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Pastoral care : the first ten years of chaplaincy in Western Australian government secondary schools

Richard G. Berlach

Brian E.R. Thornber

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PASTORAL CARE

The First Ten Years of
Chaplaincy in
Western Australian Government
Secondary Schools

Edited by

RICHARD G. BERLACH

BRIAN E.R. THORNBER



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The Churches' Commission on Education

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*This book is dedicated to school Chaplains - past,
present and future - wherever they may be currently serving.*

*Their work does not go unrewarded because they serve
in the Name of the One who called them.*

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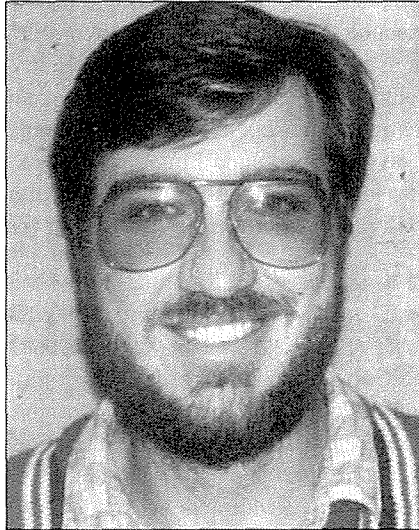
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B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Richard Berlach is a lecturer at Edith Cowan University, a position he has held for the past 13 years. Prior to this he was a primary school teacher. He teaches primarily in the area of educational and personal psychology within the Faculty of Education and has taught religious education within the Faculty of Arts. Between 1987 - 1990 both he and his wife Linda studied at Fuller Theological Seminary in California and since their return have seen themselves as a cross-denominational resource couple. As such, they are involved in a wide range of preaching engagements and seminar presentations. They currently fellowship with the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church.

Chaplaincy: An Overview

In late October 1990, some twenty school Chaplains were involved in a training day and I was invited to address them on the topic "The Chaplain as a Christian Witness". I remember feeling angst at this prospect for two reasons - first, because I had never served as a school Chaplain and so assailed myself with concerns relating to credibility; and second, because I was confronted by my own ignorance about the whole area of the secondary school Chaplaincy programme. I could do little about the first of these concerns apart from relying on the grace of God to cover my inadequacies as well as on that of my audience to forgive them; I could, however, do something a good deal more positive to ameliorate my second shortcoming. So began a process of gathering information on Chaplaincy in Western Australian secondary schools.

During this research I discovered that since the inception of the programme in 1982, very little information had actually been gathered from the Chaplains themselves about the programme and collated in any systematic fashion. A great deal had been written about Chaplaincy (e.g. various Churches' Commission on Education documents; the then Education Department of Western Australia's publication entitled **Chaplaincy in Western Australian Secondary Schools : An Exploratory Study**), but little had actually been preserved regarding the attitudes, opinions and experiences of the people at the coal-face of the project - the Chaplains themselves. It was during the October training day that I proposed to the Chaplains that they write an article each, expressing how they perceived their functions and elucidating the types of situations which they encountered on a regular basis. They were encouraged to talk about their hopes and fears and to "tell it like it is". My proposal was overwhelmingly endorsed, the result being the present publication. Not all currently serving Chaplains were able to contribute but those who were, I feel, fairly represent the issues as they relate to the majority.

The purpose of this project is broad. First, to allow Chaplains to tell their own stories in their own words thereby enabling readers to gain a first-hand "feel" for the work of a Chaplain. Second, to document the experiences of those involved in the formative years of Chaplaincy in WA schools. It is sad to think that of all the originally appointed Chaplains only one (Mrs Heather Gare) is still operating as a Chaplain, the perceptions of the others thus being lost to time. Third, to chronicle significant events which can serve as a lasting record. Fourth, to advise/warn/encourage those who are yet to find themselves in the position of School Chaplain. To this end, the present work could almost be viewed as a textbook for all those aspiring to the high calling of Chaplain. Finally, to encourage all, and especially so, District Councils and sponsoring church bodies, to continue supporting the Chaplains who are ministering in the schools on their behalf.

School Chaplains are busy people - this will become patently obvious as the pages which follow unfold. Their job description is by-and-large open ended, requiring them

to (i) be a Christian presence in the school and (ii) relate well to the individuals in their immediate arena of concern. Such a brief is desirable and necessary in that it allows Chaplains to be involved in virtually *anything*; the liability of such a brief, however, is that they may be called upon to be involved in virtually *everything*.

The work of a Chaplain is both content and context free in the main, the emphasis being on relationships - an emphasis which seems to cut across most aspects of human endeavour. It is precisely this area which is currently receiving a great deal of attention and publicity, with a plethora of articles available describing the legacy of a society in turmoil, a legacy which is being inherited by schools in an ever-increasing fashion. One article summarising a recent report on the welfare of school children, states:

Many WA teachers are at breaking point because they are faced with urgent social problems including child abuse, student suicides and poverty...."We have reached breaking point [said one principal]. Parents see us as the immediate, and perhaps only, source of help"....Many teachers and principals were being expected to act as social workers and psychologists and were unable to cope...In one school the principal and deputy principal spent up to 70 per cent of their time with family problem-solving programmes....[said another principal] "we are sent here totally unprepared, emotionally and professionally, for the situation in which we have to work in terms of pastoral care."

(**Sunday Times**, 1/7/90, p.1)

It is precisely to such an environment that the Chaplain is called - literally to be God's peace in the midst of heartache and confusion. However, lest some immediately jump to the conclusion that the general approach is one of patting individuals on the head and saying "there, there, God will take care of it", the point needs to be made that God's peace is mediated in a *practical* fashion. This may take the form of little more than a listening ear; or it may provide information regarding the availability of welfare through different agencies; or it may take on an advocacy role; or even of visiting ex-students or their parents in prison. The nature of such pastoral care is as broad as human experience itself.

Without doubt, teachers are perceived by the community as pastoral care-givers, and quite correctly so, for this is one of their roles. However, it needs to be remembered that they are assigned to schools primarily to teach - to impart knowledge - and not to spend the majority of their time in pastoral care-type situations. As the article cited previously shows, teachers have neither the time nor the specialized training necessary for such a demanding task. Chaplains, on the other hand, are in schools specifically to

spend time with people, have (or are encouraged to seek) training in relevant pastoral care areas and are selected on the basis of personal qualities rather than academic qualifications. They are in an excellent position, then, to take some of the pastoral care pressure off teachers, hence making life qualitatively better for teachers and students alike.

As you peruse the pages of this book, you will be exposed to a variety of writing styles and approaches. Some of the articles are more academic and grounded in theory while others are more autobiographical in nature; some are written in the first person while others in the third; and some are intended to impart information while others to express feelings. Regardless of idiosyncratic style, though, it quickly becomes obvious that each Chaplain has a deep love of, and regard for, all of those who tread the well-worn corridors of our schools. Their specific experiences may vary but all are united in their desire to heal hurt wherever it is found and whatever form it takes.

We live in a world of increasing complexity and it is this complexity which fuels the fire of misunderstanding in interpersonal relationships. On the surface at least, indications are that relationship-based problems are increasing in our society. It can be assumed that this will place increasing pressure on the children in our schools. In terms of future hopes and dreams, my desire is that in years to come more schools will opt to enter the Chaplaincy programme; Chaplains will undertake studies tailor-made for their task (such as the Graduate Certificate in Pastoral Care offered by Edith Cowan University); and government bodies, recognizing the contribution of school Chaplaincy will acknowledge that recognition with financial assistance for the programme, thus giving it the status of a bona-fide educational enterprise.

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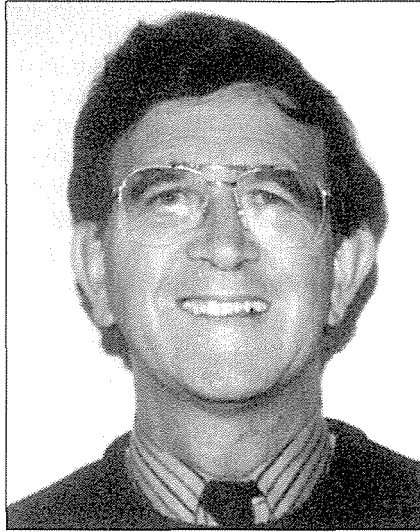
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As each article raises significant issues, the editors have designed a set of questions which arise directly from the content of each. These focus questions can be used to explore the issues further, or may be used to springboard to related topics. They should prove to be of value in facilitating discussion which further explores not just the role of the Chaplain, but also that of any pastoral care-giver.

Pause and Think

1. What do you understand by the term “Christian presence”? Is this merely an amorphous concept or can it be translated into practical reality?
2. Have another look at the quotation from the **Sunday Times** newspaper. How do you feel that school Chaplains can best offer assistance to teachers struggling in the area of pastoral care?
3. The Chaplaincy programme in Western Australia currently attracts government funding to the tune of some \$61,000 p.a. Do you think that this is a sufficient contribution from the public purse?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Brian Thornber has been the Executive Officer of The Churches' Commission on Education since 1990. Brian was ordained into the ministry of the Methodist Church in 1971 and has subsequently served in both parish ministry and Chaplaincy in Church schools. Brian has maintained an active interest in Religious Education through his membership with the Australian Association of Religious Education. He is also a member of the Christian Education Committee within the WA Synod of the Uniting Church.

An Historical Perspective on the Churches' Commission on Education and the Development of Chaplaincy

In the early 1960s it became obvious to the Churches that they could not adequately service the Special Religious Instruction (SRI) which the Education Act permitted them to conduct in Government Schools. For many years, the visits of the local clergy to the schools on a weekly basis, to the children of their denominations, had placed an almost impossible burden on them.

In response to the growing problems associated with SRI several lines of action were undertaken but no real solution was found. Eventually in 1970 it was proposed to establish a body to serve the interests of the Church in the schools. Heads of Churches met at the invitation of the late Anglican Archbishop, Geoffrey Sambell on February 3, 1971 and agreed to establish The Council for Christian Education. The first meeting of this Council was then held on March 5, 1971. The following people were elected as foundation office bearers:

Chairman	-	The Revd Brother B C Manion
Vice-Chairman	-	The Revd B Stitt
Secretary	-	The Revd T R Wallace
Treasurer	-	The Revd R Evans

The following Churches each appointed a representative to the Council:

Anglican	-	The Revd T R Wallace
Baptist	-	The Revd I Harris
Catholic	-	The Revd Father J Nestor
Churches of Christ	-	The Revd K Patterson
Congregational	-	The Revd D Wacker
Methodist	-	The Revd L Smith
Presbyterian	-	The Revd R Evans
Salvation Army	-	Major R Drummond

In addition, the Church representatives on the Education Department Syllabus Committee for Christian Education were appointed to the Council. They were the Revd Canon J Abraham (Anglican), the Revd Brother B C Manion (Catholic), the Revd B Stitt (Churches of Christ), and the Revd L Purdie (Presbyterian).

The Education Department nominated two representatives to the Council, Mr. H Loudon (Deputy Director of Secondary Education) and Mr. J. Dean (Superintendent).

In all, eleven meetings were held by the Council during 1971.

During discussion in 1974 the Council considered changes to its structure and a change of name. It was argued that the Council had extended its interests far beyond Christian education in schools and therefore a wider brief was needed. A new structure was approved at a meeting of the Heads of Churches at Archbishop Sambell's

house on July 18, 1975. Along with this change came the adoption of a new name **“The Churches’ Commission on Education”**.

The Commission’s foundation Chairman, Brother Cas Manion served as Chairman until 1982. His successors have been Canon Ken McIntyre, Dr Richard Moore, Father Bob Carden, Bishop Brian Kyme and Revd John Phillipson.

In 1971, Mr. John Paul, the then recently retired Headmaster of Hollywood Senior High School, was appointed part-time Executive Officer. His successors have been the Revd Dr. Peter Wellock (1973 - 78), The Revd Brian Haig (1978 - 79), Mrs Margaret Williams (1980 - 88), Mr Tony Mordini (1989) and the Revd Brian Thomber (1990 -).

It is a tribute to the enormous enthusiasm and commitment of Margaret Williams that her period of office saw the emergence of so many of the structures which are positive features of the Commission’s present program. As noted by a previous Chairman, Dr Richard Moore, “one of Margaret’s great strengths was to see dreams and visions translated into realities.” Some notable achievements in Margaret’s time were the development of District Councils, the School Chaplaincies, training of the SRI teachers and the restructuring of the CCE into its present six committees.

None of the original members of the Commission could have foreseen the precise details of where the Commission is today. They did not foresee the precise shapes and forms of the increasing co-operation of the Churches and people, whether in the Commission, in the grass-roots’ District Councils, or in the agreement for composite special religious instruction classes. Again, they did not anticipate the actual role and ministry of Chaplains as it is today.

It is interesting to note, however, that the Minutes of the Council did refer to the concept of “The High School Chaplain” in its first year of 1971. It was generally felt that “the Chaplain should be relatively free to exercise his functions in ways that met with his Headmaster’s approval and were called for by the spiritual needs of the students”. It was noted that “this Council will have to find the finance to pay the Chaplains. How these funds will be found is not clear, nor has the question been properly raised or discussed”. “Suppose”, said Brother Manion, “Chaplains are appointed, how much freedom is each Church prepared to allow the Chaplain with children of their allegiance? What exactly is it that the Baptist Church might question in the work of a Salvation Army Chaplain, or the Catholic Church from the Methodist? Could these fears be committed to paper, analysed, and then action be taken to minimise them? Why do we tend to fear any but our own clergy giving instruction? Surely with agreed syllabuses, inter-denominational collaboration and the urgency of need it should be possible to reduce the areas of disagreement.” The statement by the Chairman concluded, “If the Department approves of the Chaplaincies, a great

responsibility will rest on the pioneers of the scheme. They will be pathfinders for future action”.

The proposal to appoint Chaplains was discussed on January 25, 1972, with the then Director General of Education and the Council’s Chairman and Secretary. The proposal proved unacceptable to the Education Department for four reasons. They were summarised in the Council Chairman’s record of the meeting under the headings:

- (i) legal difficulties;
- (ii) administrative difficulties;
- (iii) public reaction; and
- (iv) present Departmental policy.

It was not until after fresh instigation and a real team effort by the Commission, Education Department Officers and Heads of Churches that a new basis was drawn up and agreed upon in 1981 and 1982. As a result of the agreement the first Chaplains were appointed to Central Midlands and Kelmescott in 1982 and Bunbury, Newton Moore and Willetton in 1983.

In the following ten years the number of Chaplains grew to the present number of forty four. It has been exciting to witness the strong measure of acceptance to the ministry of Government School Chaplaincy. The Ministry of Education places a high value on community involvement in schools. Provided people come in good faith to help the school to achieve its educational and pastoral goals, their participation has been welcomed. School Chaplaincy poses no threat to secular education for it has demonstrated that it can work effectively within these parameters. Sponsored by local churches and other community groups, Chaplaincy can provide additional bridges between the school and its community of families.

The first members of the Commission had high hopes of the contribution the combined churches could make to the quality of life experienced by people in our Government School system. I hope that in the articles that follow you will find ample evidence of this hope being realised through the caring ministry of Chaplaincy.

Pause and Think

1. As far back as 1971 it was suggested by the Council that “the Chaplain should be relatively free to exercise his functions....”. Is there not a danger in providing such an open brief?
2. Is it naive to believe that a Chaplain who has a specific denominational background can fairly represent all denominations? Is there a relationship between the “essential” word of the Chaplain and denominationality?
3. The greater majority of Chaplain positions in State schools are currently occupied by men. Comment on both the strengths as well as weaknesses of such a distribution.

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Paul Cannon and his wife Lyn combine to form a full-time Chaplaincy at Northam Senior High School. They began in 1990 after several years of study and experience in the roles they would later develop as Chaplains. Paul and Lyn have two boys. The family currently fellowships with Northam Church of Christ. Paul's interests include pottery, horticulture, hobby farming, bushwalking, reading and art.

Lyn's interests are gardening, crafts, bushwalking, hobby farming, reading and horseriding.

Contextual Chaplaincy

State high schools form a sub-culture in our society consisting of a distinct set of values, beliefs, practices, thought processes and language. Therefore, schools have a particular world view. Comparatively speaking, individual schools have their own unique environment forming a culture within the sub-culture. We believe that it is important to study and begin to understand this culture we are working in.

We believe that the Apostle Paul set the example of contextual missionary work. In Acts 17:vv 16-34, Paul carefully studied the culture of the Athenians. By doing so he was able to introduce Christian concepts and ideals to the Athenians who at least listened to Paul because he spoke to them from within a context they understood. In 1 Corinthians 9:vv 19-23 Paul firmly points out that his missionary work is based on the contextual approach. Modern mission has followed this example with positive results.

Once we undertake the contextual approach we are forced to read Scripture in a manner that will enable us to apply it without inadvertently introducing a "Christian" culture. The mistake of foreign missions was to introduce Christianity to Asians and Africans as Western Industrialism, thus requiring major changes in the existing culture. Thus, in working in the school we are conscious of the fact that we are not there to change the entire system, we are there to help those working in the system and to uphold the system. If our work and message was to become acceptable to the majority of workers in the school, it would simply revitalise the existing system. Therefore, the contextual model is one that must accept reality. Put simply, all that exists outside the church cannot always be written off as evil and a lot of what the church advocates or infers is not congruent with Scripture.

In Chaplaincy work, the contextual approach is actually assisted by the rule of no proselytising. Instead of relying on the simplistic approach of proclamation we are forced to study the culture and the people and to then discover other ways of introducing Christian concepts and ideals that are relevant in given situations. This is not something that happens overnight, it can take the full duration of the Chaplaincy appointment to work out the keys to a school culture, and that is only the beginning.

When we commenced our work as Chaplains at Northam Senior High School we began in faith, basing our work on the contextual approach of Paul and our training as missionaries. It was in missionary preparation that we benefited from studies that would assist not only with counselling and pastoral work, but also with taking a contextual approach. We covered topics such as cultural anthropology, comparative religion, mission strategy, missiology, and most importantly, cross-cultural communication. It should be evident from these titles that the main emphasis is on people. This is the crux of the matter. In our Chaplaincy we put those we work with first, find out where they are at, and attempt to help them.

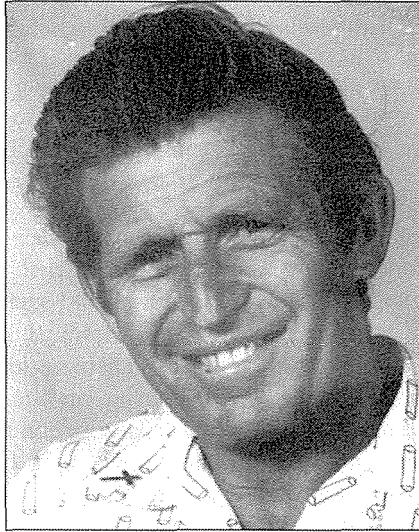
So far the contextual approach has revealed a number of important facts for our future work. Firstly, in working with the staff, students and parents associated with the school, we have discovered that all people have a need to be loved and accepted. This takes time and communication in the building of a quality relationship, it doesn't simply happen with the proclamation of the Gospel. Secondly, we are constantly discovering that when people come for counselling they are really wanting to be healed of their problems and worries, some of which go back in the family history. Again, this requires quality time in building a relationship in order to begin the healing process. It is flippant to assume that we are only required to proclaim the Gospel when people need extensive and continuing help and support.

Thirdly, the many people that we encounter usually indicate that they are also seeking trust and security in a world where such values are earnestly sought but rarely found. Therefore, to us, Chaplaincy is all about meeting the felt needs of those whom we serve in the school. We believe that this is the approach set by Jesus, and followed by Paul. This approach does not deny the importance of the need to meet the ultimate needs of people, it clearly shows that people are more important than doctrine and assumptions. It is an approach that says that what people think and how they think is important, and that much of what they practice is not necessarily anti-Christian. What also eventuates from the contextual approach is that the Chaplain and the church in the pursuit of contextuality are forced to be Biblically honest rather than doctrinally pure. We are made to truly love people as we find them and to begin to really communicate the Gospel in practical, meaningful ways. The contextual approach is a mission that values people and their felt needs and eventually, their ultimate needs.

Pause and Think

1. Are there advantages to having a Chaplaincy couple attached to a school? Can you think of any disadvantages of such an approach?
2. The cry often goes up that any sort of outreach work must be contextually grounded. Are our government schools societal subcultures? Is each school a unique subculture? If so, what five or six major characteristics do we need to find out about such subcultures before we can effectively minister to its members?
3. Are you familiar with Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs"? The Cannons' experiences showed them that "all people have a need to be loved and accepted". What would Maslow say about such insight?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Frank Drysdale left Physical Education teaching and entered the Methodist Ministry in 1961. Following six years of inner-city youth work, he became Chaplain - and Senior Boarding Master - at Wesley College, for twelve years.

In 1985 he became the first full-time Chaplain in a Government School in W.A. The venue was at Hamilton Senior High School where Frank remained for the next three years.

Father of six and grandfather of ten, Frank has now retired through ill-health, but is still involved in regular preaching.

Getting Alongside

With a background as a Physical Education teacher, Youth Centre leader, Chaplain and Boarding Master at a Church School, I began my High School Chaplaincy in 1985 with one very strong conviction. I believed that to be of any value in a non-church High School, I had to get alongside the students and win their acceptance.

This was not necessarily going to be an easy task, as I was no young, “with it”, modern music buff. As a father of six and grandfather of ten, my favourite group was still The Seekers. I still preferred the **real** old-time dancing, to the “modern” Quickstep, and found it hard to accept today’s gyrations as real dancing at all!

My first shock, was to be shown my office - one of the two entrances to a girls’ toilet block, with wash-basins down one wall, and just a locked door separating it from the toilet cubicles. At that stage I found it hard to see how this was really going to work to my advantage - but it did. Prior to the commencement of the school year, I made several visits to the school, assisted by the local Uniting Church Minister and members of my family, to try to transform my rather humble headquarters. It is amazing what a little paint, carpet, desk and easy chairs will do - but there were still those tell-tale wash-basins and locked door. We decided to solve this with a cupboard centrally placed against the wall, with curtains extending out on either side, successfully concealing those reminders of my office’s origins.

Situated on an upstairs balcony, centrally placed, and just above the School canteen, there was a never-ending stream of students past my door...with almost everyone pausing, to look inside, give a tentative smile, or wave. Then came my first group of visitors, standing nervously inside the door - looking at the curtains, and asking “Are they your confessional boxes?” I **roared** with laughter, and offered them a seat in one of the wash basins - as long as I didn’t have to squeeze into the cupboard! They joined in the laughter, accepted my invitation to look around, and stayed on for quite a chat. The ice had been broken! From then on, my door was hardly ever closed, even when students came to see me about some real, personal problem. Others would glance in, to see if I were free, and if not, just call out that they’d see me later. It became obvious from the very beginning that there was no stigma attached to “seeing the Chaplain” - and this was my greatest asset over the next few years. (I was to visit some other schools, where the Chaplain enjoyed comparatively luxurious conditions, in a special suite of rooms that catered for the Nurse, Guidance Officer, etc. as well ...but I would prefer my little “toilet-cum-confessional-cum-office” any day!)

I have often stressed when talking about the Chaplaincy system, that one of its strengths is its very newness, and lack of structure. No-one knows what to expect! So each Chaplain is free to develop in his/her own way, taking advantage of his/her own background and interests.

Quite early in the piece I developed a close, working relationship with the Physical Education staff - especially in the area of swimming, in that first summer term. Absolute non-swimmers are fairly rare in today's high schools, and those who are, tend to complicate the lesson for a teacher with a class of 20-30. They willingly accepted my offer to take any such problems - and while the teacher took the rest of the class, I was able to get into the pool, in a one-to-one fashion. This invariably enabled good progress to be made, and as the non-swimmer graduated to deep water, I had not only gained a friend for life but also respect from the rest of the class.

I was fortunate from the beginning, because of two decisions made by the school Principal. Firstly, although discipline had never been a problem to me, I was to be considered as outside the normal hierarchy, and never to be put in a situation where I would have any authority - even to the point that if I were to be in a classroom situation, the normal teacher must still be present. At first, I felt that this would be a real drawback, but it was a decided plus. It meant not only that I never had to discipline any student - but they all knew my position, so that even the roughest, most rebellious student, felt free to speak openly to me about any matter at all, fully confident that it would go no further. Secondly, students never had to request permission from a class teacher to come to see me, even during lesson time. I was always to give them a note, verifying their time spent with me and naturally I kept a check on when students came, in case they began to use me as a "way out" with a teacher, though this never appeared to be the case. This meant that students were encouraged to see me whenever they desired, and were able to come at the time that problems arose, rather than being forced to bottle them up inside for too long.

Nevertheless, early in the piece, despite lots of contacts at recess, lunch-time and after school, there tended to be quite lengthy periods of inactivity for me during class time.

To overcome this, I was fortunate to be able to develop good relations with the arts and craft, home science, manual art and physical education staff. In each of these areas, I was given an open invitation into their classrooms. I used a certain amount of discretion, naturally, and if I looked in and saw that the whole class was involved in a teaching situation, I either waited for a break, or moved on. If however, the students were all working individually at their benches or desks, I would simply walk into the room, go to the teacher's desk and borrow the class roll, and then move quietly around the room, chatting to individuals as they worked, gradually linking names to faces and in this way getting to know all the students.

Probably the area where I felt the closest affinity was with the Youth Education Officer. She was a very happy-go-lucky type, very dedicated to her work, and a real lover of outdoor activities - camping, canoeing, abseiling etc. I found that this provided the opportunity for a lot of extracurricular time with students. At first, this was mainly in the area of over-night and weekend camp-outs, which proved invaluable in establishing

relationships. It was no coincidence that the first real problems that a particular student brought to me, was through the intermediary of one I had got to know well on a weekend camp. One of her friends was most upset about a family matter, and my camping contact literally dragged her into my office, with the words, "Sir, ...has a problem that she should talk to you about!" It turned out to be quite a simple issue that a couple of home visits sorted out fairly easily.

Later, I spent one term holiday doing a basic Instructor's Course in Canoeing at the Bridgetown Campschool, and this area then became my own personal province. I began taking groups of students in the school bus down to the Department Boatshed in East Fremantle where I furthered my own canoeing knowledge. This course culminated in a three day canoe trip down the Murray River, near Dwellingup, carrying all tents and supplies in the canoes and proving an outstanding success.

One of the interesting aspects of the trip was when I talked with the group and reminded them of my official position carrying no authority whatsoever. I explained that in these special circumstances, with the potential for danger and accident, I really needed to know that if I had to give a definite order, it would be obeyed instantly. They could all see the need for this, and so for the two terms of instruction and the final camp, my slightest instruction received immediate and total response.

I think that most Chaplains would agree that the area for greatest potential conflict is in the conflict of roles between the Chaplain and Guidance Officer. This was one that I became aware of, but a close friendship between the Education Officer and Guidance Officer made things much easier, and regular meetings between the three of us overcame any conflict before it arose. In fact, it was from one of these meetings that one of my more interesting projects came to be.

There were two fifteen year old boys who were in constant trouble, stretching the school's disciplinary measures to the full. At one of our three-way meetings, it was the Guidance Officer who suggested that I take both boys on a hiking trip for a few days and try to establish better relationships with them. A request was made to the Principal, and with his approval, I put the proposition to both boys. I had imagined that there would be some reluctance for such a close, continued association with the Chaplain, but they both jumped at the idea. (I think that the thought of three days out of school held just too much appeal!).

We carefully planned what we would take, in the way of food, clothing, and equipment, and were eventually dropped off at Nanga on the Murray River to be picked up at a point quite a few kilometres downstream three days later. I was still rather uncertain as to what to do with them, and how far I should go in trying to discuss problems - but I needn't have worried.

The first day we swam, competed with each other at skimming stones across the water, took great pains over selecting our first camp-site, and then prepared our first meal. When the meal was finally cooked, one of them surprised me by suggesting that I say Grace! I did so, giving thanks to God for our most enjoyable day, and the co-operation of the school Principal, Deputy, Guidance Officer etc, (the ones they had clashed with so often!) for helping to make it all possible. They sat quietly throughout, unexpectedly joining in with the “Amen” - and from then on, accepted Grace as an integral part of every mealand each time there were so many different things to give thanks for. (On the third day, at my instigation, they even offered suggestions for our thanksgivings!)

The most productive times were probably the evenings, sitting by the crackling camp-fire on the bank of the river, with the sound of water tumbling over the many rocks, and the countless stars twinkling overhead. We talked for hours on end. I shared about similar settings in Nepal and Papua New Guinea and talked about my family, children and grandchildren and some of their problems. They responded in similar manner, sharing their problems and hurts, their hopes and aspirations and their realisation that things had to improve at school if these were to be fulfilled. This led to some specific areas of conflict - teachers who “wouldn’t give them a go” and other teachers they would prefer to be with.

The three days just flew past, and two very different boys chatted happily on the drive back to school. We were able to effect some class changes, and though no miracles occurred, great progress was obviously made.

Gradually, other teachers felt prepared to try involving me with their classes. Ironically, my first contact with one Year 11 English teacher, was a request for the list of the “seven deadly sins”! Shortly after however, she asked me for a list of parables told by Jesus, and when she saw “The Pearl of Great Price”, asked me if that was anything like John Steinbeck’s short story, “The Pearl”. We discussed them together and I was invited to her class to speak generally on “Parables in Literature”, and more specifically on the parallels between “The Pearl” and “The Pearl of Great Price.”

It proved to be a most interesting lesson, with total class attention, as together we saw that despite the totally different stories - in one, the pearl bringing nothing but trouble, and finally being thrown back into the sea, and in the other, the dealer selling everything he had, in order to buy that one special pearl, both Jesus and John Steinbeck were really saying the same thing - “Life consists of choices, and sacrifices often have to be made, if what you consider to be most important in your life is to be achieved.”

Another Year 12 teacher, asked me to take a lesson on “Psalms as Poetry” and it was a special experience. After talking about the poetic technique of parallelism, the whole

class divided into two groups, reading some of the great psalms antiphonally - and appreciating them poetically at least!

At the other end of the academic spectrum, I was to develop a special relationship with members of the Education Support group, aged from 13 to 16. Their teacher felt in need of a second adult when she took them for a regular horse-riding session - as well as a bus-driver, so this again presented me with a wonderful opportunity to be of use, and to gain student acceptance. This extended to all sorts of other occasions, including a regular Friday "Afternoon Tea" when the group prepared and hosted the occasion.

Despite several attempts on my part and the expressed interest of a few students, we never succeeded in establishing an Inter-School Christian Fellowship group, but this never concerned me unduly. At regular intervals I attended services at all the traditional Churches in the area, quite often as Guest Preacher, but met very few students from the High School. (None of the Churches were strong numerically or financially, and though very supportive of the Chaplaincy, had very little involvement with any teenagers.)

For several years, none of our feeder primary schools had received any Special Religious Instruction from visiting clergy and/or other teachers, as none of the Churches were strong enough to do anything in this area. Largely as a result of these prevailing circumstances, I saw my task not so much as pushing for a Fellowship group for the very few already reached by the Churches - but rather, what might be called "pre-evangelism" - of breaking down apathy and antagonism to the Church and showing an attitude of love and concern to all. Indeed, I was constantly aware of the fact that most of the students had never received even the most simple Christian education, had virtually no knowledge of the basic Christian tradition - even of Christmas or Easter - and that to all intents and purposes, I was their only contact with the Christian Church.

With such little Christian knowledge in evidence, I felt that I needed to make use of every opportunity to help expand it. Through the co-operation of the Library staff, I arranged for them to be ready to direct students to the right books, and then prepared a twelve question quiz on matters associated with Lent and Holy Week. Students could obtain a set of questions from me, and then return them to me for marking - being able to go back and try to correct any wrong answers. Through the assistance of the staff, on "Pancake Tuesday", all students with twelve correct answers were able to gain admission to one of the Home Science rooms at lunchtime, and eat their fill of piping hot pikelets. Well over a hundred students were able to enjoy the fruit of their efforts, to the envy and frustration of others who "hadn't got around to it."

For Easter itself, sets of questions on the Easter Story specifically, were sent to all form rooms on the morning of the final day before the holiday break, for classes to discuss

and arrive at their best combined efforts to provide answers. Questions were all marked, and in the PA announcements just prior to lunch, the winning class in each year group was announced - the prize being a small Easter egg per student (courtesy of the District Council). These activities did much to at least make all children in the school aware of the basic Christian beliefs about Easter, in a very positive manner.

On a slightly more spiritual level, every lunch-hour in the week preceding Easter, we had an open invitation to staff and students to share in a Bible reading and discussion on the Easter Story. All present participated in the readings, as individual characters, "Jews", "Disciples" etc, and some interesting discussions and questions resulted - with up to ten staff and 25 students participating.

Although we never established an ISCF group, we did have a regular, weekly Prayer Meeting amongst interested staff, one morning before school - and about a dozen participated at some stage, with the average being about five or six. I believe that one of the effects of having a Chaplain in a government school is to give encouragement to those teachers who are committed Christians, as well as to the many more who are sympathetic to the Christian witness in the school. Between them, they not only "help" the Chaplain to a remarkable degree, but witness to the students in a way they had previously never considered.

Christmas was the occasion for an activity of a different sort. With the very ready co-operation of the music teacher and the school band, several of whom had finished their school year a week or so earlier and returned especially for the occasion, we began a tradition of "Christmas in drama and song" on the last school day of the year. It included community carol singing, solos by the music teacher, and a nativity play by a drama group - with tremendous help from the Art, Manual Arts and Electronics Departments for sets, props, lighting, etc. Attendance was voluntary, but the theatre was always packed out by students who participated most appreciatively - and we battled to reserve sufficient seating to cater for members of the community, parents, church organizations etc., who had expressed a desire to attend.

The other "class activity" that I had from time to time, was a lesson on how the Bible has affected our customs and language. I offered to come into any class for this one-off session, and after an excellent staff and student response to the first couple of sessions, this became a fairly regular demand from English teachers of all years. One year eleven teacher actually asked me to extend it to a three, fifty minute period unit!

Despite all these activities, however, it was still in the area of extracurricular activities that I gained the most contact with students; for example:

- as "assistant manager" of the school C.I.G. (up to year 10) football team, who

were premiers twice in succession, with me receiving a medallion along with the boys;

as coach of an upper school Saturday morning hockey team - officially a boys' competition, but in which our team included three girls! (and reached the semi-finals!);

as organiser of a lunch hour chess competition;

as co-organiser of a special Aboriginal group that met weekly to discuss issues of concern, organising a number of outings including a trip to the Stirlings to climb Bluff Knoll;

as "helper" behind the refreshments counter at school socials. (Which meant that I had a good excuse for staying outside the hall, in the foyer! In actual fact however, I was always amazed at the number of students who spent lengthy periods outside, chatting with me, during the evening);

as staff member at all sorts of camps, ranging from Year 8 orientation camps at the start of the year, to special subject camps for various year groups;

as "hospital visitor" whenever I was advised of the situation.

Through activities such as these, I was able to gain a high degree of acceptance from the students - especially those with the more severe behavioural problems. These included quite a few where the problem had nothing to do with the school but was purely a result of family conflict, affecting the student in his/her school achievement. ●one of these was a notorious ward of the State who at times was almost uncontrollable - yet who maintained contact with me throughout, and when told he could invite two friends for tea on his birthday, asked my wife and myself! He had very severe emotional problems and eventually was removed from the school, but he has still maintained contact with me, five years later.

Another incident occurred when a year nine boy ran away from home and despite pleas from parents and the school principal, no-one came forward to offer any assistance. After two days, I was told where he was - in the fake ceiling above the bar in the local hotel, being supplied with chips etc. from the hotel kitchen by the licensee's son! His parents had almost reconciled themselves to his death when I arrived with him, safe and sound, and willing to try to sort things out. Their emotional response assured him of their positive feelings toward him.

As I look back on those three enjoyable, hectic years at Hamilton Senior High School, I cannot recall any specific conversions to Christianity - which is the only yardstick of success that some have used in the past. But I can count many friendships, closer

relations between the school and local churches, and countless students who not only knew a little more “about” Christianity, but who I believe, were far more accepting of Christian beliefs and principles in their own lives.

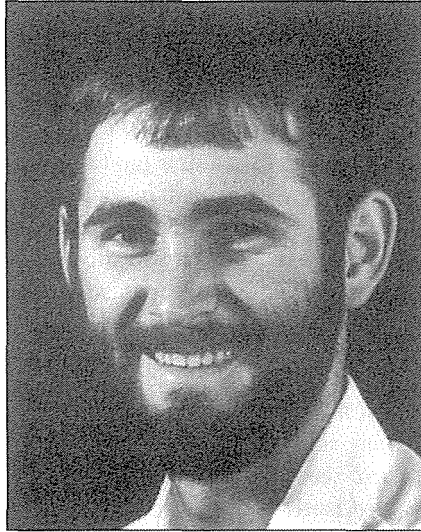
I have in my possession a photograph taken by the School photography teacher and blown up to poster size, that to me, sums up what I was trying to achieve as Chaplain. It shows the finish of “The Chaplain’s Fun Run” (an annual event, commenced prior to the Chaplaincy, and being a major part of the fund raising programme), with a year eleven boy and myself, arm in arm and stride for stride, about to cross the finishing line as equal fourth out of several hundred in the five kilometre run. Over the last half kilometre we had passed each other several times. When he drew level with me again he puffed, “I give up - let’s make it a draw!” At that we both instinctively put our arms across each other’s shoulders, and ran in step over the last hundred metres.

Somehow, that photograph of the two of us running in step portrays to me what Chaplaincy in Schools is really all about - not preaching, not directing, but getting alongside and being with the students. Once this is achieved, and not until then, will the Chaplain be sufficiently accepted to be of use to those really in need.

Pause and Think

1. A great deal of emphasis is placed upon what the Chaplain can do for the school community. However, who is responsible for helping the Chaplain settle in? What steps can be taken to help minimize the “culture shock” which no doubt assails most incumbents in the early days of their Chaplaincy?
2. How does a pastoral care-giver tread the fine line between extracting information, feelings etc. from a student and waiting patiently for these to be volunteered? What **principles** can be kept in mind when making a decision for either of these options.
3. Frank writes, “I believe that one of the effects of having a Chaplain in a government school is to give encouragement to those teachers who are committed Christians, as well as to the many more who are sympathetic to the Christian witness in the school” Do **you** think that a Chaplain’s mere presence can have such an effect?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Stephen Gallagher has been a full time Chaplain for the last three years. He is currently based at Como Senior High School where he has been since March 1990. He fellowships at South Perth Baptist Church. His interests include many different watersports, camping, travelling and "veging" with a good movie.

Reflection on the "Spiritual" Role of the Chaplain as a Care-Giver

The question that came to my mind while performing the many varied tasks involved in pastoral care, was “what made a Chaplain different from any loving care-giver in the school?” Though the answer to this may seem obvious, in my experience, I found this was not so. There was a nurse, guidance officer, and teaching staff that for all obvious purposes exhibited a quality of love and care that were Christ like. This is rather daunting especially when you are the Chaplain and “loving pastoral care” is your domain. Well isn’t that right? Wasn’t it my place to be the patient, empathetic, insightful, and loving figure to whom staff and students would be magnetically drawn? Wasn’t I supposed to be the solace in their distress, and all that stuff? No, then what is a spiritual role for a Chaplain and what makes this position different from that of others? Confronted at the core of my “role”, I sought to answer this quickly, lest someone else did, and find in their conclusion that I was redundant, and unnecessary.

Despite not shining in the empathetic, loving, caring, role, being the Chaplain does of course mean that I had the whole area (well almost the whole area) of spirituality sewn up. This was of course obvious to any observer. That it was common place for the Chaplain to commune with God, fellowship with the saints and to be able to offer direct words of revelation is of course equally obvious. Yes, it was my place to preach to the unconverted, save souls daily, or at the very least have amazing numbers of kids going to the local church youth groups. “Spectacular” I hear you say, “failure” felt I.

Sadly, the all too pervasive attitude that Christians are there to save souls is present. Or there is the equally wrong attitude that there is some spiritual short cut that we only have to wave a magic wand, or apply a spiritual band aid and problems will disappear. Quick and slick solutions for the sick in soul is not Chaplaincy.

Rather, I find that the spiritual role of Chaplaincy is being free to be oneself - to be free to respond appropriately to the whole person. This means being able to meet people where they are at, where their area of need is; freedom from needing to run in to cover the spiritual bases lest they slip through our fingers; freedom to rest in the knowledge that it is God who saves; freedom to rest in the knowledge that it is by grace that we are saved, that it is by grace we serve, and that it is ultimately by God’s grace that He weaves that which we do into His divine purpose.

Furthermore, being a Chaplain provides freedom to see and minister to the whole person, to respond to the spiritual core of a person. It enables a Chaplain to tread where non-Christian care-givers do not. The acknowledgement that the body also consists of a soul and spirit is primary and should be the basis of responding to the whole person. Thus there is the need for the Chaplain to respond, as appropriate, and to be available to meet the spiritual needs of people. So a Christian presence is the spiritual role of the Chaplain, and it is our freedom to be this in our own unique way which distinguishes us from that of the other care-givers in the school.

Pause and Think

1. What do you understand the phrase “minister to the whole person” to mean?
2. Does a Chaplain need to, *a priori*, accept that every individual possesses a “spiritual core”? What does “spiritual core” mean anyway?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Heather Gare has been a full-time Chaplain for the past eleven years at Willetton Senior High School. She began there in 1983 being the first Chaplain appointed in Government Schools. She is married with two children and is fellowshiping at the Mt Pleasant Baptist Church. She is a trained nurse and is finishing tertiary studies in Theology. She is a member of the local Christian Resource Council for Schools and runs the Willetton Youth Lounge (Drop In Centre). Her interests include music, both as an instrumentalist and vocalist, travelling, tennis, water sports and camping.

Interview with Heather Gare

Richard Berlach

Heather can you tell me something of your history as a school chaplain at Willetton?

Heather

I started in 1983 when Roy Browning was Principal. We agreed that I needed to meet students so I spoke at assemblies, tutor groups and talked to students around the campus. This also gave students a chance to meet me. In no time students were coming for appointments to talk over their problems with me. I also helped out in the sick bay as relieving nurse and students were able to meet me there in a different capacity.

Richard

How did you get yourself initially ensconced in the Willetton situation? Who's initiative was that?

Heather

It was the Executive Director of the The Churches' Commission on Education (CCE), Mrs Margaret Williams, who encouraged me. At the time, I was scripture teaching at Burrendah Primary School, enjoying it very much with a team of Scripture teachers and was reluctant to leave because it was time to help supplement the family income. Margaret had been organising a survey of the CCE's Christian presence in high schools. It suggested that the most effective method of co-ordinator of a Christian presence might be through a Christian staff member and so she asked me to consider taking up that position at Willetton Senior High school. At first I was most unsure and shocked that Margaret considered me suitable. It took three months of praying and asking Christians who knew me and whom I respected for their Godly wisdom, before I was confident that this was God's purpose for me. The confidence I had was not in my ability but that God was calling me and therefore I could rely on Him to do the work through me. Finally I was prepared to let Him do that.

Richard

When you came to the position you must have felt that you had gifts. What gifts do you feel that you have that equipped you for school chaplaincy?

Heather

Well, the first gift that the CCE looked for was, and I love the way they put it, 'a close connection with our Lord'. I knew that I had that. I believed that my greatest gift was the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. I guess that God has put me together in such a way that nursing training was very good preparation. I enjoyed listening to people, could converse with and really hear them. So, I suppose, all of those gifts from God helped.

Richard

What made you finally decide that you wanted to go ahead and become a high school Chaplain? Was there anything that clinched the decision for you?

Heather

Well, really, I didn't ever want to become a school Chaplain, but soon realised that I couldn't say "no" to the call of God. The first thing I did was to check with Margaret Williams. Did she really believe that I could do the job? She was confident. However I was not sure that she knew me enough to be able to say that. So I went to my Pastor, Bob Burton and the elders of our Church. They prayed and took a couple of days before replying. Their reply was positive. I also talked it over with Norman, my husband. His opinion that though I might not be suitably qualified caused me to relax a little. During this time I was really seeking the Lord and when I read again, "My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in weakness" in 2 Corinthians 12:9, I was really convinced that I might not feel as though I can do this job, God could do it through me. My understanding of the Chaplaincy position at this time was that it was firstly a male role for the ordained and then for someone older in years. I didn't fill any of these criteria at the time and so I didn't believe I was suitable. But God gradually convinced me that I didn't need to be male, I didn't need to wear a special collar and I didn't need to be old. I just needed to be His, which was great. I was never convinced in the beginning that I could do the job. God convinced me that He could do it through me.

Richard

So what would you say just on that same topic to incumbent Chaplains, people who feel they have some sort of a gift, and they suspect that they have a calling in that direction? What would you say, they would need to possess, to make a successful Chaplain?

Heather

I believe that they need to experience a real call from God and to be sure that it is God who is calling them.

Richard

And they need to have that confirmed somehow?

Heather

Yes, confirmed first of all by the witness of the Spirit within themselves, the affirmation from elders whom they respect and then the confirmation of God speaking to them through the Scriptures.

Richard

Heather, what do you see as your major role or perhaps roles in the situation at Willetton?

Heather

Well, generally my role is to be a Christian presence in the school. I recognise that there are several Christian presences in the school, myself being one of them. However, I guess my major role is to be the co-ordinator of Christian activities in the high school thereby encouraging students, staff and parents to be seeking the answers to their questions from a Christian world view.

Richard

It's very broad sort of brief isn't it?

Heather

Yes, it is very broad and I appreciate that breadth very much. There have been attempts to focus and specify the role of Chaplains but I strongly believe that development of the role through the prompting of the Holy Spirit for each individual Chaplain is essential. Flexibility in this area ensures that the particular needs of each school are met.

Richard

In that case you would see yourself as an agent of God rather than an agent of a specific denomination?

Heather

Yes, very much so.

Richard

So denominational affiliation doesn't come into your work at all?

Heather

Yes, it does in that each Chaplain needs to have their own place of worship and church affiliation but at school we're definitely inter-denominational in approach. We are agents of the love of God to the whole school community.

Richard

Okay. I believe you're involved in Mega Life groups. Tell me something about these and what your role is there.

Heather

It's very exciting to be talking about Mega Life. Mega Life developed from our ISCF (Interschool Christian Fellowship) groups which have been operating for a long time.

When Rob Adams, from Outreach and Church Ministries was able to come and help with the group we agreed on the name Mega Life, the greatest life in Christ. Initially we were meeting at recess time with just a few students and our numbers fluctuated. About three years ago our Principal, Mr Brendon Davies, visited the group and his comment was; "It's no good these kids having to meet in their own time. They should be able to meet in class time." I couldn't believe my ears! I thought this suggestion was great because my vision was to use tutor group, which was our pastoral care time, for appropriate Christian input. I talked to year 8 tutors first, who invited me to give each year 8 student an opportunity to encounter Mega Life. We rostered all year 8 tutor groups and conducted Mega Life for the first half of the year. During the second half, the year 8's were free to choose to come. We wanted attendance to be voluntary and in class time. Once we opened it up for all year 8's after completing the roster we had 100 year 8's attend. After the second year we had 200 year 8's attend the first meeting.

Richard

Out of how many students would that have been?

Heather

100 year 8's out of about 360. We usually have an intake of over 300 year 8's.

Richard

Over a third?

Heather

Yes, and this is our third year of running Mega Life. During the second year with the year 8's, we had 200 coming out of 340 or so, and now we're into the third year. We're not sure how many we'll get when we present Mega Life as a voluntary option in the middle of this year. (1991)

Richard

So, is the hope to go from year 8 all the way to year 12. Has it evolved that way?

Heather

Yes. Last year, when we opened attendance to year 9's we had a small number. This year after inviting year 9's we were getting 60 at every meeting and this was out of the 200 that initially came the year before.

Richard

How is Mega Life staffed with so many people involved in it?

Heather

Rob Adams from OAC [Outreach and Church ministries] conducts the sessions and we have always been able to get helpers via local youth leaders and other interested

people. This year we have been able to interest young tertiary Christian students. Last year, Rob Adams employed an intern for six months, who at the end of the year, directed a group of young, tertiary Christian students, and produced a play called "From Chains to Glory" specially for Mega Life. It was a play depicting creation and then God's message right through the gospels, Christ's death and resurrection to the end of time. It was similar to YWAM'S [Youth with a Mission] "Toymaker and Son". A number of those tertiary students are now keen to go on in service and we welcome them into Mega Life. They organise the games and the fun quizzes while Rob Adams presents the actual Christian message. I am especially grateful to Jono Crane and Debbie Snell for their faithful assistance.

Richard

So you try and get them involved with quizzes and fun games and use that as a vehicle to give them some sort of Christian content?

Heather

Yes, that's how it works. Our students are coming along to a Christian club voluntarily that they enjoy because the programme is lots of fun for them.

Richard

Moving from the students for a moment, do you see yourself as a Chaplain to other people in the school, or are you primarily involved with the students?

Heather

Well its true to say that primarily I am involved with the students. I see more of them. I am also available to staff and I see staff mainly in relation to student's referrals but also for personal reasons. I have had opportunity to support staff generally and I make sure that I know them all and take the chance to talk with them whenever I can.

Richard

I guess there'd be a lot of incidental work rather than just formal work.

Heather

Yes, very much so. I am very busy with students but if I had more people on my staff, spending more time with school staff is an area within which I would become more involved.

Richard

It's another area all together really isn't it?

Heather

Yes, it is, but no less important. Another area involves helping parents. As well as counselling for parents when the need arises, I have been facilitating Parent Effectiveness Training courses for the past four years.

Richard

Just briefly tell me something about those.

Heather

Parent Effectiveness Training is a course to help parents with the emotional explosions that occur in their home within relationships. Conflict resolution skills are taught and these help to increase the harmony in their home. The course encourages parents to help their child effectively when the child has a problem. It also aids parents with their own concerns, so that cooperation increases in their home. Conflicts can be resolved so that both parties win, rather than one party winning and the other losing.

Richard

Okay. Being in a school where obviously you have to be, as everyone else does, fairly careful about your place in that school, do you find there are any problems in that area or any restrictions that are placed upon you, or any restrictions that hamper you in your work?

Heather

Yes, I would say that there are restrictions. One has to be very careful to be able to fit into the school community, in a non-threatening way. From the beginning, the Principal, Mr Roy Browning, introduced me to the guidance officer, firmly saying that if I could not work with her, I could not work in the school. I appreciated this and all along I've been very careful to try to work with the guidance officer, nurse and those on the pastoral care team to make sure that I complement their roles. It is important that we work as a team, but also maintaining our own autonomy and specialisation.

Richard

So you see your role as a role that's integrated into the school system. You don't see yourself as an outsider or someone who's imposing themselves on the school system?

Heather

No I don't. I was invited to go there. My appointment was offered to the school and the school accepted it after a vote at a staff council meeting. I don't have any sense at all that I am there as an outsider. However, I am conscious that I'm not a trained teacher. Teachers are a special brand of people who naturally converse more confidently with other teachers. I feel that I do possibly miss out sometimes by not being a trained teacher. However there are staff who prefer not to have any contact with Christianity and so tend to avoid me but I don't take that personally.

Richard

Getting back to the students again. What do you think from your own experience are some of the main needs that students in high schools encounter nowadays?

Heather

Well, our high schools currently are usually very large places. There are lots of students. When students come into year 8 they can only ever hope to know a few people. They are constantly required to mix and move amongst a sea of people they don't know, which can be quite threatening. So, unless they can be friends and bond with a small group of their own, they are most miserable. This bonding to a small group is not without complications within the school community. This making and breaking of friendships can be very painful and I have many opportunities to aid groups in helping individual students or to mend their broken relationships. I would spend the majority of my time as peacemaker and mediator, assisting with conflict resolution as students struggle with their relationships.

Richard

A lot of insecurity associated with that?

Heather

Yes, there is. It has a lot to do with not really knowing their friends. If students can interact with their group they can belong. There is also insecurity within families, especially when this struggle for being one of the group outside the family causes conflict with parents. This threatens to alienate a student from home. The student is struggling with a new identity and is often torn away from the values of Mum and Dad. Frequently the student is unable to talk about these issues at home. So I try to help students to look after their relationship with Mum and Dad. I talk with parents as well, encouraging good open communication whenever it is needed.

Richard

Prior to this interview you mentioned that two areas of specific interest were pastoral counselling and the whole area of Christian entertainment. Would you like to elaborate further on these areas?

Heather

Sure. Firstly in the counselling area. When I first started, I recognised a need to be properly trained in counselling. In 1984 I attended the Clinical Pastoral Education courses conducted by the Royal Perth Hospital Chaplaincy department. The nine month course taught me how to discover the layers of my inner self. We had the opportunity to discover more about the influences that make us who we are. We examined the reasons for our own pain, so that we weren't unconsciously feeding our own needs from our counselling appointments. It was very important to sort that out. It was also very important to learn that true counselling was not so much advice-giving as helping others to solve their own problems. Each of us have that ability. Active listening and helping students to choose options, with encouragement towards Christian values, improved my counselling skills. Once students could see the problems of others relieved they would bring their troubled friends along.

Secondly, Christian entertainment. The very basic need of any student is to be accepted within a group at school. Often a student who goes to church with his/her family will have friends who do not attend church so it can be very difficult for him/her to attend an ISCF group. It is important for students to continue with their group. Breaking away for one reason or another can be extremely awkward. I found that the provision of Christian entertainment for the whole school, meant that these students could attend with their group. Rob Cain, a youth Pastor, helped me to organise this entertainment. We involved groups from Fusion, Youth for Christ, Jesus People, Youth with a Mission, Covenant Players and others. As a result Youth for Christ Campus Life, a teenage club, was conducted amongst our students by a YFC intern. This club was a great success and operated for two years. Other YFC activities included a Burger Bash, Banana Split and camps. I am very grateful for the partnership in the Gospel with YFC. Mega Life has more or less taken the place of these concerts of late.

Richard

Right, but you still have them occasionally?

Heather

Yes, but not nearly as often.

Richard

More as an event rather than something regular.

Heather

Yes.

Richard

Let's move for the moment from the pupils and from the school and look at some of your own needs as a Chaplain. What would you see as the main needs there; and I guess related to that question, how do you juggle your personal and your professional life?

Heather

Well I guess one of my basic needs is attending to the priorities and trying to comfortably manage everything I have to do. I tend to have more work than time. I'm really grateful to my family. Very early in my chaplaincy I needed to ask them to support me. They quickly became accustomed to helping out more and to being patient with regard to housework. They didn't mind. I minded more than they did. As they've grown up they've been prepared to help more and so my role as housekeeper is not nearly as broad as it was. Norman, Damien and Kylie have picked up various jobs and have accepted my agenda for housework. Sometimes when I'm exceptionally busy, have night meetings or am simply exhausted, I don't keep up as well with the house chores as I would like, they understand and help out.

Richard

So if someone contemplating Chaplaincy didn't have the support of the home environment they probably wouldn't succeed I would think, from what you're saying?

Heather

I would expect that to be the case. I have found that family support is essential. could not have proceeded without the full support of my family.

Richard

Do you think that you need to take time out to just sit back and reflect and ask yourself "where am I going, how does my family fit into this, where am I heading professionally" and so on?

Heather

I have found that I need to regularly readjust because of my inclination to work. The energy and enthusiasm constantly overrides the reality of time. I'm grateful to Norman, my husband, because he is a good manager of my time. He encourages me to prioritise properly and to know my limits. I know almost instinctively now, when I need to say no to certain opportunities for ministry.

Richard

What do you see as the future for yourself? What's your vision for the future professionally?

Heather

I'm not sure. At one stage of my chaplaincy, I thought it may have been to become a Chaplain's mentor in a supervisory role but that hasn't eventuated. I have thought that going into hospital Chaplaincy may be a possibility. I don't have any definite leading at this point in time. Until I am really sure about God's leading, I'll just continue in the environment where He has placed me. Meanwhile I am studying towards a degree in Theology part time, one unit a semester.

Richard

Through the Baptist College?

Heather

Yes, the Baptist College and Murdoch University now called the Perth College of Divinity. I have about umpteen years to go! I've rationalised my thinking; I'll be a student forever. It's a good way to seriously study the Bible. It is also good 'in service' and training on the job. Although study means added pressure I believe it is worthwhile.

Richard *Richard enters*

Heather, you were the first person to be selected as a Chaplain to the government schools. You've been doing it for almost ten years now in one school. Obviously there've been some highlights and disappointments for you during that time. Could you share one or two joys and one or two disappointments?

Heather

I guess the greatest joy was the time that I was walking down the footpath leading students to church and I was thrilled to pieces. Our principal, Mr Brendon Davies, made it possible for the whole school to go to church before Easter, in class time when he first came to Willetton. As I was walking down leading the first group of students to church, I really felt like a shepherd. It was wonderful! I felt as though I was leading students to a possible encounter with the Lord and that was superb. Of course, whenever the Lord brings a student to the point where they're ready to respond to Him as Lord and Saviour, I am always thrilled. I'm always amazed that it's happened because on the whole kids really don't want to know about God very much. But God is at work. He's still drawing people to Himself. From time to time the opportunity just drops into my lap and I am able to lead a person to Christ and that's fantastic. The follow up and the nurturing is a more difficult process but the actual leading the person to Christ is a fabulous ministry.

Richard

What about a disappointment or two?

Heather

It is unfortunate to have to work within certain restraints within the school. Students can come to see me in their own time autonomously at present. I would like students to be more able to come and talk to me but some students are inclined to misuse those opportunities and so we have to put certain restrictions on them. I would prefer more explicit Christian education in high schools. It saddens me to think that there is very little. I'd really like to see Christian education integrated across the curriculum.

Another area which saddens me very much is the failure in relationships in families that cause teenagers' lives to be destroyed. Sometimes, try as we might, irreversible damage has occurred and efforts to help prove fruitless.

At one stage a change of office caused me some potential anxiety but has turned out to be most advantageous.

Richard

Just finally, let me ask you if there's anything that you'd like to comment about or make reference to that we haven't covered in this interview?

Heather

Yes. A couple of things. Different ministry opportunities and my supervision. I am amazed at the areas God opens up for ministry. I'll just mention a few. I was encouraged for instance, when a home economics teacher invited me regularly to her Year 10 food classes to talk about the influence on food consumption in various cultures. She invited me just before Easter for several consecutive years. And of course, it was the opening within the curriculum for students to hear a little about the gospel and the part that Easter plays in food consumption. It was a wonderful opportunity to just be able to talk to students in that context.

It thrills me when those sort of opportunities come from time to time. One English teacher was lamenting the fact that students these days don't have a Biblical grounding and so he asked me to introduce the Bible's overall content to his English class. We had a good look at it all together for several lessons.

The question of creation versus evolution arises occasionally. I was invited by Social Studies teachers to talk about creation and again established that evolution needs to be viewed as a theory not as a fact. Also that belief in creation comes out of our faith in God and therefore if a person hasn't come to faith in God they will also view creation as only a theory. When the two are considered in education at the level of theory they can both be talked about openly within government schools.

There have been other opportunities as well. In the store room next to my office there is a cupboard where I can keep spare uniforms. Wearing uniform is a very important priority at Willetton High. We have 100 per cent of the students wearing uniform and so it's not at all acceptable for students to be out of uniform for any reason. Students know that instead of getting into trouble for not having their uniform they can come and borrow uniforms from my cupboard. Families donate uniforms no longer needed and lost property is washed and stored there. It is a good point of contact with the students.

I have benefitted greatly from the inclusion of supervision and support group in the CCE policy for Chaplains. My supervisor, Mrs Merle Mabury, has been a faithful advocate of my work. I am grateful to God for her. Merle has come fortnightly to pray with me and listen to both my problems and joys and I have always felt loved and uplifted by her quiet strength and Godly wisdom. God also blessed us with the supervision of Rev David Merriman for a few years and our Principal, Mr Roy Browning, and myself as we embarked on the new venture in 1983.

A support group for a Chaplain is a small group of people who regularly listen and pray with the Chaplain who selects them. Within this group there is complete confidentiality so that the Chaplain can really unload and speak his/her heart and mind about the ministry. I am indebted to Rev Bob Burton, Mrs Margaret Reid and

Mrs Bronwyn Parkin who have not only supported me in this wonderful way but have also faithfully supported my family on countless occasions and continue to do so. I praise God for these faithful servants. In more recent times I have met with others in this capacity and thank God for Mrs Lyn Seotis who comes regularly to pray with me.

Richard

Anything else?

Heather

I co-ordinate the 40 Hour Famine programme and usually have 200 or more students participating each year. Also, I am invited to go on camps from time to time. This provides wonderful opportunity to talk to students further in a non-threatening environment. Tutor group outings; I've recently secured a 'B' class bus driver's licence so I can become involved in this area more than before.

I am involved in various opportunities outside of school such as the youth lounge, which is a drop-in centre I help run on Saturday nights. We make contact with students from the school but mainly to contact those who wouldn't want to come and see me at school. Dressed in jeans and sports shirt I can come to the youth lounge, play table tennis and other games with those who come and talk with them. Working with a counselling team of other interested people from our churches is great too. It has worked well since 1987.

Speaking at engagements to churches and to other groups has always been a blessing to me. I have spoken to MOPS, [Mothers Of Pre-Schoolers], talking to them about family relationships and PET [Parent Effectiveness Training courses]. I also serve on the Chaplaincy Committee of the CCE as the representative of our Chaplains on that committee.

Richard

Overall it sounds as though being a school Chaplain has been a very challenging and rewarding life for you.

Heather

Yes, very much so.

Richard

Thank you very much Heather.

Pause and Think

1. Heather Gare has been a Chaplain at the one school for eleven years. What do you consider to be the advantages as well as the disadvantages of a Chaplain staying at the one school for that length of time?
2. How important is it for official school pastoral care-givers to verify their calling by having it confirmed by “significant others”?
3. Should various groups which are run by pastoral care-givers be offered in school time or in the students’ own time? How broadly do you interpret the term “School Curriculum”?
4. How important is it for Chaplains to familiarize themselves with para-church organizations and utilize the services which these offer (e.g. Youth With a Mission; Outreach and Church Ministries; Covenant Players, etc.)? Apart from those mentioned, of what other “support giving” organizations are you aware?
5. How important is it for pastoral care-givers not to get hooked into trying to meet their own needs through counselling situations?
6. If a pastoral care-giver operating as such in an official capacity does not have the support of his/her family in that role, should that individual continue in such a role?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Steve Goodlet served as the Chaplain at Esperance Senior High School during 1990-92. A welder by trade, Steve commenced full-time theological studies in 1985 after four years in the Army. Steve is married and has two children, Andrew and Rachel.

New Beginnings

I do not know how the Saturday paper got into our house. Normally the only time we read Saturday's paper is when we are looking for work or through the classified section, and yet there it was. As I looked through the paper I saw an advertisement for the position of Chaplain at Esperance District Senior High School. Simultaneously a number of thoughts ran through my mind: first, this was the perfect opportunity for the church to take up the challenge of reaching outside its walls into the community; secondly, it would give young people outside the church an opportunity to discover exactly what the church is about and thirdly, it would provide students with an opportunity to explore ultimate value questions or religious issues.

With these thoughts going through my head, I rang and asked for an application form. After all Esperance is an obscure place: 750 kms south east of Perth, two hours to the nearest towns and four from the next major centre. No one would apply for the position. I mean who would want to go to the end of the earth?

Because of the challenge and opportunity this job held I thought I had better apply simply because I wanted the job filled. I was not concerned that I might not get the job but rather that no one would apply for it. To make a long and interesting story short: I got the job.

September 7, 1990 was my first day at school. I started on a Thursday in order to meet the motor bike group. This group was funded by the Department of Community Services under the Country Young Offender's Prevention Program. The aim of the group was to allow "at risk" young people a chance to build their self confidence. The project involved stripping down and rebuilding motor bikes so they could race them at the Esperance speedway. Unfortunately, the students were only able to complete one bike before the funds for the course dried up. However, of the nine students that spent time on the course, four went on to pre-apprenticeships at TAFE, two found work and one came back to school.

The rest of the day I spent around the school. First, a visit to the Principal's office then out to meet the students in various classes including metalwork, physical education, typing and coming back to the staff room to meet the staff during the breaks. At the end of that day I felt lost but happy that I had started work.

Part of the "lostness" stems from the vague job description and in one sense I had no idea what I was doing or even trying to achieve. I had rolled up to school as the new Chaplain then proceeded to be the "Christian presence" in Esperance Senior High School.

At first I thought the role was similar to that of a Youth Worker or Youth Group Leader. This attitude failed to take into account the fact that I was working within a community that existed for a predetermined purpose, that of educating students and I had to work

within that environment as that had precedence over any programmes or ideas I could come up with.

The second problem with the Youth Leader idea was the school structure. All adults in the school are authority figures. They give orders and students obey them. As the youth worker in the school, I wanted to be the students' friend. This caused confusion because there is no place for a non-authoritarian adult in the school. Students didn't accept me in that role and I still don't know what staff thought.

In the early days too, I misunderstood Esperance's isolation. This beautiful place is quite literally in the middle of nowhere. Resources and contacts I had in Perth from fifteen years of youth work meant nothing. For example, Youth for Christ seminars which some Chaplains organize for their schools in Perth are impossible in Esperance simply because of the 1500 kms of travel involved.

These factors have curtailed many of the activities I thought I could have organized. I couldn't do much in terms of working with youth after school again, because of the distance students have to travel. Esperance Senior High School has a catchment area the size of Victoria and students who live close sometimes have to spend three hours a day on the bus getting to and from school. Those who live further out are required to live in at the Esperance Residential Boarding College.

Certain parts of the job were straight-forward. The earliest task I had was to get to know the students and staff of the High School. I achieved this by visiting students in classes which allowed me to participate. Opportunities soon presented themselves, such as the time I dressed up in the robes lent to me by the Lutheran Minister and conducted a wedding for the year ten Health Education students who were looking at the subject of marriage and the issues involved in the marriage contract.

Out of school hours I became involved in activities including hospital visitation, hostel visiting and other activities that allowed involvement with students. On one occasion, I went fishing with a student - caught one fish and a seagull, both with a fishing line.

This policy of attempting to be a youth worker and get alongside the students has led me to all sorts of activities that I simply would not have done in Perth; for example, I joined the Esperance-Goldfields Surf Life Saving Club. This has brought me into contact with senior students who would not normally have anything to do with me a Chaplain as it is not their scene. Secondly, the beach races are a great summer activity for young people and this gives me the perfect excuse to be down at the beach, and of course, I get a great tan too!

Another activity I am involved in is Netball umpiring. I started this in Perth but this skill has been useful in Esperance because a large number of girls who attend school

play netball. As part of the Umpiring duties one has to ensure that the scorecards are filled out correctly, included in that task is checking that the names of the players are filled in. The result is that I learn the names of students and am then able to greet the student in the High School by name.

The other major activity in which I am involved in is horse riding through the Esperance District Pony Club. I fell into this because my wife Carmen volunteered to instruct the younger riders. I go along to baby sit but there are always opportunities to meet with the riders.

All these activities have the primary aim of meeting the students who, due to time constraints at school, I simply can't meet in the school environment.

There are, of course, other things young people do that are best not to get involved in, for example, jetty jumping. This involves riding a bike off the end of the jetty into the ocean. While it is an interesting experience it did very little to enhance my status within the community. While a youth leader might have escaped without comment, I, as the High School Chaplain, couldn't.

Earlier I described a "lostness" and put it down to a vague job description and Esperance uniqueness. There was also another tension beginning. After the jetty jumping incident there came a realisation that Chaplaincy and youth work were not the same.

It has only been in the last few weeks that I have come to understand Chaplaincy not so much as the Christian presence but rather the presence of Christ in the High School, the implication being that the role of the Chaplain is primarily pastoral. In the same way the Priest or Minister represents the presence of God so too does the Chaplain of the High School. As a pastor in the church is for the building up of the congregation, so too my role is to build up the students.

It has taken me twelve months to realize this and I still need to work through the implications of this new understanding. Yet in the midst of all the uncertainty that I have been experiencing God has been with me and good work has been done.

The first concern which confronts new Chaplains is their District Council. Esperance District Christian Education Resource Council is made up of representatives of nine local churches plus representatives of Parents and Citizens Associations from the High School and the High School's feeder Primary Schools. The Esperance District Council has two responsibilities; namely, maintaining and overseeing the Special Religious Instruction programme in the primary schools and the Chaplaincy programme in the High School.

My family's first encounter with the District Council was during the two-day interviewing process. During one lunch-time my wife and I were invited to lunch to meet the District Council. Danni Woolhead, the wife of the Chairman of the District Council, had packed for my wife and me a wonderful lunch which went neglected simply because we spent lunch-time talking to all these people. It was wonderful but at the end of it we were left drained and hungry. Those same people had anticipated this and allowed Carmen and me to spend a few hours composing ourselves for the interview with the selection committee.

That was a very long day. I got the job and moved to Esperance. I hired a furniture truck to move our household gear. We left Perth at 8.00 am anticipating an eight-hour drive arriving in Esperance about 4.00 - 4.30 p.m. The trip took eleven hours and my family arrived in Esperance at 7.30 that night to be met by a large number of people who had been waiting since 4.30 that afternoon to help us move our furniture into the house.

This was the first of many demonstrations of the support that my wife and I were to receive from various members of the District Council. I mentioned this only to provide background to one of the pressures I, as a new Chaplain, faced. The pressure is that the District Council places a great deal of trust in the person they select as Chaplain, for in the placing of a Chaplain in a High School, the District Council is saying that they are concerned about our students and wants them to have every possible help and encouragement at school. The Esperance District Council chose me to be their representative at the High School, and the sense of responsibility became very real.

One learns to live with the pressure of that undertaking but never escapes from it, particularly in a small country town. There is simply nowhere to hide, no place to be one's self, unless of course one is a saint. I do not claim to have come to that point in my spiritual journey! To cope with that pressure it became imperative that there be some support. Through prayer and quietness, through a care team (people who have been set aside by the District Council to be a sounding board for ideas and concerns but most importantly feedback on how the work is going), and a supportive wife and family, I gathered my much needed support.

The other pressure that is exerted by a District Council is the differing perceptions of what the Chaplain ought to be doing in the High School. In general, because a District Council is made up of different groups and churches, there can exist within that group different ideas about what a Chaplain should do and be. This is a pressure of which the Esperance District Council is aware, and great efforts have been made to set me at peace by suggesting that my job is simply to get alongside the students and be a pastor and friend to those who have need.

I have spent a good deal of time on some of the issues I have confronted as a Chaplain and this is because I'm only in my first year of chaplaincy. However, there have been good times. Inter-School Christian Fellowship is great. Nine or so of us meet every Tuesday lunch-time and have a time of sharing. This group has "stuck with me" over the last twelve months and we are just starting to work together toward particular goals like an abseiling camp, and sponsoring a child through Save An Orphan. Next year looks full of promise.

One thing I enjoy about being a Chaplain rather than a teacher, is the little extra things I can do; for example, I joined the school band as a trombone player. I also hold a bus driver's licence so I was able to go on the Music camp that the school held. This camp was basically a trip around the South West of WA giving a series of concerts at a number of places including Albany, Busselton and Bunbury.

Nearly half of the Esperance School Band profess a Christian commitment. This commitment was demonstrated on the camp in the most wonderful of ways. Several students who came on this camp did so without their friends and for the first six hours of the bus ride felt quite left out. This continued until we got to the first campsite where students who were aware of the problem simply invited these lonely students to join in with them.

Everywhere we went comments were made about the students' behaviour, attitudes and camaraderie. I came away from that camp on a high knowing something of the experience of Elijah who felt that he was the only one who was prepared to be faithful to God until God reminded him that there were in fact 7,000 others in Israel whom God had kept for Himself. There are students in this school who take their Christian commitment seriously and live by the demands which that makes on their lives in the school scene. I feel blessed to be part of that scene, and hope that the love of Christ will reach many others as a result of my ministry.

Pause and Think

1. God often calls individuals to fill positions in the strangest of ways! Have you ever received a “potential” call? How can we know whether or not a calling is “for real”?
2. What grants etc. are available through Government bodies which would assist with the work in which you’re currently engaged?
3. What can a care-giver living in an isolated area do to ensure that personal morale is maintained? Are there any advantages associated with isolation?
4. The comment was made that “the role of the Chaplain is primarily pastoral”. Is this an accurate evaluation?
5. How important is it for any pastoral care-giver to develop a supportive network around him/herself?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



My name is Sandra Heine. I have been a Chaplain at Hedland Senior High School for seven months. I work there three days per week. I am married with five children: two step-daughters, two sons and one daughter. At the moment I am fellowshipping at Shilo Pentecostal Church, South Hedland. My hobbies include sewing, craft, poetry and listening to music.

The First Six Months of Chaplaincy

Firstly, I need to explain that I have only been a Chaplain for seven months and my description of Chaplaincy work is somewhat limited. One reason for the limitation being the time element and the other the isolation of living in Port Hedland. There are no other Chaplains in the North West with whom to compare and share ideas, reach out or receive support or encouragement so I can only share some of my lessons and findings of my journey in the first six months.

The initial shock of this calling on my life as a High School Chaplain put me into a state of “awe” arguing with myself and the Lord

“Do you mean me?”

Here I am with no Bachelor Degree, my academic level of education was just average twenty five years ago and with a low level of self-confidence. All I had to offer was my love for the Lord and willingness to walk in faith and obedience, and my life experiences. I had lived with five entirely different teenagers; been through the “School of Hard Knocks”; had lots of counsel, ministry, and read every book I could and went to any workshop available on Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Self Development. Any possible positive step I could take toward wholeness I would, in either a secular or Christian sense. There was just an inner yearning to get off the road of self-destruction and rebuild a new life. So after reflecting on where I am and where I’ve been, I could understand why the Lord called me for the task and decided to walk in faith, obedience and “TRUST”.

In the first month or so I found the anxiety of being over ambitious needed to be addressed constantly. I had to talk to myself and say “Gently, Gently”. The desire was great to do my job well and to change and cure the heartaches and problems of these teenagers especially when you know the power of God. Here I was with a Ministry of “Hope and Healing” without wanting to come across as a Bible basher.

There is a frustration from time to time from the politics of the calling and learning to work within the system, trying not to step on people’s toes and threaten their job identity. I found there is time for putting “OK” messages on myself because society sometimes puts Chaplains in a little box. “They are supposed to have grey hair and wear white collars”. I learnt how important it was to be yourself, use your creative gifts, your natural social ability, and earn credibility by using any opportunity you can as an out-reach for ministry. In my case I used craft, ballroom dancing, poetry and my social skills. After some years of hairdressing you learn to be a good sounding board and have a good idea of social problems. I found there can be a trap we can fall into, everyone has their own perception of what Chaplains should be doing and their expectations vary so much, sometimes we run around doing what we think is right, meeting people’s expectations as well as our own, that we tend to forget that we should be a **being** person not a **doing** person, so that we can be a lamp for the Lord. As I

mentioned before, I used my creative gifts for outreach. In craft, I found it to be an excellent recreation and social interaction time, in a non-threatening environment. I started by advertising in the school's daily notices and used "St. Valentine's Day" as my theme. From there I used Mother's Day and Easter until credibility was earned and I gained access to funding and wholesale goods which gave a wider variety of items to make at low cost. The most rewarding thing I found was to watch the girls enjoying themselves and see self-confidence growing.

The same applied for ballroom dancing. I used the school ball as my opportunity to create an interest until the idea started to grow even among staff members. Another area I have become involved in is support classes where the students get specialized teaching. Some "Tender Loving Care" goes a long way in an environment like this - I find you get to know the students personally.

I always make a point of saying "Hello" to staff members and have an occasional chat if I am not distracting them. I quite often chat to the tea lady and the gardener when he is doing some work. I try to make a point of approaching someone if they look sad or unwell, giving them an opportunity to talk about it, while at the same time not prying. If I see a staff member walking when I am driving I will stop and offer them a lift if I have time.

As far as student's work is concerned, if there is a particular piece of work which catches my eye I will remark to the teacher, ask the name of the student and remember it as best I can so that if the student crosses my path I can compliment them on their work.

Sports carnivals are another way of becoming known, even though I am not sports orientated. I will lend a hand in some aspect of organization to enhance staff and student relationships.

I found manual arts to be an easy way to communicate with the students without distracting them too much. If the teacher introduces you to the class it can really open some doors for ministry.

I found my resource library to be a good outreach point - it gives me insight into where people are at by the books they borrow. Quite often, the book will set off a catalytic reaction emotionally and will give the person encouragement to seek counsel and me an opportunity to witness or share a part of myself or my experiences.

My poetry collection is a great asset. I try to remember who likes poetry and posters so if I come across a new one I will share it with them. Most poems I photocopy to give away. I also collect awareness booklets and pamphlets and leave them in the front foyer of the school for reading material and change them every week. Some of them

disappear but at least people are taking something worthwhile, so I just pray the Lord will minister through whatever they take.

Another way I get involved is in peer support programmes so that I can get to know the students and staff on a deeper level. Any programme that is running I endeavour to find out about and weigh up whether or not it is beneficial to me and the student or staff before I make a commitment.

I also roster myself on duty at our house centre which is a place where students go to check in and out for appointments outside of school or when they are late. It is an excellent place to learn their names and introduce myself. Our school has now started a breakfast programme for students - another good way to rub shoulders with them.

I have joined the Student Services team and we have weekly meetings to keep in touch with each other and address problems as a team. There are many ways to be noticed and to be a servant of the Lord but I believe in sticking to your own capabilities and interests and being sincere because teenagers are perceptive and will see through hypocrisy.

I find outreaches challenge me to take risks. I am growing, helping others and learning to trust God at a deeper level.

There is also a time for finding out which resources are available to you within the community e.g. government departments, churches and the general public. I meet with people from these groups occasionally to share my role and my progress and try to be sensitive to their response to me. I find as a situation arises it challenges me to reach out for support or guidance for myself or the student involved. It also broadens my network of people and resources. Any community meetings involving youth, that I am invited to, I try to attend.

I believe that goal setting is important and needs to be relevant to the needs of the school. It's hard sometimes to keep them realistic but you soon learn your limits and boundaries within the system because your day is sometimes unstructured and you can be called upon at any-time, you feel like you have achieved nothing.

I suppose one of the hardest lessons to learn is to accept criticism, mistakes, failures and disappointments - looking at them realistically, trying again with positive self-talk to rebuild confidence, trusting the Lord and getting on with what you were called to do.

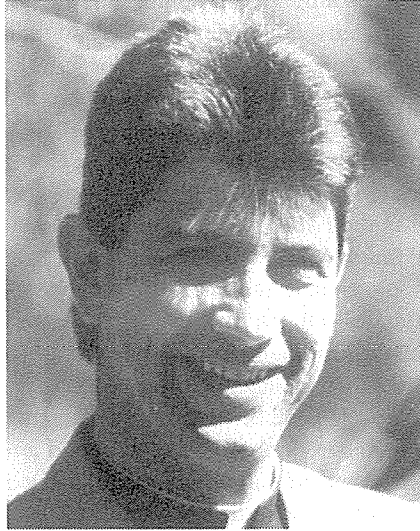
Last but not least, there are the joys of the job - to feel accepted in your role, the school teachers seeing you as human, cracking jokes even relevant to your job, the students popping into your office to say Hello!, a wave across the school grounds while outside among their peers. Church members willing to contribute financially and prayerfully are a blessing. My biggest enjoyment is seeing students being so open with me, it tells

me there is a sense of trust developing, and of course, to simply sit down and pray with them is just great. I found one of my greatest fulfillments is to sit with them while watching a film with a gospel message and sense the Holy Spirit moving in their hearts. The ultimate experience is when they surrender themselves to the Lord if even in a quiet way. The fulfillment that floods your heart far outweighs any hardship and heartache you may come across in the task that the Lord has assigned. Even though I have only been a Chaplain a short time, I realize how important my role is and intend to do it to the best of my ability and to draw on God's strength and spirit continually.

Pause and Think

1. Should care-givers in a school be mature, experienced individuals who possess a sound knowledge base, or are there other criteria of greater importance?
2. The comment is made that it is important to "be yourself" How true is this? Should care-givers "be themselves" or are they obligated to project a certain image - an image which is based upon others' expectations?
3. What business do Chaplains have in mixing in curriculum areas such as craft, manual arts, dancing, poetry and the development of social skills? Isn't this the prerogative of the teachers?
4. How appropriate is it for anyone who is involved with students in a pastoral capacity, to see their role as being many faceted - e.g. Chaplain = "Christian presence" + youth worker + student counsellor + social worker?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Brother Michael Horsley belongs to the Brothers of St. Gerard Majella, a religious congregation within the Catholic Church dedicated to the work of religious education in Government Schools. He is a trained teacher and has worked in both the Catholic and Government Education systems in NSW and the Government system in WA at Primary and Secondary level. His educational experience has also branched into adult education. He is currently Assistant Director of Personnel and Curriculum, Secondary Government Schools for the Archdiocese of Sydney (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) where he has been since 1988. As a Member of the Australian College of Education he has a keen interest in developments in education. His further interests include family history (having finalised a book on his own family), and coaching school rugby league.

Contemporary Education and the Chaplain

Describing 'education' as a process by which information is transmitted from one person to another is a narrow descriptive, one that neglects other aspects of humanity beyond that of the intellectual. Contemporary education endeavours to adopt a holistic approach which embraces the total person: the intellectual, social, physical, psychological/emotional and spiritual dimensions, as the subject of its educative process. If education is to be true to itself and authentic it must attempt to address the total needs of the individual in an effort to support the balanced growth of that individual. Such attempts are more likely to succeed in schools where the 'climate' reflects a genuine care as top priority, supported unashamedly with interest, enthusiasm and dedication by the entire school staff, both academic and ancillary. A school that is serious about its holistic educative role (ground in Pastoral Care) cannot in principle nor conscience ignore the spiritual dimension. To address this area is essential (as with any other aspect of human development) if the school is to adequately fulfil its role as an authentic contemporary educational organisation, supporting an individual's balanced growth, enabling them to become fully human and fully alive. The school Chaplain attempts to address, in a particular way, the spiritual dimension and, therefore, has an appropriate and essential place in contemporary education. This paper will focus on the relationship between the Chaplain and contemporary education as it was experienced by this author at Newton Moore Senior High School, Bunbury, Western Australia, in the years 1983-85 - the infant years of this Chaplaincy project which began in 1983.

Education has undergone a transformation over the last fifty years, at least in theory if not in practice. Paulo Friere outlines the contrast between two approaches to Education: the banking concept and the problem posing concept. The banking concept is very much as its title suggests, simply an approach that requires the teacher to deposit information. This implies blind unquestioning acceptance on the part of the receiver. Friere argues that this approach is an insult to human dignity. Alternatively, in the problem posing concept "the teacher is no longer merely 'the one-who-teaches', but one who is himself taught in dialogue with students who in their turn while being taught will teach" (1970:144). In identifying such contrasting approaches to education and advocating the problem posing concept as the most desirable, Friere reflects current pedagogical thinking, and the overt concept of what education truly involves.

In further addressing the formal curriculum, the main focus of contemporary developments in pedagogy, according to Graham English, is that the educative role, at least in part, is an 'invitation to imagination', developing within the students the desire to think (1985: 45). The type of thinking desired is both imaginative and creative; as Michael Warren would describe it 'a critical consciousness' evoking thoughtfulness and reflectiveness (1982: 58). The teacher, a humanizer of knowledge, therefore, becomes a translator rather than a transmitter of knowledge. Much of the emphasis, in the formal curriculum, upon creative thinking, was not only a reaction against the 'banking

concept' of education as expressed in the past, but also a response to the recent developments in psychology, philosophy and sociology. Such developments have exposed the contemporary educator to new insights into human development (especially of the adolescent), both as a personal process and in relationship to social change. The onset of modernity, with its dominant feature the 'electronic estate', has demanded the demise of the uncritical reception of information in favour of a critical consciousness and creative thinking. Michael Warren urgently calls for this revolution because as he states, "Today we tend to be so immersed in narrative, especially through the electronic media, that as a culture we tend towards a diminished analytical ability" (1982: 60). This same urgency is apparent in the thinking of many contemporary educationalists who see that young people today seem to be moving back to an oral culture. On this point Warren suggests that the young are "deficient in objectivity and high in subjectivity, deficient in analytical ability and high in descriptive ability" (1982: 60). This cultural reversal is due primarily to the electronic media which often dominates the lives of the young. Emphasis upon creative, critical thinking is an attempt to turn the tide not in an authoritarian, controlling manner, but in the setting of relationship.

There would be few educationalists who would not endorse the absolute necessity of an appropriate 'climate' as the essential ingredient for the successful execution of modern education endeavours. The teacher as the translator, who has the responsibility of exposing the pupils to the wonders of creative thinking, does so by setting up a relationship with students, thus establishing a positive climate (Dwyer 1988: 24). This is done on the 'micro' level by individual teachers in the classroom, and at the 'macro' level by the entire staff with a common vision. The establishment of a school climate permeates the individual classes not only in terms of relevance in content and method, but also addresses the effects of creative and critical thinking beyond the academic. By issuing the 'invitation to imagination' as a counter-cultural measure to the effects of the electronic estate, one begins to open a 'can of worms', to use a colloquialism. Whilst reflecting critically on the formal curriculum their new found consciousness will invariably focus upon society and their own personal relationship to it. This in itself will raise more than ever the questions related to personal identity and the meaning and purpose of life. Idealism is evident in their critical analysis and in it a searching for a sense of belonging, community and overall acceptance and love. Such questions and needs surface with unprecedented vigour and depth of reflection when one has developed a critical consciousness and is able to employ creative analysis. Contemporary education, more than ever, reveals the scope that education embraces in practice if it is going to be authentic and true to itself. It is a holistic education which embraces the psychological/emotional, intellectual, social, physical and spiritual dimensions of human development. The modern school must, therefore, cater for all such needs in order to fulfil its educational obligations.

Newton Moore Senior High School was a school that in the early 1980's became very aware of its total educational responsibilities. The staff were not only endeavouring to implement the most recent developments in pedagogy, but were very conscious of the increasing psychological/ emotional, social and, indeed, spiritual needs of its students. These students were often from the lower socio-economic levels of the community growing up in a modern electronic world. The school had, prior to the establishment of the Chaplaincy, a pastoral care network to deal with the perceived needs of the students. The Guidance Officer, Youth Education Officer, School Nurse and several members of staff took on the role of counsellor and adviser to a number of students in addition to their regular responsibilities. They worked together in association with the 'house centre' where these staff members gave of their free time to record merit or house points in acknowledgement of student efforts, and provided a listening ear for the troubled and those in trouble. However, the school saw an even greater need at the time that had to be addressed in an effort to be true educators and a caring community.

It was at this time that Newton Moore adopted William Glasser's Ten Step approach to behaviour modification. This programme required for success the complete acceptance and involvement of all staff - a common vision. The approach was established providing a positive climate based on relationship between all individuals on campus. Glasser's Ten Steps provided opportunities for self evaluation of both teachers and students, and acknowledged the acceptance of personal responsibility. The nature of the process provided for continual and consistent care for all students in the school. Having established its pastoral care foundation with the total commitment of all staff, the arrival of a Chaplain was a welcome addition to the school to, in a sense, complete the educational team.

The school staff were by and large very open and accepting of a Chaplain, although not without some apprehension. However, they had already begun to cultivate a climate based on relationship and acceptance, a real sense of pastoral care. The pastoral care perspective is established on three fundamental principles: word, example and presence. The 'word' is the basic means of communication for the educator. It is the way in which material is related so that it is relevant to the needs of the students. Words also establish values and responsibility as they are articulated by staff in discipline and conversation. Verbal communication, if it is to be effective, should be exciting, creative and enthusiastic. Enthusiasm is contagious and seeks a similar response in those who experience its effect. However, words have little substance unless supported by example. Example emerges from personal belief or principle and identity. If actions do not support the words then credibility is lost, as is indeed the effectiveness of the words. More notice is taken of an individual's actions rather than the words. Inconsistency breeds contempt and indifference, not ideal for success in

communication and relationship. The combination of word and example provides credibility and a sense of honesty which is admired by the young in a relationship.

However, it is in 'presence' that one really touches the caring heart. In being present to another, one is accepting and acknowledging that person; one is prepared to 'be' for another. It is in this combination of word, example and presence, equal in importance and dependent upon each other, that one discovers what is essential to pastoral care. This approach to pastoral care implies an interest in and concern for the total individual, attentive to the needs of another no matter from where those needs may emerge. It is the basis for the establishment of relationship which embraces an understanding of the needs of the young and an awareness of self in dealing with the young. It is with the genuine engagement of these elements of pastoral care that the climate may be established, one based on mutual respect, understanding and acceptance, making effective relationships possible. The climate is largely the product of the informal (hidden) curriculum. The greatest impact comes when the principles are actively embraced as a common vision by all school staff. These principles in the establishment of climate for effective education are in keeping with recent developments in pedagogy. They were very evident and operational in the Newton Moore school community during the years 1983, 84, and 85. Such principles were also in keeping with the ideals associated with the concept of a school Chaplaincy. With a particular emphasis upon the spiritual, the Chaplaincy role addressed a dimension of personal development that was often neglected in schools. Yet, if education is indeed holistic, then this cannot be ignored. Therefore, Chaplains in Western Australian schools have an essential and definite place in education in the modern world.

Students responded positively and affectionately to my presence in their school as a non-threatening confidant. My position enabled me to deal with a number of situations which were often beyond the scope of the ordinary staff - dealing with outside parental problems, family tragedy and school tragedy. Often when tragedy struck, either with individuals or the school as a whole, there was a sense of relief that the Chaplain was there to handle the situation, to offer consolation to individuals and families or to the whole school through prayer assemblies and so on. In the many problems and questions that were presented to me it was obvious that these young people were the products of contemporary education surrounded by the electronic estate of modernity. They were young people confronted with the ultimate questions of life and of love, and very critical of their social environment. The questions of love and belonging, meaning and purpose, and personal identity all touch upon the spiritual and need to be addressed, along with other aspects of human development, if our young people are to grow in a balanced way to become fully human, fully alive human beings.

During the first two years of the Chaplaincy at Newton Moore a staff survey was conducted by the Research Branch of the Western Australian Education Department

on the general acceptance of the project. Of the 37 responses (57.8% of teachers), 35 (94.6%) recognized the importance of the Chaplain in the school, 1 was not sure and another did not accept the Chaplain (2.7%). By and large the comments were very positive and supportive of the role. Some of the comments included:

He is a pleasant smiling face in a totally non-discipline role and gives students a 'friend' to turn to.

He is not offended visibly by nasty students or comments.

It makes the students more aware of the school as a caring place.

Students with problems have someone outside the school to talk to who has the reputation of being helpful.

A focal point for lost children in the system.

(Hyde and Tame 1984: 57)

Other comments related to being an 'ear' for staff and that the position should be a full-time one (at the time it was only part-time). Since this survey was conducted, including the years that I was there, the role of the Chaplain has become more acceptable and highly valued by most of the staff and students. This became most obvious towards the end of 1984 when the school faced the tragic death of a young staff member. Hospitalised in Perth he never came out of a coma after suffering a head injury. I liaised between the family, hospital and the school in an effort to console and keep people informed as to what was happening. Since then, I believe the Chaplaincy has reached new heights.

The recognition of the special place of the spiritual dimension in the education of young people is continuing throughout the country. In a recent publication by the New South Wales Department of Education called **The Values We Teach**, it established a core set of values. Under the heading 'Values Relating to Education', the document states:

“. . . All public schools are expected to promote the following attitudes and behaviours which reflect a core of values that are generally supported by the community of N.S.W.

- * accepting the importance of learning,
- * encouraging curiosity and the questioning mind,
- * setting definite goals and high standards and clearly communicating them,
- * encouraging and rewarding effort, achievement and excellence,
- * promoting logical and critical thinking based on evidence,

- * encouraging imagination and creativity,
- * demonstrating a commitment to truth,
- * encouraging the search for meaning and purpose in life,
- * appreciating the importance of spiritual values,
- * recognising the partnership between school, home and community in education,
- * appreciating the importance and basic principles of parenting,
- * seeing the close links between education, work and personal fulfilment,
- * fostering interpersonal, practical and vocational skills and appreciation of technology,
- * seeing education as a life-long process.

(1991: 6)

These values not only reflect contemporary developments in pedagogy, but depict clearly the wide scope of education. The document addresses further values relating to self and others, and civil responsibility to complete that scope. These values embrace a holistic approach within which the spiritual dimension is stressed as part of the education praxis, a discovery made and acted upon in Newton Moore Senior High School some eight years ago.

Recent developments in pedagogy, therefore, highlights as an essential feature of effective education, the climate, not only embracing the classroom but the whole school community. The principles of pastoral care - word, example, presence - which promote relationship through mutual respect, understanding and acceptance, contribute to establishing this climate. The Newton Moore Senior High School Chaplaincy experience highlights the holistic nature of education by addressing, in a particular way, the importance of the spiritual dimension so often ignored in the arena of public education. The success of the Chaplaincy in this school, and the emphasis upon spiritual values from the New South Wales Department of Education, suggests strongly that such a dimension can no longer be ignored, but must take its rightful place beside other educational values. Therefore, Chaplaincy and any system that promotes and cares for the spiritual dimension of human life, has not only an appropriate but an essential place in contemporary education as it is currently defined.

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Pause and Think

1. How can "education" be defined in a way which gives a high profile to the arena of pastoral care?
2. Does pastoral care-giving fit better into the Banking or the problem-posing concept as far as your philosophy of education is concerned?
3. Are you familiar with the work of William Glasser in the area of behaviour management? Is Glasser's approach compatible with the humanistic bent of most pastoral care-givers?
4. "Word, example, presence" were cited as the principles upon which pastoral care was established. Do you see these three elements as principles which are confined to formal pastoral care-givers or can they be interpreted more broadly than that?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Sylvia Kelly has been employed as a Chaplain at Warwick Senior High School since 1988. She is married with 11 children (4 from her first marriage and 7 stepchildren). Since all except 2 are married she also has 11 grandchildren. She has been involved in youth work as a teacher, ISCF leader, Church youth group leader, and CSSM Beach Missions over many years. More recently she has worked with ex-prisoners and street kids, trained in Clinical Pastoral Education and did four years part-time hospital Chaplaincy. She is also a professional florist and works in that capacity one day a week when she is not at school. Her church involvement as Elder, Parish Councillor, Christian Education Co-ordinator etc. has ceased now that she is a Chaplain. She enjoys fellowship at Greenwood Uniting Church.

God, in the Dust of the Road

Jesus walked the dusty roads of Palestine. He sat on a well with an outcast Samaritan woman. He publicly accepted, was seen with and ate a meal with a hated tax collector; he walked with grieving people as they buried their dead; he cried with those who had lost loved ones; he identified with and was hung alongside criminals; he welcomed and talked with community leaders who genuinely wanted to talk with him - even though it needed to be at night. But he also challenged concepts and values and he put his power and energy to work where people were oppressed. He embodied the reality of the message that God so loved that He came in human form to where humans **are**.

A Chaplain is a Christian presence in the school - somebody who embodies in human form the reality of genuine acceptance, unconditional love and the good of the person, whether it be the school's worst "ratbag", the school "slut", the senior master, the single parent living de facto, or the school Principal. Someone who stands outside of systems and their labels and judgements on individuals, and yet can work with and within systems for the wholeness of damaged, lost, unhappy individuals and dysfunctional, angry, hurting, disintegrating families, peer groups and classes.

What is it like to be a Chaplain where the people **are**? In my school it's full time availability. My time is fully booked by voluntary visits - students, staff, parents who need someone who will **listen**, and really care and **hear**. Someone who is a human being on an equal footing and who is very aware of their own humanness and will not judge or condemn failure, weakness, fear and doubt, is apparently hard to find.

Availability on campus without the red tape and hassle of trying to make psychologists appointments and waiting 4 weeks or longer to get in, is one of the special things about Chaplaincy. The Chaplain is the only person in the school with no set programmes who is available full time for "being there" for people. Appointments are made during class as well as out of class time, and grateful teachers have somewhere to send or bring distressed students and parents - or to come themselves.

A Chaplain's day in our school is totally unpredictable. The whole day can be booked out with ongoing support appointments and at 8.30 am a distressed student can turn up with "my friend tried to commit suicide last night and I don't know what to do". Some time ago the whole school was thrown into trauma after receiving news of the murder of 2 of our girls and the Chaplain was looked to as "the one who knows what to do with grief and death". A "whole school funeral" coinciding with the actual funeral, and much crisis support, followed.

What specifically have I been involved in over the last three years? Kids running away from home or being told to leave and finding alternative accommodation and/or family support; communication breakdown between parents and students; family break-ups and the parent and child grief that follows; death in families; long term illness; suicide threats; anorexia issues; ethnic family stress in an Australian culture; pregnancy;

sexually transmitted diseases; school bullying; Girlfriend/Boyfriend stress; cancer; AIDS grief; staff stress; alcoholism; religious persecution; school refusers and truancy; "Embryo Crimes" - students with characteristics which will inevitably lead them into a life of crime if not helped; incest victims; peer group out-of-control behaviour; blended family stress; parents who are helpless to control kids; stress caused by overly high expectations by parents; violence in the home; teacher student conflict; imprisonment of family members; anger and it's results and causes; isolate students; friendship pressures - especially in Year 9 groups and the effect on classes; drugs; grief reactions from frequent changes of address and school and country; the whole area of the search for meaning; issues of identity and purpose; the occult and satanism; the search for what is beyond the material world. All of these have been my arena of involvement. Throughout, the reality of God in there, loving people, healing, reaching out, reconciling, and drawing people to Himself in their search, has been my daily experience.

As well as all of this, a Chaplain represents all the Churches in the area and is the extension of each Church into the school. The Chaplain links kids into youth groups and holiday camps and where possible seminars and input drama. The Chaplain is the contact person to and from community support agencies with knowledge of the network of agencies and groups available for help.

The Chaplain also focuses the drawing together of Christians in the school - staff and students - for their mutual support.

The experiences in every-day Chaplaincy would fill a book. A tight-rope walk involving liaison between staff/students, student/student, staff/parent, staff/administration, as well as working for 2 simultaneous authorities (Ministry of Education and Churches' Commission on Education) with multiple accountability, makes the job even more of a challenge. Jesus' comment of being wise as serpents and innocent as doves is very apt!

Finally, being a Chaplain in the foreground of where it's all happening is a bit like Jesus' Garden of Gethsemane experience. Other people, like Jesus' disciples, can be "with you" only so far. The rest of the way you are "in there" alone with God. Church people are very caring and supportive but they tend to say "wow, it's rough out there isn't it. We live such sheltered lives we don't really understand, but the Church should be out there so it's good that you are. We'll pray for you". It's then that a Chaplain feels just a little of what Jesus felt when He left the comfort of Heaven and entered the world of humans.

When I see the changes in young people's lives, it's all worth it and I wouldn't be anywhere else. Chaplaincy is one of the biggest privileges and special opportunities of twentieth century Church ministry - reaching people who would never go near a Church and who are the leaders and Mums and Dads of tomorrow.

Pause and Think

1. What is the difference between “listening” and “hearing”? How important is this distinction for pastoral care-givers?
2. Re-examine the paragraph in which Chaplain Kelly gives you a vignette into her arenas of concern. Ought Chaplains to be seen as experts in all human relationship issues? What can a Chaplain do who doesn't have the answers?
3. The maintaining of client confidentiality is obviously important for any Chaplain. This being the case, how can a Chaplain, or for that matter any pastoral care-giver, “dump” all the burdens which they carry. Who cares for the care-giver?



Graham Lawn has been a part-time Chaplain in three Primary Schools as explained in the article. He served as an ordained Pastor in the Methodist, Uniting and Assemblies of God Churches over a period of 25 years. He is married with two children and is currently worshipping at the Manjimup Four Square Church. He now teaches remedial reading at a Catholic College and does some relief teaching. His interests include cricket, football and most sports, as well as gardening.

Pioneering in Primary Schools

1. **INTRODUCTION**

I have been a Chaplain in three Primary Schools in a very limited capacity, averaging 1.0 - 1.5 hours per week in each school.

I was involved at Hampton from April 1985 to March 1986, Bridgetown from February 1988 to July 1988 and in Greenbushes from April 1988 to December 1989.

In each school I pioneered the Chaplaincy work so there were no definite guide-lines to follow. No-one else had done any Chaplaincy work in WA Primary Schools when I commenced at Hampton in 1985.

2. **ADMINISTRATION**

a) **Initiatives**

At the Hampton school the initiative for Chaplaincy came from the Parents and Citizens (P & C) body which had discerned particular social and spiritual needs for its children. After prayer and discussion with the church I was leading, I applied for the position.

In both Bridgetown and Greenbushes schools I offered my services after becoming aware of certain needs in those schools through my Scripture teaching.

b) **The Role of the Principal**

In each school the Principal was supportive, with one Principal being most enthusiastic. Indeed, I believe that the Chaplaincy couldn't work without the Principal's support.

Through discussion with each Principal it was agreed that only children from certain classes could visit the Chaplain. Usually these children were from school years 4-7 although a few Year 3 children with special needs did come.

The Principal communicated the Chaplain's role to his teachers in staff meetings. I think I was invited to only one staff meeting and do not recall asking if I could attend others.

c) **The Role of Teachers**

Some teachers were more supportive than others. However, I was not aware of any teachers in the three schools who actively opposed the Chaplain and his work. I found a few who were not sure of my role.

Generally the teachers released the students at those times (all pm) when they wished to see the Chaplain. Occasionally a teacher would suggest to a certain student that he/she could benefit from a visit to the Chaplain. However, attendance was entirely voluntary.

On only one occasion did a teacher misunderstand the Chaplain's role and ordered a troublesome child to go. That misunderstanding was soon rectified!

d) **Publicity**

Initially the Principal communicated to parents concerning the Chaplain's appointment and role in the school. Next, I visited the relevant classes to meet all the students and to explain my role.

One Principal put a reminder to students over the PA system on both the day before I came and the day itself. This gave the children time to think about any issues.

e) **Provision of Space**

None of the schools had a spare room which could be allocated entirely for the Chaplain's use. Usually there was a fairly permanent base to operate from. Nevertheless, there was quite a variety of spaces provided such as a library, empty classroom, staff room, Principal's office, storeroom, sick bay and open verandah. All of these areas were prone to interruptions by staff and students.

f) **Christian Resource Council (CRC)**

The CRC (also known as the District Council), consists of representatives from the local churches which are involved in supporting the Chaplaincy programme.

When I commenced the work at Hampton I was endorsed by the local CRC. I made verbal reports to this Council from time to time. The only remuneration was reimbursement for phone calls and no other was expected.

When I offered to do Chaplaincy in the Bridgetown and Greenbushes Schools I was endorsed by the local Ministers' Fraternal, because a CRC had not yet been established. It was a nice gesture when the CRC and the P & C of one school agreed to my request to be reimbursed for travelling. Other expenses such as the cost of Bibles were also covered.

When the Bridgetown - Greenbushes CRC was inaugurated I always provided written reports on the Chaplaincy, whether I could attend meetings or not.

g) The Churches' Commission on Education (CCE)

Before commencing at Hampton I was interviewed by the Chaplaincy committee and given the "green light". When I started in the other two schools, the Committee's endorsement was simply transferred to those schools.

Official approval in writing from the Education Ministry always came long after I'd started the Chaplaincy work.

In later years the CCE required reports from the Chaplain each term. These I found difficult to compile because of my limited involvement. Nevertheless, they afforded good opportunities to review progress and to set goals.

Because I was a full-time church minister during the period of my Chaplaincy, I was not able to attend any of the retreats for Chaplains. This was regrettable because the fellowship and cross-fertilisation of ideas would have been invaluable.

h) Role of the Supervisor

It was essential to nominate your personal supervisor, approved by the CCE from the outset. I found each supervisor to be a person who helped me reflect on progress and to offer practical suggestions.

i) Prayer Support

Much encouragement and direction resulted from the faithful prayers of Christians in local churches and members of the CRC. Only eternity will reveal their great contribution to this work.

j) A Further Comment

The reader will have observed the degree of administration required to establish and support a Chaplain doing only 1.0 - 1.5 hours per week. However, it was all essential and also re-assuring for me to know that such structures were operating.

3. **THE COUNSELLING TIME**

a) **Relationships**

Students arrived for counselling either as individuals or in twos and sometimes threes. It appeared that a student might need a friend for moral support or the group may have had a common concern. It was important to assure the students of confidentiality from my side.

After some months in a school it became apparent that a core of students had become "regulars". Other students might only come once or twice, either because the need had been met, or perhaps because they felt that I couldn't help them any further.

b) **Attitudes of Students**

Nearly always the students came for genuine reasons and were able to focus on the issue. Only a few times students came in order to get out of class work. A few younger students had no perceived need and apparently came just to talk to a friendly person. (Perhaps that is in itself a valid reason!).

c) **Chaplain's Approach**

I endeavoured to listen carefully for the problem or question and be reflective in a non-judgemental way. I would suggest possible courses of action and help the student clarify what he/she proposed to do.

When necessary I would ask how the child felt about sharing the matter with a parent or teacher. I would point out the desirability of doing so but leave the decision to the child. Occasionally the child preferred me to share firstly with the teacher or parent. On other occasions, the child was adamant that he/she didn't wish the parents or teacher to know any details at all.

d) **Personal Concerns/Questions**

Possibly about half the reasons for visiting the Chaplain were concerned with personal issues. There were some issues relating to themselves such as a fear of death, starting high school and certain dreams (or nightmares!).

Other issues focussed on relationships with peers - during school hours, whilst coming to and going from school and after school hours. There was usually emotional and physical conflict involved. Just occasionally it was amusing to have visits from both protagonists so that "stories" could be compared!

A lot of issues related to parents, step-parents, relatives, other adults, brothers and sisters. There was often a perception that the child had been treated unfairly. Of course, only that child's side of the story was being heard!

Only rarely did a child bring a complaint about a teacher. This seemed to indicate that either there were few hassles with teachers or the hassles were already being resolved.

e) **Biblical Concerns/Questions**

These issues also covered approximately half the visits. They were the standard things that a Scripture teacher taking that age group would expect. The questions were basically about God, Jesus, the Bible and its stories, churches and other religions in that order.

Obviously a visit to the Chaplain provided more time for such questions and his answers. I recall one "curly" question about which church was the best one to attend!

The seasons of Easter and Christmas usually produced more questions about these festivals.

f) **Prayer Ministry**

At the end of each visit I would always offer to pray about the issue. Usually the child was only too willing to accept. Sometimes the child was happy to repeat the prayer after me. At other times the child preferred me to do all the praying, perhaps later, in the privacy of my home.

Most children indicated that they felt better after the prayer, there and then. It was truly exciting when a child also returned for a follow-up visit and triumphantly declared that the prayer had worked. It was also sobering to indicate that in some situations on-going prayer was required and the answers might be some time in coming.

4. **DIFFICULTIES**

a) **Part-time Capacity**

In each school where I worked there were occasions when not all the children were able to see me in the allotted time (even with some extensions). One Principal eventually asked the children to write a short note beforehand, explaining why they wanted to see the Chaplain. These were sealed in envelopes, left in his office and scanned by me upon arrival.

I selected the apparently more urgent issues. However, this system probably denied some children immediate access when necessary.

Other teachers kept their own lists so that children could come in turn. They also exercised some discernment about the more urgent situations.

However, some children would declare that at last after three weeks or so, their turn had come. Some children would pour it all out but some had even forgotten the original reason for wanting a visit! Others may have simply given up trying to see me.

An associated problem was having to wait a week or two in order to follow up a child, especially if the child was absent on my day. In some cases the child had forgotten the original advice offered or not acted upon it as yet. Thankfully, some situations had been resolved without my presence!

Sometimes, due to other commitments I would have to change the day for Chaplaincy. This caused some confusion at times.

Overall, the staff and students tended to view me as a visitor, rather than as an integral part of the school.

b) Relationships with Parents

Most parents seemed to be happy with the Chaplain's role, whether they heard much news or not. In one school a few parents seemed threatened when they discovered after some time that their children had been visiting the Chaplain. They didn't approve of their children sharing confidences about which they knew nothing. This was a valid concern. To try to allay these fears I visited the P&C Meeting, discussed my role and allowed questions. Some parents good-humouredly asked what others were trying to hide! But seriously, it appeared that some parents would actively encourage their children to see the Chaplain. Most parents were happy to leave the choice to their children.

However, a few parents thereafter, actually forbade their children to visit.

c) Peer-Group Influence

In one school my clients had greater behavioural problems than most. One child in particular was eventually suspended by the Principal before the family left the district. When this boy left, his friends gradually stopped seeing me and no other children started coming.

It was hard to diagnose the causes. Other children may have felt that although they would have liked to see me, their problems were nowhere near as bad as the boy who had left. They may not have wished their peers to cast them into a “problem child” mould.

Subsequently, I took lunch-time walks in that school to provide openings for children to approach me casually. There were some useful contacts but these did not lead to any counselling. Possibly a Chaplain spending more time in that school would establish greater relationships with students. Eventually, I considered it better use of my time to simply make myself available when needed.

In another school after sometime the senior children stopped visiting the Chaplain. Enquiries revealed that a few peer group leaders were ridiculing the children who saw the Chaplain. This was a big factor which was hard to eliminate.

The younger children were still seeing me in large numbers. However, a lot of the same Biblical questions were being asked.

For all the above reasons it was considered more profitable to suspend the Chaplaincy and to start Scripture classes in that school. Initially half the senior children opted out but in the following year most children stayed. Hence I gained contact with the senior children again.

5. HOME AND PARENT CONTACT

In some situations I thought it could be beneficial to make contact in the home. Hence I took the initiative in at least two situations and found that the parents appreciated my contacts. One parent was happy to come and see me at the school on another occasion. In a third instance my contact led to an on-going support for the family for some years and continues to this day.

On only one occasion did the Principal suggest that I might visit a home because he had suspended a child and thought that my visit might help. I made the visit, discovered a lot about the home environment and was appreciated by the mother. I met the father for the first time and he seemed threatened by my presence.

There were no contacts made by the parents taking the initiative. Possibly a full-time Chaplain operating over a longer period would find home and parent contact increasing after the early stages.

6. **VARIOUS ISSUES**

a) **Talking whole classes**

It was never conceived by the CCE that the Chaplain would take Scripture in a traditional sense. However, at one school I discovered that many of the children had common concerns about family life. Hence I gathered them into one classroom and took a family theme for 2 or 3 weeks.

In another school I took a series of 3 lessons with 2 classes as background for a Christmas service planned in that school. It provided an opportunity to remind the children of my presence and role within the school.

b) **Lunch-hour and Recess Contact**

I have mentioned one purpose for this already. Another purpose was to show children that it is perfectly normal for a Chaplain to join in sports such as football, cricket and anything else that he could manage!

c) **Gifts of Bibles**

There were times when some children expressed a strong wish to have their own Bibles. I usually sent a note to the family asking if they were happy for the child to receive one. All the families concerned were agreeable. A few offered to pay but usually the costs were met by the CRC of the local churches.

d) **School Camp**

I offered to join the senior children of one school at their annual camp and the Principal agreed. He further supported my suggestion to take brief devotions at the close of each day. I selected a highlight from each day's events and compiled the devotional around it. A visiting adult led us in some singing one night. Only one parent requested her child to be absent from devotions. The children received the devotions very well.

Another feature was the Principal asking me to say Grace before meals which I offered in a variety of ways.

I also joined in the same school's outing at the end of the year which proved to be a lot of fun.

e) **Teachers**

I found that a few teachers confided in me regarding professional problems. These exchanges occurred as we met informally. No requests were made by teachers for formal counselling sessions.

f) **Legal Protection**

In my opinion this issue was not properly clarified during my Chaplaincy in the three schools. I recall one little girl who confided that she was leaving the school during lunch-times without permission. She was ringing her natural mother from whom she had been legally separated.

I was concerned about the safety of this girl and advised the Principal. He found a way of speaking to her without compromising my confidentiality.

Some months later I found that I was asked to supply confidential information relating to a custody hearing in court. My advisers said that I could not legally withhold confidences shared by the girl. I was therefore obligated to share all that I knew. Hopefully the legal position of Chaplains has now been clarified.

7. **CONCLUSION**

I ask myself the question - was my role as a part-time Chaplain in the three schools worthwhile? I very much believe that the answer is yes!

Principals and teachers expressed their appreciation and made the observation that behavioural changes could be seen in some children. They also believed that it was invaluable for children to be able to clearly express themselves to a sympathetic adult apart from teachers and parents.

The few parents with whom contact was made invariably conveyed their appreciation for my efforts.

Lastly, there was my own satisfaction and thankfulness to God that this particular ministry opened up in Government schools. It was extremely gratifying to see children receiving and growing through the ministry offered to them.

Most children expressed their gratitude for my efforts both verbally and through letters and cards. One child continues to send letters from a distant country. Then there are the grateful children who perhaps cannot express themselves.

Finally, only One is truly qualified to measure the everlasting value of this work, to which He still calls His servants.

Pause and Think

1. Few government primary schools in Western Australia have full-time, or even part-time, Chaplains. Are secondary school Chaplains addressing problems too late? Should a recognized “Christian presence” be made available to children in our primary schools?
2. How important is it for an officially recognized pastoral care-giver to have a timetabled and private room from which to work? Where is the best place in the school for such a room to be located?
3. Assuming that a child shares with a Chaplain on a confidential basis, what moral/legal obligations does the Chaplain have in cases where physical, sexual etc. abuse is reported?
4. How should it be determined whether a pastoral care-giver is full-time or part-time - rate of pay? on-campus contact hours? official plus unofficial hours worked? etc.
5. Should children have unrestricted access to Chaplains in the same way that they do, to say, the school nurse?
6. Ought teachers to be consulted when the viability of a chaplaincy programme is being assessed?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Don Edwards, Chaplain of Lockridge Senior High School and Hampton Primary School
1987-1990.

Vale Don Edwards

Written by Julia Leat, former Principal of Lockridge Senior High School

My early memory of Don was in Term 1 1987, when I attended my first Morley Christian Resource Council Meeting. I saw a tall man with a kind face and an aura of calmness and strength of purpose about him. On my arrival at Lockridge Senior High School in that year, the Deputy Principals had asked me if I would like to have a Chaplain at the school. I replied affirmatively with great enthusiasm. In The Pilbara where I had been the year before, no mention of a Chaplain had ever been made. I had been especially interested in 'Pastoral Care' in the various schools I had worked in. Children with severe home problems and those who were emotionally disturbed due to neglect and/or verbal or physical abuse could not possibly use and take advantage of all the educational resources a school could offer.

These children need to have that deep inner core of pain, lack of self-worth and feelings of helplessness eased and their burdens shared. Who better to do it than a Chaplain with the message that Jesus loved them and would always care for them? To get that message of love and salvation across to these children, the school needed a man of God and Don Edwards was to be our Man of God at Lockridge Senior High School. We worked together to help in the fundraising, and I recall the absolute sincerity of the man when he spoke to a gathering of the church congregation, regarding his very strong conviction and the calling that was in his heart and mind to be the Chaplain of our school.

Don had been the first Social Worker at the school, so that he knew the district and many of the families, very well indeed. He had a great love for the Lockridge area and felt that God was directing him to serve this district again.

And serve he did. He walked around the school and developed a sound knowledge of the 'educational environment'. He was highly skilled in the Manual Arts area and would help teachers and students in making various models. He was a resource person used by the Social Studies staff in the area of religious studies. A number of us referred children to him. He comforted those who were bereaved. He helped families experiencing financial problems. Teachers saw him about children who were difficult to handle and in one instance after a long talk with Don, the student proceeded to behave and apply himself to his studies. Gradually he gathered a group of students around him and commenced the first Christian Fellowship luncheon meetings the school had ever had, despite considerable effort in previous years. It was a small group to begin with, but just before he took ill, Don asked for my permission to transfer the meeting from his office to the Speech Room, because about 20 students were now attending. Don also gave most generously, his time and skills to the school's Chess Club. One lunchtime a week he would coach students and after school hours he would drive team members to other venues for competition matches and then take them home. As I wrote in our school's December 1990 Newsletter-

Our Chaplain Don Edwards, a gentle man who lived his life in the service of others, was kind, compassionate and caring. He exemplified the Christian principles of love, and forgiveness and “doing unto others as you would they would do unto you”.

To conclude this valedictory I quote excerpts from an article that Don wrote for our annual publication ‘In-Print’ in 1990.

There is nothing very clever or mysterious about the Chaplaincy programme.* It is a straight-forward Christ-centred programme based on God’s Word. It is not a ‘pussy-cat’ programme, it is as strong as a lion. We teach about the changing power of Jesus. Students have the notion that the programme deals with student and family problems”. I am not interested in problems. I **am interested in solutions only**. Students fall into one trap or another daily. Most pick themselves up and we hear no more of them. A few students fall in the problem area and stay there, some over-stay! This is where the harm is done. I hate seeing young students drawn insidiously into the problem area, blind to the long term damage taking place. Solution - get out while you can or you will be trapped. In the teaching area of the programme, ISCF on a Thursday lunchtime, we study with great joy the ‘Jesus Factor’ in students’ lives. One astute person remarked ‘So Jesus can put Humpty Dumpty together again!’ Why not? It is here that bitterness, hatred and acting the tough guy are changed into the fruit of the Spirit: gentleness, love, joy, peace, and living a profitable and successful student life. Try us, it costs you nothing, but it cost Him everything.

Don Edwards.
Chaplain.

I will always remember Don with great respect and humility, as will many others he listened to, and prayed for. He was an exceptional human being and many are the better in life and spirit for having known him.

[Reproduced from **Hear, Here**, published by The Churches’ Commission on Education, March 1991, p.2. Permission granted by the author.]

[* The Chaplaincy programme which is being referred to here is more accurately described as the Interschool Christian Fellowship programme - Eds.]

Pause and Think

1. How much say do you think that the Principal of a school should have in the selection and appointment of a Chaplain (or for that matter, of other non-teaching professionals?)
2. Chaplain Edwards wrote, "I am not interested in problems. I am interested in solutions only." Do you believe that all problems, ipso facto, have solutions?
3. What resources exist in schools today which pastoral care-givers need to be aware of and which could be used to enhance the emotional and spiritual quality of life of the members of the school community?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Glenys McKinnon is in her fourth year as Chaplain at Leeming Senior High School. Her husband Alec is the Principal at Jandakot Primary School. She has three children - Carole, David and Janelle. She has one grandchild, Emily. Glenys and her husband fellowship at the Bullcreek Anglican Church where they are very involved in helping to establish this new parish. Glenys' interests include trying to keep up with her active family, reading, growing roses, furthering her own education and helping others come into and understand more clearly what a relationship with God entails.

Crossing the Boundaries

Leeming Senior High School is a new and fast growing school. Most weeks of the year, we have one or two new students arriving from many places - the U.K., Malaysia, Singapore and from various places in Australia.

To help the students adjust to their new surroundings, I meet them as they prepare to start their first day at school. I show them around the school, introducing them to the School Psychologist, the Youth Education Officer, the Nurse, the Canteen Manager, the Librarian, and any of their teachers that are available. When I eventually take them to their class, I introduce the new student and ask for someone who is doing the same subjects to befriend the new student, particularly for the first few days.

If the new student has any difficulties in settling in, they feel free to come and ask me for help. As a result of all this attention, most new students settle in very quickly.

This year I have been invited into two ESL (English as a Second Language) classes.

In the first, I was asked to share my life story - sharing about my family, where I have lived and my role in the school. The students were encouraged to ask questions and improve their oral language skills. The teacher had invited different members of staff on different occasions as she believed that this would help her students understand the way Australians think and behave.

In the second class for Year 12 ESL students, I was asked to teach the history and essence of Christianity. As part of their English course, the students are required to listen to various lectures, take notes and then write a summary of the talk. The students listened well and were very interested. Of the class of twelve students, four indicated that they were Christians. The other eight would probably have known very little of Christian belief and history (actually the Christian students later informed me that they learned a lot from the talk). From the feedback I received, the students have glimpsed beyond their own cultural and religious background and have a better understanding of Christian beliefs.

One Christian girl from Malaysia was sent to Australia to improve her education when she was about fourteen years old. She was quite homesick although she did not make a fuss about it. When she discovered that I too was a Christian, she came in regularly to see me. Her trust in the Lord was strengthened as she had to rely on Him and not on her friends back home. She gradually made new friends and naturally shared her faith with them. A number of her new friends have made their own commitments to Jesus Christ.

One of her new friends has a Christian mother, and it was a fairly smooth ride from being a nominal Christian to becoming more fully committed.

Another new Christian is not able to go to the church of her choice with her friends as her parents are ignorant of the basic similarities between all the denominations and will only let her go to a church where they have a relative attending. This gives her a choice of one or perhaps two churches.

Another Christian girl has not felt able to tell her father about her new faith. For although her mother is Christian, her father is not, and she feels he would be very upset by the news. However, as I have watched her develop in her faith, I feel her father would be very proud of her. A lot of fear and tension has been replaced by peace and joy. She is also working well at school and being a responsible daughter.

Once, on a school camp, our Principal was thrilled when one of the Asian students came up to him and said that as they could not get to Church on Sunday, would he go and pray with her? He was very happy to do so and said it was the first time that a student had made such a request.

The new Christians are keen to read their new Bibles, starting at Genesis. With no background of Sunday School teaching or Primary School Scripture classes, they find many Old Testament stories hard to cope with (I sometimes have to agree with them!) We have had some very interesting discussions.

One new Christian was presented to a witchdoctor when she was a very young child and was given a spiritual guardian for her protection. However, she has had a very traumatic life and has come to see the need for Christ to put her life back together and to give her a hope for the future. She has expressed a real desire to forgive her parents who did not want her and to forgive her relatives who did not show a lot of love but only took her in out of a sense of duty. It is so wonderful to see the transforming power of the love of God!

Once a week, I meet with up to seven Year 12 students for a time of informal prayer. They are all Christians, all with darker skin than mine, and come from Malaysia, Singapore, Burma, Lebanon and South Africa. I believe that because of their background, in that they have had to make a stand (either personally or their whole family) for Christianity, their faith is genuine and strong. They are not necessarily noisy about it, but they do not deny their faith when questioned. For example, three of these were in the ESL class, when their teacher asked how many were Christians they did not hesitate to raise their hands and affirm their faith. I find these students a real blessing and encouragement to me in my role in the school.

Pause and Think

1. What special roles could officially appointed pastoral care-givers take in helping migrant children who are new to a school to settle in quickly?
2. If a migrant child comes to the Chaplain for help but wants answers from the point of view of a religious persuasion other than Christianity, what is the Chaplain to do?
3. Be creative! How could a Chaplain introduce the Christian perspective if asked to address children taking subjects in the following curriculum areas?

English as a Second Language

Mathematics

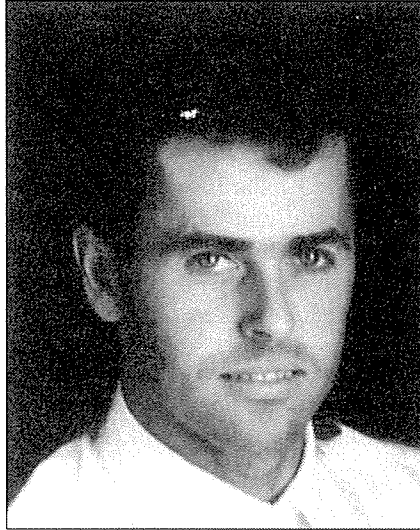
Art

Drama

Physical Education

Computer Studies

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Shane Scott is a full-time Chaplain at Hollywood Senior High School. He commenced as Chaplain in August, 1990 after having moved to Perth to marry his wife, Carolyn. He comes from the Gold Coast in Queensland. Shane is a trained Minister within the Churches of Christ. His main interests are surfing and photography. Shane has been involved in Youth work for the past eight years.

The Secondary Students' View and Understanding of Christianity

By way of introduction I feel it is important for me to outline why I have chosen to write on the topic: *The Secondary Students' View and Understanding of Christianity*, for a publication on Chaplaincy in WA Government Secondary Schools. While it is not the Chaplain's role within the school to evangelise or proselytise, the Chaplain does have a role of providing a 'Christian presence' within the school. While there may no doubt be other Christian people within the school community, be it students, staff or parents, it is the Chaplain who provides a 'Christian presence' in a formal sense.

It is my belief that for too long the Australian Church has by and large failed to understand and/or acknowledge that what the Australian people perceive the Church and Christianity to be about is somewhat different from what the Church and Christianity really are. While there is certainly the need for the Australian church to realise as John Smith writes in his book **Advance Australia Where?**,

"To the average Australian, the church has been, and still is, a foreign culture. Nor has there been sufficient attempt to change that image. Much of what we do as Christians is just not part of Australian life..."

(1988, p212)

the point I wish to make is that for a 'Christian presence' to be accepted and effective in our society, the person or persons presenting that 'presence' need to be aware of the views of the people with whom they are coming into contact. This could not be more important than for the Chaplain working in a Government Secondary School.

In writing this paper I draw largely from my own work and experience with youth over the last five years (the present generation of secondary school students). However, my work with youth takes in the last eight years. This involves work with both church and unchurched youth in the context of various Church-based youth groups. The capacity in which I have worked with youth has been as a Youth-leader (3 years), Assistant Minister (4 years), and in the past twelve months as High School Chaplain. I am well aware that some of my findings, perceptions, and conclusions may differ from those of the reader and that is to be expected. Likewise, some of my observations will apply only in the general sense and obviously will not have wide-spread application.

Also, as part of this project, I conducted a survey of 100 Secondary students from years 8 - 11 at Hollywood Senior High School. A class in each year was chosen randomly and each student was given an opinion survey to complete. Surveyed were 50 males and 50 females. Obviously such a survey is only a small sample and may not necessarily be representative of the school population as a whole, nor of Secondary students as a whole. The main purpose of the survey was to compare the sample findings with my own personal findings and observations. I will refer to the survey

throughout. NOTE: As 100 students were surveyed, numbers indicated are also percentages.

OUR HISTORY AS A NATION

It goes without saying that in order to understand the present we often need to understand the past. In order to comprehend why people think or act the way they do, we often need to understand their upbringing and surrounding environment. The same is true when it comes to addressing the issue of people's view and understanding of Christianity. It is not one of my aims in this paper to explore the history of Australia, nor in particular the history of the Church and Christianity in Australia, or how this has possibly affected our present-day society. However, it cannot go without mention that Australia has a rather unique history. A history which I believe contributes a great deal to the way the Church and Christianity is understood today.

John Smith (Ibid: p. 209f) suggests that basically paganism has reigned throughout the history of Australia. The Church has never been effective in bringing a significant, or anything like a significant proportion of our nation to even a superficial commitment to Christianity. The Fathers of the Australian nation were not like the Pilgrim Fathers of America who sought to found a nation in the search for justice and the Kingdom of God. Rather, the majority of Australia's 'Pilgrim Fathers' were convicts.

A study of Australia's history soon reveals that Christianity was not a significant founding influence, nor has it been a significant influence in the development of the nation. The Church and Christianity has struggled in its attempt to gain relevance and acceptance in the Australian society which by and large has remained a foreign culture.

OUR NATION TODAY

While the past is important, it is also necessary to take into consideration the present social environment. The Australian young person (for the remainder of this paper I will use the terms 'young person' and 'teenager' to refer to the secondary student) lives in a society of rapid change. Many young people are forced to face issues and changes for which neither life experience or parental influence have prepared them. They are busy dealing with the pressures of restructured families, low self-image, prospective unemployment, and the list goes on. They live in a society confronted with a host of ethical dilemma's such as Abortion, Aids, IVF technology, and Euthanasia. The framework for addressing such issues appears to be that of moral confusion. The historian Manning Clarke put it this way: 'We live in an age of doubt about everything' (as quoted by Mal Fletcher, 1991, p44).

Our young people live in a society which from a demographic viewpoint, is now unquestionably multicultural. Exposure to the many and varied ethnic religions now

represented in Australia presents the young person with more 'world view' options than they care for or know what to do with. Richard Eckersley (in Fletcher, 1991) writes,

"Australia has become more pluralistic and heterogeneous...While young people may no longer be under the same pressure to conform [as they were prior to the 60's]...they now face a bewildering array of values and beliefs to choose from." (p43)

Some things however, never change. This generation of young people ask those same life questions that all the generations gone before have asked: "Who am I?" "Where did I come from?" and "Where am I going?"

It is in the light of what has so far been written that makes it very interesting to take a look at the secondary students' view and understanding of Christianity.

THE SECONDARY STUDENT

Religious Affiliation

In stating on the survey which Religion they belonged to (sample size 100):

- 40 students (20 male/20 female) indicated a Christian denomination.
- 4 students indicated Buddhism
- 3 students indicate Muslim
- 2 students indicated Jewish, and
- 51 students (26 male/25 female) indicated No Religion
(ie. they wrote 'None' or left the space blank)

It has been my observation that more and more young people today do not align themselves with any Religion (Note: I am referring here to Christian denominations in particular). The 51 students who indicated 'No Religion' would be representative of that. I believe that ten years ago not quite so many would have placed themselves there. That is not to say that they or their family would have been practicing Christians and/or attending the church services, but rather they would have inherited that Religious affiliation (if only by title) from their parents, and theirs before them.

In fact, the 1986 Census revealed that:

"Nearly 2 million people stated they had no religion, an increase of 75% since 1976...The age pattern of people with no religion was similar at both censuses increasing from the teens to the mid and late twenties then declining for older age groups...Comparing the proportion of an age group who had no religion in 1986 with the proportion who were ten years younger in 1976 (largely the same

group of people), indicated an increasing tendency for people to reject religious affiliation up to the age of 40 years”.

(p. 19-21 under **Religion**)

(It is interesting to note that along with the 12.7% of people who stated that they had no Religion, a further 11.9% of people did not state anything in relation to Religious affiliation - p. 19. Though the question was optional it is likely that a percentage of those who did not answer the question do not claim a Religious affiliation).

One can almost be certain that since 1986 the tendency has continued for teens to reject Religious affiliation. The 1986 Census revealed that of those in the age group 10 - 19 years, 23% stated that they had no Religion. In both censuses men were more likely than women to have no Religion. This was the case for the 10 - 19 years age group. The 51% who indicated no Religion in the survey I conducted is, in my experience, higher than usual for secondary students. At the same time, in my experience the 23% indicated in the Census is way below the mark. Whatever the percentage may be, the fact is that rejection of Religious affiliation among teens is on the increase.

It appears to me that one of the contributing factors to the decline in young people being aware of, or claiming some Religious affiliation (even if it only be inherited and not necessarily a personal Faith) is the change we have seen in Christian education primarily in Primary schools over the last decade. Christian education in Government Primary schools is rarely carried out on a denominational basis as it once was. This is certainly not all negative in my opinion but it does seem to do away with the need to know what Religious affiliation (Christian or other) one has.

For a large proportion of Australian families one of the few times the issue of Religious affiliation was raised was when their children in Primary school needed to know so they could receive the appropriate denominational education. I am not for one minute advocating that being 'aware' of what Religion one belongs to is of any great value in itself. The point I make is that for many young people today there is usually not even the need to know their Religious affiliation, and therefore they don't know. The sense of belonging to a particular Religion (denomination) ceases to exist. The awareness of the family acknowledging some Religious affiliation is reduced greatly also. And often what is left is the feeling in the child that Christianity (Religion) is somehow irrelevant to their everyday life. It goes without saying that if what is taught in the classroom as important is not reinforced in the home as being important the teaching loses some force. For the majority of children in Australia, their Christian Education is limited to that which they receive in Primary school. In fact, in many Primary schools today, there is no Religious Education being conducted at all.

The present generation of Secondary students has grown up in such a climate and as I have briefly tried to explain it does contribute greatly to their view and understanding of Christianity.

BEING A CHRISTIAN AND GOING TO CHURCH

When it came to indicating whether or not they considered themselves to be a Christian;

- 35 students answered True
- 58 answered False, and
- 7 were undecided.

Of 40 students who had indicated they belonged to a Christian denomination, 35 answered True in relation to this statement; yet only 17 of the 31 indicated that they attend Church regularly.

In talking with young people I have found that many who do consider themselves to be Christian and yet do not attend Church, are usually those who have 'inherited' a Religious affiliation and who consider a Christian simply as someone who believes in God. Question 4 on the survey sheet: "In my opinion, a Christian is someone who...."brought the comments I expected. Most responses were: Believes in God/Goes to Church/Believes in Jesus/ Does good. While these are certainly all true, there were only 5 students who mentioned anything about Jesus as Lord and/or Saviour.

While a belief in God is obviously a prerequisite for being a Christian, it appears that the majority of young people who consider a Christian to be someone who simply believes in God (35% of those surveyed) don't realise how narrow a definition that is. When confronted with the fact that other world Religions also believe in God the young person then realises there is obviously more to it than just that. The survey revealed that:

- 69 (29 males/40 females) believe that God exists
- 27 (19 males/8 females) do not believe that God exists, and
- 3 (1 male/2 females) were unsure.

I was rather surprised that 27 students did not believe in the existence of God. This sample is certainly higher than I have generally found. Other surveys that have been carried out over the last five years of which I am aware have indicated that only 2 10% of Australians do not believe that God exists (claiming to be atheists). For young people the same percentages have applied. It is interesting that sometimes the young person who claims they do not believe that God exists has a picture in his/her mind of the God they do not believe in. For example, I may say to the student: Tell me about

the God you don't believe in? And he/she proceeds, for example, to describe an old man sitting in heaven with a big stick ready to punish anyone who has any fun. They see God as a killjoy (incidentally, this is a rather common misconception among young people). The point I make is that often the young person (and I expect the same applies for adults too), who claims to not believe that God exists has a picture of God in their mind which is not attractive to anyone. It is that misconception of God which leads them to prefer to believe that He doesn't exist. When confronted with the God of love, mercy and justice as revealed in the Bible, a belief in God's existence is more acceptable.

Even though the 27% indicated for those who do not believe that God exists is possibly high, it would be likely that the number of young people denying God's existence is on the increase. We would almost have to expect that in an increasingly secular and humanistic society that that would be the case.

When it comes to the person of Jesus Christ, the survey revealed that:

- 73 (34 males/39 females) believe that Jesus lived
- 23 (15 males/ 8 females) did not believe that Jesus lived, and
- 4 (1 male/ 3 females) were unsure

Altogether there were 17 students who did not believe that God existed and that Jesus lived. There were 6 students who believed in God's existence but did not believe that Jesus lived, and 9 of the students who did not believe that God existed did believe that Jesus lived. These statistics would align with my general findings over the last few years.

One of the things I have noticed with young people (and adults alike) is that often there is the lack of understanding that Christianity is grounded in historical events - that it has an historical basis. There appears to be a great deal of ignorance in relation to such historical events (for example that Jesus lived). I have found that when the young person who does not believe that Jesus lived is confronted with the basic fact that our calendar is dated in relation to the birth of Christ (B.C. - before Christ / A.D. - since the birth of Christ), that they have never given any thought to what that actually means.

As already mentioned, 'going to Church' was a common response for question 4, seventeen percent of students indicated that they attend church regularly. It is interesting to note that it is not so much God who is considered to be irrelevant but rather the Church structures. This has been evident in various surveys that have been conducted in recent years. Although teenagers often express concern about many of the issues the Churches seek to address, the Churches themselves are perceived to be out of touch. The teenagers world is one of rapid change and the Church at large has failed to change with the times. To many, the Church is a 'foreign culture'.

Question 5 in the survey was the statement: "Church is not irrelevant or boring". The results were:

- 21 agree
- 6 agree - unsure
- 38 unsure
- 9 unsure - disagree, and
- 26 disagree.

Of the 21 students who agreed with the statement, 8 were regular Church attenders. Four students who attended Church regularly disagreed and a further 5 were unsure. The results of this survey revealed that just over half of those who attend Church regularly find it reasonably irrelevant or boring. This is in line with what I have found generally (if anything, the percentage would be higher). From my experience, I would say that somewhere in the vicinity of 50% of young people attend Church because of parental persuasion not necessarily of their own choice. It has been my observation that many young people (again, approximately 50%), who have grown up in a Christian home and attend Church do not discover their own 'faith' till their later teen years.

It should be mentioned too that the comment: "You don't have to go to Church to be a Christian" is often made. It is obvious from the survey that at least 18% of students hold that opinion.

It would be my suspicion that many of the 38% who indicated 'unsure' so indicated because they have never or rarely been to Church. I suspect many of those who disagreed would fall into the same category. For many Secondary students all they know of the Church is what they have presented to them through the many facets of the media. And needless to say the Church is not always portrayed in a positive manner. For many, their picture of Church consists of robed priests, liturgies, old fashioned hymns and strange practices (e.g. communion, baptism) - all culturally unfamiliar. Of course, not all Churches are like that, however it is the perception the average Australian has of the Church.

As a Minister of Religion I continually find Secondary students amazed that I am not robed or do not wear a 'collar'. That is not how the Minister is normally presented in the media. Admittedly however, it is usually the clergy of the mainline denominations (Catholic - 26.1% of population and Anglican - 23.9% of population [1986 Census]) who have media exposure, many of whom do wear the traditional clergy clothing.

The other major response to question 4 was that a Christian is someone who does good deeds and/or lives by God's commands. I do not want to expand on this a great deal except to say that while many young people do not have any trouble with the Christian seeking to do good to others, etc., they often interpret 'living by God's

commands' as never being able to enjoy yourself. Christianity is often considered to be adherence to a list of rules and regulations. For the young person, drinking, smoking, swearing, and sex are still considered to be the main things a Christian is not allowed to do. These things, along with such acts as murder, stealing, lying pre or extra-marital sex (and other such 'big sins' as they are often termed) are what the young person understands sin to be so far as the Christian is concerned. Sin is understood to be disobedience to God's commands but it is only the "heavies" I have mentioned (together with one or two others) that are seen as God's commands. Such sins as jealousy and impure thought are not recognised as sin. The idea that sin is simply leaving God out of your life is a foreign idea and teaching to most.

My finding is that little time or effort is given to exploring the beliefs of Christianity, or other Religions for that matter. However, I don't think all the blame lies with the young person. Often, the forum for discussion about world Religions is not provided within their educational or family setting. I find a great deal of ignorance, misconception, and confusion among Secondary students in relation to Christian beliefs, for example.

WHO IS (WAS) JESUS?

As we have already seen, 73 students indicated they believe that Jesus lived. The survey shows that of these 73 students, 48 believe that Jesus was the Son of God (note: a total of 53 indicated Jesus to be the Son of God, 4 of those however indicated they were unsure if Jesus lived and 1 indicated he did not believe that Jesus lived). Of these 48 students:

- 23 agreed that Jesus rose from the dead
- 7 placed themselves somewhere between agree and unsure as to whether Jesus rose from the dead,
- 16 were unsure if Jesus rose from the dead, and
- 2 disagreed that Jesus rose from the dead.

So as we see, the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith, that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died and rose from the dead, are only believed by 23 students, 12 of these are students who attend Church regularly. Of the 35 students who consider themselves to be a Christian only 18 believe Jesus was the Son of God and that he rose from the dead.

While the survey did not ask any questions relating to the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection, it is unlikely from my experience that all these 23 students would understand and/or accept the fundamental Christian teaching of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. The fact that only 5 students mentioned anything about Jesus being Lord and/or Saviour in relation to question 4 may be an indication of this.

On the whole, in regard to the statement: Jesus rose from the dead:

- 34 indicated agree
- 8 agree - unsure
- 32 unsure
- 4 unsure - disagree, and
- 22 disagree.

In relation to who Jesus was:

- 53 indicated - The Son of God
- 16 - A myth
- 13 - A great teacher
- 9 - A good man
- 6 - A prophet of God, and
- 2 - A lunatic.

The results of this survey align by and large with my own findings and conclusions over the years. I would make the comment, however, that usually the young person's opinions about who Jesus was and whether or not He rose from the dead are usually not as a result of their personal examination of the evidence. Many would not be able to present any evidence as to why they believe what they do. Rather, their opinion usually comes from what others have told them or what seems logical to them. The young person is therefore no different to most adults in this regard.

WHAT ABOUT THE BIBLE?

In talking with young people I have found that the Bible is a point of confusion. The survey seemed to indicate this also. The only part of the survey relating to the Bible was the statement: "The Bible can be trusted (It is reliable/accurate)". The results were:

- 23 agree
- 6 agree - unsure
- 47 unsure
- 3 unsure - disagree, and
- 19 disagree.

(It was interesting to note that of the 17 regular church attenders only 6 agree that the Bible could be trusted).

It is my belief that the majority of young people today are Biblically illiterate. That is to say, they are not familiar with the stories, teaching, and/or general content of the Bible. I find that very few know the difference between the Old and the New Testaments. The

majority are unable to list the ten commandments and many cannot name the four Gospel writers. Most young people are not aware of who wrote the various books/letters that make up the Bible. Many are not even aware that the Bible is made up of different books/letters. Very few are aware of how we obtained the Bible in its present form.

It is very difficult for the young person to know whether the Bible can be trusted or not when they do not know the basic information regarding the Bible. One of the contributing factors to such 'Biblical illiteracy' is no doubt the fact that a very small proportion (compared with their parents or grandparents) of this present generation of Secondary students attended Sunday School. In addition, it appears that Christian Education (Scripture) in primary schools does not necessarily make up for this. This is not to say that Christian Education in primary schools has not been successful. Rather, it highlights that if Christian Education is limited to half an hour a week at the most in primary school, the level of Biblical literacy will be limited. There is little need to mention that the Secondary student is obviously of an age to better understand Biblical truths than is the Primary student. As mentioned earlier, the forum for the Secondary student to discuss Religious issues (the Bible included) is usually not provided for in the educational or family setting.

I would expect that many of the 47% of students who indicated they were unsure as to whether the Bible can be trusted did so because they are largely unaware of its content and history (e.g. who wrote it, how we got the Bible, etc.). It is likely that many of the 22% of students who placed themselves on the negative end of the scale fall into the same category. Along similar lines, it is likely the 52% who indicated they were unsure whether they were or could be good enough to meet God's standards did so because they were unsure of what God's standards are (some students made this comment to me as they completed the survey). Such standards are revealed in the Bible.

CREATION OR EVOLUTION?

The Great Debate' regarding Creation or Evolution is one to which many students give some thought. It is inescapable when they study Evolutionary theories in the science classroom. The opinion survey shows that:

- 21 of students believe in Creation
- 37 believe in the Theory of Evolution
- 39 are unsure, and
 - 2 believe in both (ie. God originally created life but there has also been a process of evolution).

Of the 69 students who believe that God exists:

- 19 believe in the Theory of Evolution
- 20 believe in Creation, and
- 28 are unsure.

It has become apparent in recent years that the Theory of Evolution has some major flaws to it. The flaws have always been there, but it is only in recent years they have become a little more publicised. It is not my purpose here to debate the Creation/Evolution issue, except to say that it doesn't take too much study or thinking to see and realise that a belief in the Evolutionary Theory requires a lot more faith than a belief in God as Creator. It appears to me that many Secondary students realise this and while it does not lead them to a position of belief in Creation it does lead them to stating they are not sure which is correct. My observation is that the number of students who believe in Evolution alone is on the decline.

The survey revealed that 5 of the students who attend church regularly indicated 'unsure' and 3 indicated they believed in Evolution. I have found secondary students very open to discussing the Creation/Evolution issue and those who believe in Evolution are often very interested to hear evidences against Evolution (something which is not usually presented in the classroom).

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Death is possibly the last 'taboo' subject of our society. Nobody likes to talk about it. In the last five years or so, however, there has been a great deal of interest generated among youth in relation to life after death. In my opinion this is the result of various movies, cartoons, video and board games, music, and books which focus on the supernatural or spiritual realms.

Two questions in the survey related to Heaven and Hell specifically. In response to the statement: "Heaven and Hell are real places":

- 36 agree
- 8 agree - unsure
- 29 unsure
- 4 unsure - disagree
- 21 disagree.

One of the things I have noticed is that often there is a stronger belief among young people in Hell than there is in Heaven. Likewise, I find that there is often a stronger belief and awareness of Satan than there is of God. If this really is the case, I would attribute it to those factors which I mentioned above.

I have usually found that most young people who believe in God also believe in Heaven and Hell. I would estimate in my experience that somewhere in the vicinity of 70% of young people would believe in Heaven and Hell. The 36% in this survey is surprisingly low. However the number who do not believe God exists has contributed to this result.

The other question asked was: "Assuming God exists and Heaven and Hell are real places, where would you expect to go when you die?" The results were:

- 83 indicated Heaven
- 10 indicated Hell
- 5 were unsure.

One thing is certain, if God, Heaven and Hell do exist few people want or expect to go to Hell. As was mentioned earlier only 23 students believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that he died and rose from the dead, 12 of these are students who attend Church regularly. While the question of on what basis the majority would expect to go to Heaven, was not asked as part of the survey, I would guess from my findings with young people that it is a mixture of belief in God's existence (63 of the 69 students who believe God exists indicated 'Heaven' for this question), a belief in Jesus as God's Son; and the belief that the way in which they live their lives is good enough to meet God's standards.

PERSONAL IMPLICATIONS OF BELIEFS

As has probably been made apparent thus far, and as I have already suggested, I find a great deal of misconception, confusion, and ignorance among Secondary students concerning Christian beliefs. It is apparent also that often the Secondary student does not consider the personal implications of their belief. For example, a belief that God created the world does not lead them to consider the possibility that they are responsible to God for how they live their life. A belief that Jesus was the Son of God does not lead them to examine or consider his teachings. Again, a belief that Jesus rose from the dead does not lead them to consider the implications that this has for their personal life. The Secondary student who believes in Heaven and Hell does not seek to find out the basis upon which people will either go to Heaven or Hell when they die.

In my opinion it is not that the majority of young people are anti-God or anti-Christian, it is just that they are not aware of what the Bible teaches or of the evidence to support the Bible's authenticity and reliability. That does not mean that if they were aware they would be a convert to Christianity. That is a personal choice. One can have facts but still choose to ignore them. The simple point I make is that the young person's beliefs

concerning Christianity are usually not based upon any intelligent or thorough investigation of the evidence to support Biblical teachings. Much of what they believe is a result of what they hear, see and read in the world of the media (including movies/videos, television series, etc). Such intelligent and unbiased investigation is not offered in the media. Nor is it offered in the classroom.

THE CHRISTIAN PRESENCE OF THE CHAPLAIN

Those great life questions: “Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?” are often left unanswered for the Secondary student. I am reminded of the passage of Scripture:

“...the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How, then, can they call on the one in whom they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

(Romans 10: 12-15)

As I pointed out at the beginning it is certainly not the role of the Chaplain to preach, evangelise or proselytise. However, the Chaplain does provide a ‘formal’ Christian presence within the school community and functions and/or operates from a Christian ‘world view’. In the pastoral care of students (as well as staff and parents), it is hoped that the student sees and understands something of the love and concern God has for those whom He has created.

Those great life questions are ‘Religious’ questions because they deal with important issues relating to the meaning and purpose of life. For the enquirer, the Chaplain is able to answer those questions from a Christian perspective. It is then up to the individual to respond to that information as he/she so chooses. Our society has tended to neglect the fact that people have spiritual needs and part of the role of Chaplain is to attempt to meet the spiritual needs of those within the school community (this includes referring students to their own respective denominations or Religions where appropriate).

It should be mentioned that though Australia is a multicultural society, 73% of people in the 1986 census indicated a Christian denomination for Religious affiliation compared to the 2% who stated a non-Christian Religious affiliation (in the survey I conducted 9% indicated a non-Christian Religious affiliation). No doubt the percentage of people who claim a non-Christian Religious affiliation will have

increased since 1986 but it will still be a small percentage of the total population. The reason I make mention of this is because the argument is often put forward that Christianity has no more right to be represented in the Secondary school than any other Religion. It is apparent however, that if any Religion has the right, it is Christianity. The statistics speak for themselves.

One of the significant tasks of the Chaplain, then, is to provide information about Christianity in an unbiased, non-confusing and non-threatening fashion. Perhaps then, much of the misconception or misunderstanding which abounds could be corrected!

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Pause and Think

1. Do you agree with the statement that by-and-large Australians really don't know what the Church is all about? What can Chaplains do in order to project a more authentic and contemporary Christian image?
2. Does Australia's history of convict colonization colour the way in which most people view Christianity? Are we products of a "harsh history" and therefore see ourselves as self-sufficient and so devoid of the need for God in our lives?
3. The comment is made that "rejection of Religious affiliation among teens is on the increase." Assuming this to be so, could there be a relationship between such a trend and the increase in violence in our society?
4. Are many of those who dismiss Christianity quite ignorant regarding its basic tenants? How much can the public school system be held accountable for perpetuating such ignorance?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Steve Small has been a Chaplain at North Albany Senior High School since 1989. He is married with 3 children. Steve and his wife Jennie are part of Oyster Harbour Baptist Fellowship. Steve's interests include triathlons, competitive cycling, bushwalking and reading.

Chaplaincy Experience at North Albany Senior High School

In this brief article I intend to give insight into why I am a Chaplain, and my role within the school. But before I go on to express the reason for being a Chaplain, I offer some personal background information.

Through my life, as far as I can remember, I had a belief in a Supreme Being. However, that belief neither gave purpose for living nor direction for my life. In my early and late teens I was fairly involved with experimenting with different types of drugs as well as using alcohol on a very regular basis. The reasons for doing this were to alleviate the boredom of life and to find a sense of freedom which I didn't find in every day life. At the age of 18 I started to become disenchanted with my lifestyle. My life seemed to be without purpose or direction. I started to ask questions about God. My sister had a New Testament so I started to read it. As I read the New Testament I became convinced that Jesus was the Saviour of Humankind and my personal Saviour. I read in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus' words "believe and be baptised". I did believe in Him so I got myself baptised as soon as possible; that was the start of my Christian walk. A new sense of purpose and direction came into my life.

WHY A CHAPLAIN?

As I grew in my new found faith, my desire grew to serve God with my life. I spent 3 years studying - 2 years at Perth Bible College and 1 year at Kenmore Theological College preparing myself for future Christian Service. During and after my studies I was involved in working within the local churches I was attending, mainly with youth and young couples as well as preaching, worship leading and being involved in the general church life.

After a crisis time within my own Christian faith I started work with Jesus People Incorporated (JPI), now Perth City Mission, at the Drug and Alcohol centre in Northbridge as a youth worker. After working with JPI for a short time I left to become Chaplain of North Albany Senior High School where I have been for the past 3 years.

The overpowering reason for becoming a Chaplain, was the desire to "serve Him with my life." As we read the Old and New Testaments, we become very aware that God, the creator of all things, is very interested in His creation. Throughout the Old Testament we see God communicating and breaking into the lives of individuals as well into the life of Israel as a nation. He shows that he cares and loves people. In the New Testament, we see God's ultimate revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. In this, He shows how much He loves and cares for us by the death and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf to bring us back to God.

I believe that those who claim to follow Jesus need to show and are commissioned to show how much God loves and cares for people. That is why I am a Chaplain, namely, to show the students, staff and parents of North Albany Senior High School that God is

interested in them. In fact, He loves and cares for them and wants to enter into a personal relationship with them. Chaplaincy is all about showing people that God is interested - that he Cares. Because God cares, I care, and the way I show I care is by being involved in a practical way in the life of North Albany Senior High School.

MY ROLE WITHIN THE SCHOOL

The brief I have had for my job as Chaplain is “to be a Christian presence within the school”, or “to enhance the awareness of God within the school community.” It is up to me as to how I go about doing that - in fact, all chaplaincies are very different. It is up to individual Chaplains to develop their respective roles within each school. Our message doesn't change, but the way we go about communicating it does.

The role of the Chaplain within a school really depends upon the Chaplain's gifts, abilities and interests. These will dictate how he or she goes about making himself or herself known, and how the Chaplaincy will develop. As Chaplains within a government school we usually have to deal with the stereo-type many non-churched people have of what a Chaplain looks like and does. Many think of an old bald-headed man wearing his collar back-to-front with a huge black Bible under his arm, telling people what they should and shouldn't do. Chaplains within a secular school environment have to break down these stereo-types before our work can have an impact upon the school of which we are a part. Chaplains need to find their own way of cementing their role within the school. For me (because I am very involved with sport and outdoor activities), I have tried to be involved in as many physical education and outdoor education activities as possible. This has become one of the major ways of getting to know students as well as helping the physical education department, at times, with an extra staff member. As a Chaplain, it is vitally important to get myself known around the school if I am to have any influence upon people's lives. The following are some of the ways I go about doing that.

As I have just mentioned, my major areas of interest are physical education and outdoor education activities. These include: cycling, swimming, running, bush walking, canoeing and abseiling. These activities are invaluable for getting to know students as well as for getting myself known. I am also involved with classroom activities by way of the under achievers class; speaking on different subjects when asked; and generally dropping in on classes and seeing how kids are going - this mainly happens within the Manual Arts and Home Economics arena.

Apart from the above, there are many other areas I am involved in such as excursions and camps; following up students on work experience; being a part of school socials and other school functions; organizing or being a part of community activities such as the 40 Hour Famine, Red Shield Appeal, Walk Against Want and the School Fun Run. These are all ways I become a part of the school community. I also try to get as much

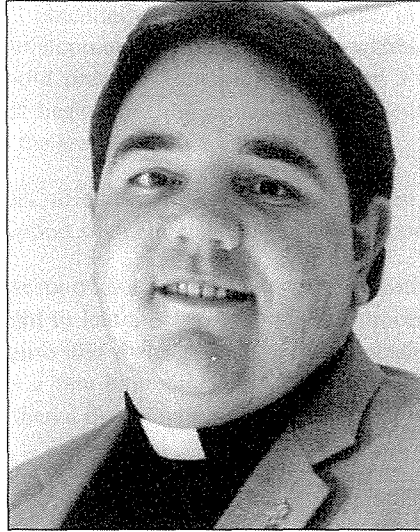
specific Christian involvement within the school as possible - e.g. Youth for Christ seminars on self esteem; Youth with a Mission - drama, mime and dance; Christian Rock bands and organising displays within the school library. The most important part of my role as a Chaplain is to offer a counselling service within the school, or should I say, listening service. All the activities I have mentioned are hopefully encouraging people to use this service - hopefully people see me as a friend and as someone they can trust. With this service I am simply offering a listening ear, being a compassionate friend and presenting a Christian perspective. A few of the hassles and questions I deal with regularly are parent/child conflict, peer group pressure, student/teacher conflict, answering questions about God and the Christian faith.

As a Chaplain I feel I need to be involved in as many areas of school life as possible, portraying a **positive** Christian presence and hopefully encouraging some to think more seriously about the Christian faith. My work is done in the here-and-now but my influence may be felt, by those with whom I come into contact, for many years to come.

Pause and Think

1. Steve Small writes, "I believe that those who claim to follow Jesus need to show and are commissioned to show how much God loves and cares for people." If this is in fact the case, how come there is so much suffering in the world and wars continue to ravage the face of the Earth? How would a Chaplain answer such a question?
2. Do individuals who are attracted to formal pastoral care-giving possess a certain type of personality? If so, what are the strengths as **well as the liabilities** of such a personality type?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Brother Michael Toohey has been part-time Chaplain at Newton Moore Senior High School in Bunbury for the last six years. He is a member of the Society of Saint Gerard Majella, an Australian Religious Order in the Catholic Church founded thirty years ago. He has been a high school teacher of Science, Mathematics and Religious Studies and since coming to Bunbury has completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Aboriginal and Intercultural studies. He is also a member of the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers and the Australian College of Education. His interests include skin-diving, coin and banknote collecting, and bonsai.

Pastoral Care and a Model for Encouragement

RATIONALE OF EDUCATION AND PASTORAL CARE

The teacher's role is to provide an environment in which individuals experience and develop toward their full potential. Therefore, the purpose of instruction at school is education; that is, the development of the person from within, freeing them from that conditioning which would prevent them from becoming a fully integrated human being. The school must begin from the principle that its educational programme is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.

If our intention is, in fact, to educate the whole person, then we need to develop an environment that will support such an integrated wholistic approach.

The development of a second-level discipline system, allowing all students a right to their education, their right to learn, is a very important process that all schools must undertake. If we recognise that there is value in the education of the whole person, and that the school has a very important role to play in this educational process for students under its care, then a discipline system, however perfect, is not enough.

For schools, the implication according to Glasser is

“that students need involvement with educators who are warm and personal and who will work with their behaviour in the present. They need teachers who will encourage them to make a value judgement of their behaviour, rather than preach or dictate; teachers who will help them to plan better behaviour and who will expect a commitment from the students that they will do what they have planned. They need teachers who will not excuse them when they fail their commitments but who will work with them again and again as they commit and re-commit, until they finally learn to fulfil a commitment, when they learn to do so they gain maturity, respect and a successful identity”.

(1969:24)

Schools therefore must move beyond a system that is based on the Autocratic model to one that encourages respect, co-operation and responsibility through the acknowledgement that each person, whether teacher or student, should be afforded the dignity and respect that is the right of every person. This system will, by its very nature and objectives, need to move far beyond that of just a discipline system to the pastoral care of each person within the school community.

Similarly, in the New Testament, the Gospel message exhorts us to afford all people dignity, respect and love. When a Scribe asked, “which is the first of all the commandments?” Jesus replied, “...you must love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12: 29-31). As a school Chaplain I consider this to be the ultimate starting point for the underlying motivation for pastoral care within a school. It is certainly, for the Chaplain, the nexus where you can meet and accept people where they are at while being at least one of the lights within the school environment that challenges people to move further, to love others more and to accept and find out more about themselves, others and God.

Concerning the enabling of students to develop toward their full potential, implicitly underpinning this premise is the belief that all students are valued and have dignity as humans, not just when they perform to the expectations of others. Gutierrez suggests that, “In our relationship with God and with others there is an inescapable personal dimension to reject a fellow human being, a possibility implicit in our freedom, is to reject God as well.” (1984:97) With this in mind we are exhorted to see structures in education accepting the student where ‘they are at’ and encouraging them to grow in all areas.

“The right education demands a transformation of heart; fundamental to this admission of sin, in its personal as well as its social forms. Education must emphasise a totally human way of life in justice, in love and simplicity. It must awaken the capacity of critical reflection on our society and on its current values; it must stimulate the readiness to reject these values when they no longer contribute to helping all persons come to the rights.”

(Gutierrez 1984: 401-402)

CHAPLAINCY AND PASTORAL CARE AT NEWTON MOORE HIGH SCHOOL

In my position as school Chaplain at Newton Moore High School I have seen the school discipline/pastoral care system at work and have felt very privileged to have been part of the overall school system. The school has worked very hard at developing the “whole school” ethos - educationally, socially, personally and spiritually - and so the supporting of the Chaplaincy concept. The Glasser system is the discipline system that has been adopted by the school and in my assessment the real value of this system is in the way it identifies negative behaviours and deals with them by providing students opportunities to think and work out their behaviour problems with their teachers while not being punitive or escalating sources of conflict in the classroom or school. The system encourages positive interaction between staff and students both in school as well as in extracurricular activities and this helps students realise that teachers see them more as people than as a number in a classroom setting. One of the areas that I thought lacking in the system was an across the school process for encouraging positive behaviours, attitudes, and recognition for student achievement. After much

deliberation with school staff and with the assistance of my chaplaincy supervisor, Brother Terence O'Loughlin SSG, I put together a system to address this and would like to share it here, especially because I believe it has been one of the areas of significant contribution that I have been able to provide to the school.

A MODEL OF ENCOURAGEMENT

PREMISE: Encouragement is a more effective motivator and change agent than discouragement.

As encouragement is a more effective motivator, all teachers need to recognise good work, good behaviour and anything at all which is above and beyond the ordinary for a particular student.

Specifically, teachers need to recognise improvement. There is no absolute standard and there is no room for teachers who argue that they will not recognise or encourage a student for doing what they should do.

The encouragement programme is designed for developing behaviour, attitude and effort; it is student-centred and works on the premise that every person can improve with a structure of encouragement. The criteria of success is changed behaviour with students accepting responsibility for their behaviour which is in accord with the school rules. The teachers should ask themselves: is encouragement an inherent part of my normal teaching process?

Teachers who find themselves answering this question in the negative are encouraged to take the following two steps:

- (a) Discuss with other teachers what they see as the best methods of encouraging students.
- (b) Seek assistance; such assistance is available from other staff, the year-centre staff and support staff such as Deputies, the Chaplain and the Guidance Officer.

The most common means of a teacher encouraging a student is via the "recognition slip".

Anything within the school context can be encouraged to occur again by the use of a recognition slip, **and should be** when it is a significant change for an individual. For example, for a student who consistently comes late to class, a recognition slip for coming on time once, then three times, then five times, etc. will gradually bring about a change in the student's behaviour. The system is consistent with the school pastoral care/discipline programme which recognises the need to encourage behaviour consistent with school rules and goals.

THE SYSTEM AT WORK

Recognition slips are given to the student to present them to his/her year centre teacher. When a recognition slip is presented, it is recorded against the student's name: Year Centre Records. The recognition counts towards both the student's own score, as well as to the cumulative score of the house faction to which the student belongs.

When a student is recognised ten times, a 10+ Recognition Certificate is presented to the student at either a House or School Assembly. This leads to a reference being placed in their personal file to be shown to prospective employers.

At Newton Moore every student's recognition progress is monitored, therefore no student could remain unnoticed for long. Year Teachers would, from time to time, publish the progressive number of times students have been recognised, and low scoring students are able to be identified and brought to the attention of all staff members. Those with low scores, once noticed by teachers, are to be kept constantly in mind by teachers during class lessons, in the yard and so on. The Guidance Officer, Chaplain, School Nurse and Aboriginal Education Worker may also be consulted to offer general or specific advice in regard to particular students.

The "inform parents" clause is used from time to time, to let parents know that positive things are happening, and to give students a real sense of immediate recognition which can be shared with parents.

OCCASIONS FOR RECOGNISING STUDENTS

By way of example only, a student may be recognized for exhibiting the following: being polite, friendly even with isolates, wears uniform, apologises when appropriate, helps others even when there is no personal gain, neat work, work presented on time, cares for equipment, gets work done quickly and well, sticks at a job even though it may be very difficult, follows routine instructions quickly, is punctual, does work in spare time, tells the truth even when this may mean that certain consequences must be faced, hands in lost property, helps out younger students, contributes in group discussion. **And of course;** changes in a previously discussed unacceptable response by acting more in line with school rules.

Be aware of the trap of:

- (a) telling the student what you don't like,
- (b) telling the student what you would prefer,

then, failing to notice that the student has done what you've asked.

REMEMBER

Encourage rather than discourage

Encourage rather than praise

Recognise individual differences

Encouragement enables students to accept recognition. It describes the student's behaviour and the responsibility of ownership remains with the student

Notice all students, respect them as individuals

Encourage regularly and systematically

Seek assistance from the House Centre, Guidance Officer, School Nurse, School Chaplain, Aboriginal Education Worker, Youth Education Officer, Deputies, etc.

References

Glasser, W. (1969). **Schools without failure**. New York: Harper and Rowe.

Gutierrez, G. (1984). **We drink from our own wells**. Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis/Dove.

Pause and Think

1. What's with all this fuzzy "touchy feely" stuff? Aren't schools there to provide knowledge? Isn't it, after all, increased knowledge that will make this a better world in which to live?
2. What do you think that Gutierrez means when he writes, "The right education demands a transformation of heart; fundamental to this admission of sin, in its personal as well as its social forms"?

The notion of "sin" seems to be a peculiarly Christian one. Would a Chaplain, then, define "a right education" differently to the way it would be defined by a secular pastoral care-giver?

3. What do you think of a "whole school" approach to what has been termed a "second-level discipline system"? Should the Chaplain or formally appointed pastoral care-giver, in fact, be part of such an ethos or ought he/she to remain outside such school-system imposed constraints?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



Pauline Webb is in her fifth year as Chaplain at Swan View Senior High School. She is married with three grown-up children and currently worships at Claremont Baptist Church. Her background includes eighteen years working in student hostels. Pauline enjoys swimming, cycling and walking.

A Day in the Life of a Chaplain

They are already waiting for me! Good kids, I enjoy their company. They are just waiting for a quick chat before class begins. They are keen to tell me about their Year II History excursion today.

The siren sounds and the girls hurry off to class. A staff member rushes in; what can she do with a very upset mother on her telephone? The problem is really one for the police, but the child is not attending school. As if on cue the truancy officer appears and I refer the problem to him.

A note is delivered to me from a teacher who has reached the end of her tether with a boy. She's a good teacher, very experienced and very patient, also very caring of her students. So I'll see the boy this afternoon during her next class with him.

Time to fit in some phone calls. The mother who rang me yesterday so concerned about her 16 year old son, she was feeling quite ill at the time. I'll call her now, inquire about her health and assure her that I have spoken with her son. Must ring "Moving Images" next, I really want to arrange for them to perform at our Easter Assembly. Bother, I can't raise anyone there, I'll try again later. Now for the Department of Community Services. I've been working with a family, they are most concerned that their daughter has been placed in an undesirable foster home. The Officer in Charge is not available today. I'll make a note to try again tomorrow. Contacted "Moving Images", they are not available for Easter but have a promising new production for High Schools for next term. Now to raise the funds! I'd really like to be able to offer them to each year separately.

One of the staff members stops me, she's having a difficult time at the moment. I talk with her, and then another who is feeling particularly sad. A teacher comes to tell me that she's referred a worried mother to me. I remember that mother from last term.

The nurse isn't at school this morning. Time to do my "heal the sick" bit. I hope this boy's wrist isn't broken. He insists he doesn't want to go home, so an icepack and a firm bandage with instructions to show Mum straight after school. But the boy with the bad headache would be better at home. It's the aftermath of an accident. Mum would want him home, no phone there though so I'll take him home.

There's a boy waiting to see me. Just wanted to tell me that his dog has been hit by a car. But he's recovering now, a bit battered but on the mend. His friend tells me how bad it was when his dog died.

Recess time and there's a face peering in at my window. There's the usual little group of visitors waiting to see me. But today they need to wait a few minutes. A staff member is talking to me about three students who have what seem like

insurmountable problems. I've worked with them all before and prayed a lot for them too. Where to go from here?

Then in troop the little group, eager to chat about everything from problems at home to their latest loves. Up go all the little hearts and names on my white board and I try to include every student in the chatter.

As the siren sounds and the group scampers off to class three girls come in requesting to see me. I'm sure they just want to avoid class but each one has massive problems at home so I'm glad for the chance to talk with them. I don't know how much help I am to these three but they know I care and I'll listen to them.

The Youth Worker from the local church calls in next. We run the ISCF (Interschool Christian Fellowship) group together and he's come to talk over plans for the group and for the proposed Easter Assembly. We discuss ways of encouraging Christian students to be involved in ISCF; then we pray together and he stays on to chat with the students who arrive at lunchtime for more social chat. Students wander in and out and there are about eight students at any one time. Lunchtime has proved to be a valuable time of getting to know the kids - it's amazing what I learn! It also gives them a chance to have a good look at me. Out of this group has developed our ISCF group - all non-Christians.

Immediately after lunch two ex students pop in to see me. One has transferred to another school as she believes she can't shake off the poor image she has gained with the teaching staff here. So perhaps with a new start she can do well. The other girl has started work. Both are eager to tell me their news and to know what has been happening at school.

I ring a mother whose son is in Longmore Prison. She is certain of her son's innocence and both she and her son are in the depths of despair. I am able to tell the Mum that I visited her son yesterday.

Final period of the day arrives and three girls who have been fighting come to my door. We talk over the whole situation, one girl apologizes but as we talk a second girl tells me how her father hits her when he is drunk. She shows me the evidence and with her permission I call the nurse in for help. The fourth girl arrives, she just needs a cuddle and to be told she's loved.

The girls leave and I snatch the last few minutes of the day with the nurse as we discuss the problem we have just encountered and one or two other difficulties within the school. We even manage a cup of coffee together. It's a real help to me that we relate so well to each other.

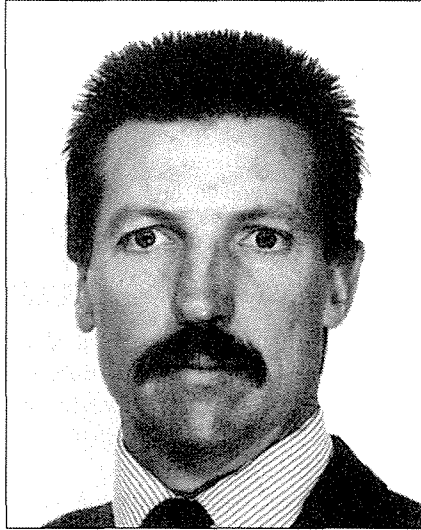
Goodness, another day gone, and still a list of students I need to see. One girl was asking for me so I've sent a note to let her know she's not forgotten.

I wonder what tomorrow will hold!

Pause and Think

1. Should full-time pastoral care-givers be assigned specific "non contact" times during which they are not to be disturbed in any way, and so be able to take care of administrative tasks, make 'phone calls, complete records, preview videos, etc?
2. When Pauline submitted this manuscript she attached a little note, "I wasn't quite sure what to write so I thought I'd describe a real day instead of make one up." Having just read what she wrote, do you think that school Chaplaincy constitutes a high-stress job?

B I O G R A P H I C A L S K E T C H



James Yates was a full time Chaplain at Kelmscott Senior High School. In December 1989 he left Kelmscott and moved to California USA, to complete further studies. He has since returned to Perth WA, where he is seeking another Chaplaincy position. He is married with three children. He and his family fellowship at Calvary Chapel of Perth in Thornlie. His interests include swimming, reading, chess, bush walking, physical fitness training and Bar-B-Qs with friends. Jim also enjoys exploring the great Australian outdoors.

Postscript:

Jim is now in his second year of Chaplaincy at the Cannington Senior High School.

The Relevance of a Chaplain in a Government School

INTRODUCTION

I was delighted to have been asked to write about some of my experiences as a Chaplain at Kelmscott Senior High School. I certainly enjoyed the nineteen months that I was a Chaplain. (May 1987 - December 1989). Out of all my past employment positions this was the most rewarding and fulfilling experience for me.

I was thankful to have the support of the Principal, the School Board, the year coordinators, the nurse, the psychologist and the social worker. I met dedicated and professional teachers at Kelmscott and of course many, many students who let me share a part of their life.

THE UNIQUE CHAPLAINCY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

In contrast to the USA public school system, the Churches' Commission on Education is privileged to have Chaplains work in the WA secondary school system. In the USA it is a violation of the Constitution which separates Church and State. It is ironic that the USA, founded by Christian Pilgrims fleeing from Europe, does not allow Chaplains to work in government schools. It is a paradox that America, with its constitutional freedom of religion, is really not free to have Chaplains work in public schools. In contrast to America, Australia has no Freedom of Religion enshrined in a constitution and is free to have Chaplains in public schools.

A CONTRAST OF HISTORY

History shows America began with the "founding fathers" sharing a religious faith and applying Christian values and principles to governing politics and education. Today however, the specific teaching of religious values and principles is outlawed from classrooms in America.

History shows Australia, which was not founded with Christian values, at least allows these values to be explored and promulgated in the school system.

But why draw such a contrast? Are there any effects of such a contrast? What difference does it make, if any, to have a Chaplaincy programme in a school?

CHAPLAINCY ENHANCES EDUCATION WITH VALUES

It is my opinion that a school Chaplaincy programme offers its students a broader education. It can present the student with another philosophy (value system) other than secularism, agnosticism or humanism. There is no such thing as a value-free education. So why not include Christian values in education? True learning does not limit its source of education.

A Chaplain's witness in the school can give student a fixed reference point outside of themselves, expanding their thinking. For example, creation is a matter of faith and so is evolution. But if I am created in the image of God then there is a God who is personally interested in me. This awareness can foster for the student, a meaning and purpose to their life where there may previously have been none.

Which is inclined to give the student a better self-esteem? The evolutionary value system that says we are a product of random chance existing on a mere animalistic level or the value system that says each individual student is a unique creation of God?

Another consideration is that a Chaplain's witness represents to the students a fixed value system other than relativism. If students have a fixed theological value system then they will experience less ambiguity, confusion and cognitive dissonance when faced with moral and ethical decisions. Such a value system will help to build the student's character.

A Chaplain's witness provides for a more balanced holistic education. A Chaplain deals with the spiritual aspect of the human. Communication with the Creator God is on a spiritual level but you will not find that topic offered in a Communications class.

All in all, I believe that a Chaplaincy programme in a government school offers to the student a more integrated, holistic form of education by teaching a plausible explanation of life and a valid, viable value system.

This is logical and reasonable when you realize that thousands of parents prefer their children, and pay for them, to be in private schools where Christian values form the ethos of the school.

My experiences as a Chaplain at Kelmscott, (at that time the largest of the secondary schools in WA) is the basis of my opinions. I also realized that there are stages that a Chaplain goes through when working in a high school. The first stage is one of impression. The next stage is either acceptance or rejection.

FIRST IMPRESSION AND THE STAGE OF ACCEPTANCE

When I first started my ministry at Kelmscott, I was very aware that I was under the microscope. The people looking at me most closely were the teachers. They wanted to know what I was about. For the first few months they watched me from a distance, I was the new chum in school and it was important to me and the Chaplaincy that I earn their acceptance and respect. During this time I was working to establish relations with students as well. It was just as important to initiate a rapport with them.

I remember the first day at work that a parent came in to seek help for her son, a student at KSHS. I did not have the time to get my office organized first. I had to stare

at her over a pile of books. One of the first comments out of her mouth was that I did not look like a Chaplain. It would not be the last time I was to hear that comment.

Eventually, the year co-ordinators started using me more and more to help troubled students. The year co-ordinators carry a heavy responsibility for all sorts of things pertaining to their year class students in addition to teaching. They just did not have the time to deal with every troubled student who came to them. When the year co-ordinator did take the time they were often late getting to their class. When they asked me to help out it was a sign to me that I had passed their close scrutiny. Some of the students needed an hour to unburden themselves and for some it took more than one session. A team approach was developed between myself and the year co-ordinators. At our meetings I would keep them informed as to what had transpired with the student.

We have heard the saying that first impressions of people are lasting. I learned quickly that most people expect Chaplains to look like Moses or wear something that identifies them as a Chaplain. I did not even have a sign on my office door that said Chaplain.

I was attending a Chaplains' conference in Perth. Most of the Chaplains were there. We were all different sizes, ages and shapes. There was no conventional dress. I was sitting with three or four other Chaplains that I knew. I noticed a guy in his mid-twenties walking in our direction. He was wearing a pink tank-top, white shorts, tennis shoes and no socks. When he sat down next to me I noticed he had shaved the hair off his legs and arms. He said he was a new Chaplain. The rest of us were speechless. What do you say to a male Chaplain who shaves his legs? He noticed that we noticed so he gave us an explanation. He said he was a triathlete and had just competed in a triathlon a week before, placing in the top ten. I breathed a sigh of relief. Incidentally, I believe he gained immediate acceptance in the physical education department at the school where he was Chaplain.

WHAT IS A CHAPLAIN?

Being a Chaplain goes beyond the outward appearance, it goes deeper than the physical manifestation. A Chaplain is a person who cares for and has genuine empathy with young people. The Chaplain has a personality that relates well with the students. The students must see the Chaplain as a person who openly and actively demonstrates care. A Chaplain is a person who befriends the lonely, comforts the hurting, accepts the rejected and speaks peace to the confused souls in that school. A Chaplain is a person who is there, who listens, helps to guide and just as important, to laugh and enjoy fun with the students. Essentially, the Chaplain is a person who is friendly and approachable.

I remember a time when I came to the help of, shall I say, not a popular student with the teachers. He was a discipline problem but this time the teacher treated him unfairly. A Chaplain should be concerned about justice so I spoke to the teacher. I alienated the teacher although I did not intend to do so. The teacher chose not to change the course of action taken. I dropped the issue. The next day the father came to the school and spoke to the principal. The principal in turn addressed the issue to all the teachers in the staff room at morning tea. A big deal was made of it because a school guide-line had been violated.

The point is that when I went to bat for that student, he knew I was genuine. Chaplains walk a fine line of being an advocate between the student and the teacher. Sometimes we can be seen as taking sides. The positive aspect of that situation is, that the student brought his friends in for help and word spread in the school. My relationship with that teacher was healed and some time later, we worked closely together.

My rapport with that student helped another teacher who was having difficulty with him. I was requested by the teacher to come to the classroom. The student was acting strangely. He went into the corner of the classroom and seemed to be crying. I went in and we went to my office for another long talk. His family was very mixed up. Many students act out their home problems at school. Incidentally, that teacher later came into my office seeking to make some sense and direction in her own personal life, even though she was not religious herself.

A SNOWBALL EFFECT OF ACCEPTANCE

As a snowball rolls down hill it gathers more and more snow. As a Chaplain in a school, one event often leads to another and another. It is very much a cause and effect ministry. I never knew what would happen next.

I was quietly sitting in my office working at my desk when suddenly two girls burst in and plopped down on the chairs. I had talked with these two before but this time they began to heatedly yell at each other. I found myself acting as a moderator. I knew they were best of friends but it looked as if their friendship was seriously at risk. We got things sorted out, they reached an understanding and departed. It was a matter of poor communication at its worst. They were not listening to and so not hearing each other. So many of the problems I handled were of this sort, dysfunctional communication. One of the challenges of this ministry was to help facilitate an understanding between people regarding their dysfunction and discover new methods of communication and interaction. But these two girls were like a whirlwind blowing into my office and out leaving me to catch my breath.

I recall another time when two students sheepishly walked into my office. Their faces were pale white. The two had been reported as missing and it was feared they had run away. But here they were in my office. They were as scared as little rabbits. I found out they had taken a cocktail of several drugs and it was obvious they were getting very sick. We quickly went to the Nurse's office and from there an ambulance rushed them to hospital where they had their stomachs pumped and recovered.

Another event which I remember with clarity is the Christmas assembly. I was told that the school had not had a Christmas assembly in seven or eight years. I thought it would be a good thing to have one. The Principal was very warm and accommodating towards the idea. My plan was to sing some Christmas carols and have a guest speaker. I put the words to the carols on a large screen in the front of the auditorium so the students would sing along. But they would not sing. An effort by the Principal was made to get the students singing. He said he would sing the first line and then the students could join in. Of course the students thought it was great fun to hear the Principal sing solo. I was becoming embarrassed because the assembly was not going well. What saved it was the guest speaker from The Living Stones Foundation. As he started to address the students a silent hush fell over the auditorium as the students tuned in to what he was saying. He did not preach but he related to the students at their level. He was communicating in a dimension that held their attention. He spoke about the true meaning of Christmas.

A STAGE REVIEW

I mentioned earlier that a Chaplain, when new at a school, goes through stages. Stage one is about the type of impression we make and people's perception of us. The impression we give people is influenced by our physical appearance, dress and the way we communicate. Also the level of interest we show or fail to show in people influences their impression of us. People will have preconceived notions about Religion and Chaplains so this too, will colour their impression. The Chaplain's personality in general, influences his/her ministry.

I said the next stage is acceptance or rejection. Once acceptance is gained then the workload of the Chaplain will increase. Acceptance is influenced by the manner in which the Chaplain uses wisdom to counsel students. Acceptance is also gained by mixing with students and staff. In short, the Chaplain's acceptance is influenced by how well they relate and interact with students and staff.

Up till now I have not spoken about the stage of rejection. As Chaplains, we should be prepared for some personal rejection. This is natural and should not easily offend us. What is meant by rejection is, when the Chaplain, overall, does not assimilate into the school. Reasons for this vary. It can be that the Chaplain is over zealous in the

presentation of Christianity. It can be that the Chaplain does not use good judgement when dealing with people. It can be that the Chaplain is just not in touch with young people.

However, I believe the Churches' Commission on Education goes to great lengths to minimize this happening in the screening process. And rightly so because something like rejection of a Chaplain can be very damaging for the cause of Christ and it would make it difficult for the next Chaplain to operate in the school.

CONCLUSION

I think a Chaplain in a high school gives the school extra character and benefits. I found that the school is now dealing with more and more social problems because many young people are being neglected by their parents at home. The pastoral care structure of a government school can be enriched by a Chaplain's ministry. I believe my ministry at Kelmscott Senior High School helped those students, parents and teachers who sought out my help. It promoted the welfare of people. That's why it is relevant.

I am convinced that one of our best resources and investments we have for the future is our children. To help mold and guide them into adulthood is one of life's greatest challenges and responsibilities. Tragically, I found many parents who have abnegated the challenge and responsibility. Chaplains are there to stand in the gap. I found so many religiously illiterate students. Religious jargon and theological idioms meant nothing to them, but they responded to the care and interest shown to them.

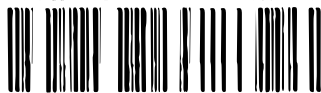
It is imperative that Churches effectively reach this generation of young people with the message of faith, hope and love. Churches can make more of a contribution towards fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ by sending a Chaplain into a government school with that very message. Chaplains in schools are in a position to minister to people who would never set foot in a Church. Chaplains can reach the otherwise unreachable. Again, that's why it is relevant.

Working at KSHS was one of the most rewarding and personally satisfying things I have ever done. It is a great privilege to work as a Chaplain. I realize that Chaplaincy is a calling and not just a job. It is an investment in people and what is more important than that?

Pause and Think

1. Is it true to say that “there is no such thing as value-free education”? Surely our public school teachers do not bring their personal values, biases and prejudices into the classroom! Or do they?
2. Jim speaks of stages through which Chaplains pass during the formative years of their Chaplaincy. Do you think that the “stage model” is a viable one here? If so, what are some of the possible stages and what would cause a Chaplain to move from one to another?
3. From your experience, could it be stated that the majority of interpersonal conflicts have dysfunctional forms of communication at their core? Would a Chaplain or other skilled pastoral care-giver be the right person to offer mini-courses in communication skills?

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