

University of Waikato Ecumenical Chaplain Report to the Chaplaincy Committee AGM April 2024

The last twelve months have finally seen chapel usage return to pre-COVID levels. This is particularly gratifying since the opening of the Pā has led to a shift in the University's social centre-of-gravity from the Village Green to the Hillcrest Rd side of the campus.

Our Chaplaincy team is still a work-in-progress. Nadine Werner was unable to continue in the role due to unfavourable timetables in her paid employment. However, Nick Goodwin has become a valued member of the team, especially in maintaining a presence beyond the walls of the chapel. The Tauranga candidate was also unable to continue due to health issues with a dependent parent. However, I am building a relationship with the Rev'd Enosa Auva'a (he/him) from the Presbyterian Church of St Peter's in the City, just opposite our Tauranga Campus. We're also looking at supporting students with a free Hot Chocolate drink once a week during the winter months on that campus.

Background considerations (from the Chaplain's Job Description):

POSITION PURPOSE

To provide a service of pastoral counselling, public worship and informal Christian teaching on the campus for staff, students and others. To communicate the work of chaplaincy to local, regional and national churches, thus ensuring the continuation of the Chaplaincy on campus. To work in a Chaplaincy team with the Roman Catholic Chaplain and to make regular reports to, and work closely with, the Chaplaincy Committee.

KEY TASKS

- Lead worship in the chapel as appropriate
- Act as a liaison with Christian groups on campus
- Liaise with and coordinate the input from local, regional and national church bodies.
- Ensure the proper use of the Chapel and 'drop-in' centre in accordance with established policies
- Conduct informal study groups and the presentation of a Christian perspective on issues as and when they arise on and off campus
- Liaise with chaplaincy teams in other tertiary institutions
- Participate in the maintenance of a safe and healthy environment. Contribute to the hazard management programme.

Lead Worship

No changes here other than numbers climbing slightly for the weekly Eucharist (averaging seven communicants). It's been good to have a number of students drop in from time to time. Shortly I shall be officiating at the marriage of a couple whose son I baptised last year. I expect to take the wedding of a colleague later this year, also.

Liaise with Christian Groups

TSCF (Tertiary Students Christian Fellowship) have been particularly busy over the past year as Nick will confirm. It's been great to have WaiCath meeting again mid-week, and Student Life are often out and about on campus. Arise Church meets regularly in the chapel. But ISM (International Student Ministries) are running as a house-group off-campus this year. I'll be hosting a couple of meetings for UniQ shortly, and will talk at one of them about the Church and the Rainbow Community.

Liaise with Churches

There has been little activity on this front with most churches tending to look inwardly rather than ecumenically as they continue to deal with the flow-on effects of COVID. I met with the Anglicans and Presbyterians in Tauranga which has resulted in the Presbyterian minister joining the team as a volunteer. I shall invite him to our next regular meeting. I have continued my involvement with the Anglican Tikanga Pākehā Ecumenical Group (TPEG) and the national Anglican/Catholic dialogue (ARCCANZ) which included presenting a report on the Anglican response to Assisted Dying. This year, I am Vice-President of the Waikato Interfaith Council and continue to promote chaplaincy amongst the other faith groups.

Chapel Usage

The good patronage by the various student Christian groups has continued. Our regular users also include the music department, UniRec for their specialist services, our Mental Health team, the Clinical Psychology training group, and, more recently, the Waikato Disabled Students' Society.

The Society of Friends, Hillcrest International Church (SDA) and the Fijian AOG group, all meet regularly on the weekends, along with Father JP (Juan Pedro Maldonado) and his Sunday mass community. We also have an Eastern Rite Catholic youth group meeting weekly on Monday evenings.

Occasional users include the Theosophical Society for public lectures, the United Youth Orchestra and the Hamilton Classical Guitar Society for concerts, and the Marian School for retreats.

Conduct Informal Study Groups

Last year, upon the completion of Abp Stephen Cottrell's Lent course, we worked our way through Brian McLaren's book, "Do I Stay Christian?: A Guide for the Doubters, the

Disappointed and the Disillusioned.” This year, we have been reading and discussing Rob Bell’s “Love Wins: At the Heart of Life’s Big Questions.”

Working with Suzy Fourie up at the Wellbeing Hub, I ran a series of three practical workshops on “Contemplative Photography”. Later in the year, as you can read in Father JP’s report, the Chilean photographer Maribel Pottstock and I had a week-long exhibition of our photographs from the Camino de Santiago. We joined with Father JP to talk about our experiences and showcase the role of Pilgrimage in the Christian life.

Liaise with Chaplaincy Teams

I continue as a resource person for our national association, ANZTCA. I gave a talk on grief in Christian pastoral care at our regional hui in Auckland, and will be assisting with planning for this year’s annual conference to be held in Auckland in December.

Safe and Healthy Environment

Last year, I was appointed as Student Health’s Safety Representative and received training for this role. I have also completed the Anglican Church’s “Safeguarding and Child Protection” course. The International Students’ Support Office is running a “buddy programme” for new international students, and I gave a presentation on Cultural Diversity at one of their training events.

Other Events and Activities

I continue to promote the work of the chaplaincy through my participation in Open Days, Staff Inductions, the Student Services Expo, and orientation events. In 2023, I took part in the revamped “Kanohi ki te Kanohi” programme for staff, as well as the more localised “Cultural Development Journey” for senior staff within the Student Services Division. The relationships built during these programmes led to an invitation to conduct a funeral when one of my fellow participants lost a family member to a sudden medical event.

In the middle of 2023, Student Health received funding to promote our Mental Health work with a “Hauora & Diversity Week.” I helped open the week with a BBQ, spoke as a member of a panel on Mental Health, and later ran a pumpkin-soup-making demonstration and give-away. We expect to offer a similar programme in 2024.

Significant pastoral events included the sudden death of a doctoral student who was a respected leader within our Solomon Islands community, and the death of an Emeritus Professor in Psychology. Both involved large services in the chapel, which highlighted to the University the lack of modern facilities for such things as live-streaming. An attempt to get costings for an upgrade was delayed by the departure of both our Director of Student Services and also the ITS staff member arranging the quotes. However, with new people in these roles, the process has begun again. I have also performed two house-blessings, one for a staff member and one for a student.

Personal Matters

Of immediate concern is my recent diagnosis of localised prostate cancer. My urologist has suggested several treatment options with curative intent. I'm currently gathering information to help me make the best decision in terms of both long-term outcomes and more immediate quality of life. I shall communicate regularly with both Steven Bright as chair and Jo Knight as my line manager once we have an idea of how this might affect my work. For example, surgery might require up to six weeks off work.

In Conclusion

As always, I am very grateful for the support and encouragement of our chair, Stephen, and my line manager, Jo. I am confident that I already have a good working relationship with the new Director of Student Services and Pastoral Care, Dr Brett McEwan, and look forward to working more closely with him in his new role.

Thank you again to Jill Schumacher and our church funders for their financial and administrative support. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa!

Rev'd Andrew McKean TSSF – 2 April 2024



Br Andrew at the Academic & Support Services Expo

Br Andrew, Maribel Pottstock, Father JP and Laura Garcia de Mora at the Camino talk