

# University of Waikato Ecumenical Chaplain

## Report to the Chaplaincy Committee AGM

### March 2025

It has been quite a year, mostly positive! The most difficult part was navigating my prostate cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment, but I have been discharged back to the care of my GP, and all is well now. Highlights of the year have been forging a new relationship with Brett McEwan in his role as Director of Student Support and Pastoral Care, and growing a team of volunteer chaplains. I'm very much looking forward to what the next 12 months will bring.

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

##### POSITION PURPOSE

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

##### KEY TASKS

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

#### Lead Worship

Our regular Tuesday Eucharists continue with one or two changes in the people attending. Rose Stokes, a new volunteer chaplain, is assisting here periodically with a gospel reflection. Nick Goodwin has begun a short service on Monday mornings which seems to be averaging half a dozen students. I have been helping to resource a new initiative by Auntie Rosemilly Teaheniu, a Solomon Islander and the Pacific Island voice

on the Student Union executive. Rosemilly has begun a monthly worship service in the chapel for the various Pacific Island communities. A couple of particularly joyful occasions were when I officiated at two marriages last year, one a colleague, and one the daughter of a colleague.

## Liaise with Christian Groups

TSCF (Tertiary Students Christian Fellowship) continues to be one of the most active Christian groups on campus, and Nick has partnered with St Francis Hillcrest in a food distribution programme on Thursdays. Father JP will talk about WaiCath, but I am glad to see they are starting a mid-week Mass again after a gap of several years post-COVID. Student Life work mainly around The Pā and Oranga Lake but keep their gear in the chapel, while Arise Church held an event in the chapel for young adults recently. They have new leadership and haven't yet confirmed if they wish to make a regular booking.

## Liaise with Churches

The relationship with St Peter in the City in Tauranga is flourishing, with four volunteers assisting on our Tauranga campus and growing support for the student accommodation there. I was invited to preside at Sunday worship in Ōtorohanga recently and used the "sermon slot" to talk about my work in chaplaincy. I continue to wave the chaplaincy flag at a national level through my membership of the Anglican Tikanga Pākehā Ecumenical Group (TPEG) and the national Anglican/Catholic dialogue (ARCCANZ). I had hoped to host the latter group later this year, but the Catholic bishop had to reschedule our meetings and so it will probably be 2026 before I am able to welcome them to the Waikato. I liaise with other faith groups through my position as Vice-President of the Waikato Interfaith Council.

## Chapel Usage

The regular users listed in last year's report continue, with the addition of the Kirikiriroa Autistic Women's Group, and the Solomon Island Students' Association. The original SDA church left at the end of last year seeking larger premises. However, a small group have continued to meet in the chapel. With the addition of a Chinese Pentecostal Church, we now have the chapel fully booked on weekends, with five groups meeting every weekend, and a further three groups meeting one weekend a month each. Thinking Matters, an apologetics group, meet every second month. The average over the next five weeks is 18 separate bookings each week! And of course, there are many casual users who drop in for prayer or study, or just to relax in the quiet space. So many people have praised the ambience of the space.

## Conduct Informal Study Groups

After ten years, I have stood down from hosting the Tuesday afternoon study group, though there may be a group continuing with support from Rose. This year, I am initiating an interfaith group for staff and students, with support from Teresa Fernandez

of Waikato College. Our intention is to examine the various practices that most faiths share – fasting, feasting, fixed daily prayer, liturgical seasons, etc. – to share how they assist us in our spiritual wellbeing. I have also reached out to the new coordinator of our Wellbeing Hub with the intention of offering some workshops on Contemplative Photography later in the year.

## Liaise with Chaplaincy Teams

I continue to work closely with the leadership team of our national chaplains' association, ANZTCA. This year, a key project will be designing a framework for training chaplains of faiths other than Christian. We will begin with the existing Muslim chaplains in Auckland and Dunedin, but hope to have a framework that we can extend to include Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, etc.

## The Waikato Chaplaincy Team

At Tauranga, the Rev'd Enosa Auva'a has handed over the coordination of our volunteers at St Peter's to John Buxton. As I transition from working there on Wednesdays to Thursdays from 20<sup>th</sup> March, coverage on Tuesdays and Wednesdays will be provided by John and his team: Angela Robinson, Karen Caldwell, and Marion Sanders. On the Hamilton campus, I expect that Nick Goodwin will be joined by Lin Chu from Hillcrest Baptist Church, and Rose Stokes from St Francis Hillcrest, subject to completion of the necessary paperwork. Dave Tabrum from St Francis has also expressed interest in becoming a volunteer. Some of you may remember Rose who interned with me a couple of years ago, and also provided cover for the Wellbeing Hub when Suzy Fourie was away. I'm very pleased to have a chaplaincy team on each campus that models diversity in theology, gender, and ethnicity.

## Safe and Healthy Environment

I'm looking forward to renewing my Mental Health First Aid Accreditation once the refresher courses become available. The usual round of fire drills continue. The only excitement in 2024 was when a minor motor vehicle accident in front of the chapel escalated with one of the cars being reversed into Chapel Lake. The car ended up being a write-off but the driver was safely returned to terra firma. Our marketing team wrote up a lovely piece for the University news under the headline "Lola the Corolla takes a swim." Otherwise, I have nothing new to report in this area.

## Other Events and Activities

2024 was the second year of our three-year promotion of "Hauora and Diversity." Once again, I ran a cooking demonstration featuring healthy, nutritious, and inexpensive hummus that's easy to prepare. We provided a tasting for 50 or so students, and gave away another 50 DIY hummus packs with dried chickpeas and recipes. For 2025, I will conclude the promotion with a simple refried bean dish that can be served with salads or tacos etc.

Following 2024's office-sharing trial with Brett McEwan, I have granted Brett exclusive use of the small office. In return, the chaplaincy has gained an upgraded AV setup for the chapel (new microphones, a 75inch monitor on a trolley to replace our antiquated data projector, and two PTZ cameras and cabling to facilitate the live-streaming of events). We also gained heat pumps for the three offices which have made for a much more comfortable working environment, particularly in the heat of summer.

This year, the small lounge will be refurbished to accommodate the library. It will also incorporate two hot-desks for the use both of students and our counsellors/Mental Health nurses when the latter's consultation rooms are at capacity. We will retain a lounge area for small groups and individuals.

## Personal Matters

I am pleased to report that my cancer treatment has been concluded successfully, and my PSA levels have returned to normal. I still have a mild case of anaemia, so energy levels are about 80% of usual, and a brain fog is causing some issues with short-term memory (where did I put those keys, what did I come into this room to get? etc). Christine and I recently celebrated our tenth wedding anniversary, and we shall be on leave from just after Easter until the end of May on the holiday that should have happened last year. We'll be visiting Belgium, Italy and Croatia.

## In Conclusion

I am ever grateful for the support and encouragement of our chair, Stephen, and my line manager, Jo. I believe it has been mutually beneficial having Brett in his role as Director of Student Services and Pastoral Care working physically so close by. I'm excited by the opportunities for collaboration as we grow the chaplaincy team and work to ensure compliance with the 2021 Code of Practice for Pastoral Care.

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

*Rev'd Andrew McKean TSSF – 14 March 2025*