

TTCTB Ecumenical Chaplain's Report - October 2023-September 2024

Kia ora koutou e te whanau o Synod of the Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki

I acknowledge the support of TTCTB, WITT and the diocese for financial and prayer support in my ongoing hope to offer consistent, integrous and effective chaplaincy service for staff and students at WITT.

As a new chaplain (9 October 2023), being a WITT staff member meant I've had to learn systems for health & safety, work organisation, student management, professional development, Ako, etc. Due to my interest in Te Ao Māori and music, I am regularly involved in pōwhiri, waiata and karakia spaces. Professionally, this year I have upskilled in key areas including rainbow training, religious literacy, porn and online content in schools, and some of these learnings have been presented at TPM staff professional development.

I love being part of the multi-disciplinary Te Puna Manaaki (TPM) Student Success Team. The diverse skills and experience we individually hold has led to healthy collaboration and good outcomes for ākongā. As I become better known, I receive more office visits and referrals for kōrero and karakia. There are increasing invitations to join in-class, across-campus and local community initiatives including student assessments, Tool Box and priority learner collaboration. I am involved in TPM monthly events including Step into WITT, mental health week, international students, Blue September, Men's Health, two 'O Weeks', Te Wiki o te Reo Māori, Rainbow Alliance, Disability Pride weeks, 'Stress free study' and Easter and Christmas events. I also participate in fortnightly peer supervision, direct report catch-ups and TPM staff PD. I am responsible for food support in student welfare spaces.

I'm privileged that my role also encompasses working with Kaiako/kaimahi (academic and support staff). From early on, I made it a priority to engage with tutors in their own spaces rather than wait for them to come to me. It helped having known a few from the 12 years I worked at Taranaki Polytechnic as well knowing others from various community spaces. This has proved invaluable at a time where government's 'Redesign of the vocational education and training system', along with associated uncertainty, staff cuts and course closures is being felt around the campus. I am involved in regular conversations about complex life issues and future concerns. I am humbled to be trusted as a listening ear/confidant and praying partner.

Apart from 'normal' pastoral work, I have been involved with a number of de-escalation incidents. These are always learning moments and each present in different ways; from family trauma, separation, religious ideation, classroom disruption, etc. Two serious situations, one dealing with a student assault and the other, as part of a multi-disciplinary critical incident team in response to the tragic death of a recent ākongā gave deeper insight into the broad scope that chaplaincy in a tertiary settings entail.

I keep monthly contact with local ministers in NPCLN and have made some good connections with other tertiary chaplains around the country. I have participated in ANZTCA chaplaincy PD including the December 2023 annual conference, a regional training day in Palmerston North ('Bridging the Sacred and Secular') on 26 June and an online 'Religious Literacy' webinar involving Hindu, Moslem and Christian perspectives, to which I invited 3 WITT colleagues along. I'm booked for December's 2024 ANZTCA annual hui in Auckland.

My wife and I now have 3 grandchildren (4th due in November) and are involved in our own, and several other church spaces. I have a growing number of clients for professional supervision and again volunteered to be a mentor in small-group facilitation at the 2024 'Aspiring Leader's Forum' held in Wellington.

I hope to continue being able to assist as WITT navigates uncharted restructuring territory. I count it an ongoing privilege to serve God and our wider community in this role.

Ngā mihi mahana

Chris Lee

Kaiwakararau Wairua (Chaplain)