

University Ecumenical Chaplaincy Chairperson's Report for AGM 25 March 2025

1. University 'State of Play'

For 2024 the University of Waikato experienced a modest level of recovery in terms of both domestic enrolments and international students. While not yet at pre-covid levels these at least were trending in the direction of improvement. As a result, the University of Waikato avoided the substantial staffing cuts experienced by other universities - notably Victoria and Otago. However the deficit still outstanding at the end of the 2024 year represents a significant challenge to the university budget for 2025.

However, the biggest financial challenge for the university in 2025 will undoubtedly be the possible cessation of interim 'lifeline' funding (4% extra per student) which the Labour government initiated in 2023 for a two year period. This funding is due to cease in September this year and indications are that it will not be renewed. If so, this will be, in essence, a 4% cut to current university funding.

2. Financial Position of the Chaplaincy

2024 was a mixed year. In terms of donations from the Kaimai Presbytery, these were lower than 2023, reflecting the tougher economic environment. Expenditure as recorded in the accounts is also lower than usual for most of the year because of the continuing difficulties in eliciting an accurate invoice from the university for the church contribution of 50% of the Ecumenical Chaplain's salary.

However, I am pleased to say that due to the sterling efforts of Jo Knight and Jill Schumacher, the billing process has finally been resolved and a 'catchup' invoice from the university was issued by the end of 2024. Regular quarterly invoices can be expected for 2025.

Other expenditure was within budget expectations. The decision was made during 2023 to dispose of the chapel organ, and this will help reduce ongoing expenditure in 2025 as we no longer pay maintenance fees.

Upgrades to the AV capability in the chapel were undertaken and funded by the university as per the partnership agreement for chapel cost splitting.

3. Assistant chaplains (Voluntary)

2024 saw the continuation of the ministry of our assistant chaplain(voluntary) (Nick Goodwin) who was appointed in December 2022. He continued in his ongoing ministry during 2024 and appreciated the benefits that an official position in the university system provided, such as easier room bookings, a university email address, and recognition of his work in the university.

Some work has been done in 2024 seeking to expand this element of the chaplaincy ministry as an area for development in 2025. I had email and Zoom conversations

with other university chaplains about the processes they use for recruiting voluntary chaplains. Two local churches (one Baptist, one Anglican/Presbyterian co-operating parish) have been identified as possible local faith communities who already have an interest in being more active in ministry in the university context. This year we will progress this to canvas these two churches for suitable applicants for voluntary chaplaincy.

4. Ecumenical Chaplain's 2024 Performance Review

I was invited by Jo to participate in Andrew's performance review, which was completed and noted the contribution Andrew makes to the Health team as well as his wider ministry in the university.

5. Chaplaincy Committee Operation

Chaplaincy committee attendance was at about the same level as 2023. Two new chaplaincy committee members, Rev. Kelly Gilson (Presbyterian) and Rev. Grace Chamberlain (Baptist) were added to the membership this year, filling these two gaps in church representation. We are grateful for their commitment.

My thanks to all the committee members who attended and gave their time for the oversight of this ministry. Your effort is appreciated.

A big thank you to Jill Schumacher for her work as secretary and processing accounts during 2024. She will be continuing as secretary to the chaplaincy committee in a voluntary capacity in 2025.

Stephen Bright
Chairperson
3 March 2025