

Welcoming the Stranger - Radical Hospitality as the Core Value of Peace-building in an Age of Pluralism

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Presented at the International Symposium:

The Strategic Role of Religious Education in the Development of a Culture of Peace. 10-13 September, 2012. Bogor, Indonesia.

Abstract:

This paper outlines how a multifaith collaboration of religious leaders developed in a Religious Centre in a secular university against the resistance of a hard-line Christian hegemony.

Through this experience, the value and practice of hospitality, as understood within world religions, was identified as a unifying theme for transformation toward a culture of peace.

The community of colleagues representing major world faiths, embedded in the university, has become a resource for the university and the wider community.

The paper will draw on these experiences to outline

- principles within the process which have given rise to an inclusive, safe space for students and staff
- the model of interfaith engagement among the religious leaders at Flinders
- principles which guide their collaboration
- principles which may guide other communities in developing a culture of peace.

Context

Australia has a history of difficulty dealing institutionally with racial difference. For example, the Aboriginal people of Australia were not given voting rights until 1967. One of the first acts of the newly federated Australia in 1901 was to pass laws known as The White Australia Policy that intentionally restricted non-white immigration to Australia. This was not dismantled until the 1970's, allowing the settlement of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugees following the Vietnam War.

Difficulty with religious difference has accompanied this history, even though white settlement in Australia was accompanied by contributions from people of diverse faiths and this contribution has continued throughout its history. Institutional resistance to cooperation with people of other faiths is a reflection of a view of Australia from its foundations as essentially white and masculine. Conservative protestant evangelical Christians fitted well with this culture.

Evangelicalism was derived from Fundamentalism, which rose to prominence in the USA early in the twentieth century, with an emphasis on the literal reading of the Bible. Their reading that all non-believers go to hell creates urgency in their motivation to convert others and often arrogance in their attitude, believing themselves to be the only true believers. (Addendum 1, a paper initiating discussion at

a Christian- Muslim Dialogue at *Oasis*, posits a brief explanation of how Christian Fundamentalism arose.)

This paper addresses the development of a culture of peace by relating the experiences of the development of a multifaith collaboration of religious leaders in a secular university in the face of resistance by a hard-line Christian hegemony.¹

The arena for this development was the contested space of a religious centre at the heart of Flinders University, in Adelaide, South Australia. The Religious Centre was a gift to the university by the Christian churches and the Jewish community of Adelaide at the university's inauguration in 1968. It was intended by its donors to be "for the spiritual benefit of students and staff",² "...for the well-being of the university and all who study here."³

However, reflecting the societal religious consensus at the time, the Religious Centre was conceived as a *Christian* Centre, both in its form, architecturally as an adapted church design, and its staffing, four chaplains from the majority Christian denominations in South Australia.

Thirty years later, when I began my chaplaincy at Flinders, significant changes had taken place in university life and the wider society.

1. The cost of education had risen and university student fees had been introduced.

As a result the majority of students worked in part-time jobs to assist meeting the costs of their education while they were studying. This meant that students spent less time on campus, with less time to engage in extra-curricular student activities, freely chosen activities the universities had always valued as part of a well-rounded liberal education. Religious societies fell within this extra-curricular domain, which had now come under pressure. As a result, attendance at meetings of religious societies declined, creating a crisis of identity among the chaplains, who were expected by their sponsors to minister to their adherents in the traditional ways - which depended on students attending meetings.

2. Universities had internationalized.

The increase in students and staff from other countries challenged any mono-cultural and mono-religious hegemony. Cultural inclusivity became an important challenge to the university, but it didn't seem a priority for the churches at the time.

3. Economic Rationalism

Underlying these changes was a political shift in Australia towards what could loosely be described as economic rationalism – a need for justification of strategy and action by the funders of universities on the basis of economically judged outcomes. Universities seemed to have become more competitive for

¹ Boyce, Geoff *An Improbable Feast – the surprising dynamic of hospitality at the heart of multifaith chaplaincy* (Self-published 2010)

² Quoted from the original agreement between the University and the Heads of Christian Churches, also reproduced in the Flinders University Union's Procedures Manual, section 4: Services and Facilities (1998. p 88)

³ As stated by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Mellis Napier in declaring the Religious Centre open, November 17, 1968 (reported in the *The Advertiser*, 8 Nov 1968).

students and the dollar. University staff seemed to be swamped with compliance to increased regulation, drawn away from their traditional core business of research and teaching. The outcome for staff was similar to the effect of fees on students - decreased time for any extra-curricular activities with students.

4. Decline among sponsorship of religious life on campus.

Coincidentally with declining numbers at meetings on campus, in the wider society the traditional churches were also in decline. The four Christian chaplains at Flinders decided to come together and offer combined programs. However, even this was not successful in developing a sizeable core of students to meet regularly. Gradually most of the religious clubs and societies on campus collapsed and chaplaincy was cut back by its sponsors or terminated altogether. But, by and large, the churches failed to understand and address the underlying issues of change that were producing decline.

During this thirty-year period, a hard-line Christian group had emerged, breaking away from the one Christian ecumenical group established at the inauguration of the university. This so-called evangelical group⁴ was sponsored by an external international organisation. They were focused on the aggressive marketing of their ideology and the winning of others to their cause.⁵ Their combative behaviour contributed to the demise of other Christian associations, and eventually they won dominance in the Religious Centre through weight of numbers and occupation of it. Recoiling from their offense, other students on campus disengaged from anything offered within the Religious Centre. It had become an unsafe place. It had also become unsafe for the chaplains, who retreated to their offices to meet with small numbers of students committed to their Christian denomination. The constant presence of the evangelicals posed an ongoing challenge to the chaplains, constantly goaded to become religious competitors.

However, in 1997, the year I commenced as chaplain at Flinders, a new group formed on campus, the Pagan Association, which claimed equal rights to use of the Religious Centre, challenging the dominance of the evangelical group.

My commission by the Uniting Church was to be chaplain to all within the university. Therefore, although I might not agree with their religious beliefs, I was charged to support their right to use the centre. As a result I sometimes found myself in the seeming unlikely position of advocating for the rights of the Pagans against the aggressive intent on dominance by the evangelical group. This was not understood or appreciated by allies of the evangelical group in the churches and resulted in pressure on my church to terminate my commission.

However, the unlikely introduction of a foreign third party, the Pagans, reframed the intra-religious in-fighting among the Christians, in particular, between the hard-line

⁴ "So called" because I considered myself an evangelical, but not one intent on imposing one's views on others.

⁵ The evangelical group was very successful in recruiting students to their cause. They were strategic at meeting enrolling students, offering friendship and inviting them to meetings. Their meetings were friendly and well structured, invariably focusing on a Bible Study from their leader and a relatively narrow message about salvation from sin. There was pressure to accept the message of the leader without question. I believe they were successful because students entering university for the first time and at that stage of life are vulnerable to a message of seeming security, reinforced by the apparent friendliness of the group.

evangelical group and the chaplains from the traditional established churches. Initially, for some, the Pagans became the common enemy. But for me, my focus became how to welcome the stranger.

Steps in the Development of a Culture of Peace

So what conditions helped those of us who wanted to work toward the development of a culture of peace in the Religious Centre?⁶

Just as the Pagans became a third party that reframed intra-Christian tension within the Religious Centre, the introduction or recognition of other third parties became important in its resolution.

1. The secular governance of the university

The context of the hostility within the Religious Centre was the secular university, which had higher powers to enact its own rules to protect its own culture; in particular, its determination for equity and cultural inclusivity and its valuing of social cohesion.

When the evangelical group set out to attack the Pagans, the chaplains appealed to the university to mediate in the dispute, on the basis of the university's policies. This resulted in the university appointing a member of staff to establish a Religious Centre Committee, which became the forum for dialogue and decision-making.

2. Structure for Dialogue

The Religious Centre Committee, established by a careful, 18-month consultation process by the university provided a rigorous, civil framework for discussion and decision-making within the protocols, procedures and values of the university itself. A website was created, which signaled greater transparency and openness, reflecting the new management structures which had been instituted. Rules for booking rooms were established, breaking the dominant possessiveness of the evangelical group, who, until that time seemed to occupy the space most of the time as if privileged.

3. A Common Project

Once the Religious Centre Committee was established and its website launched, the chaplains obtained funds from the university to refurbish the centre. The introduction of religiously neutral third parties, such as architects, ameliorated the power of the evangelical group. On the other hand, the confidence of the Pagans, who had a well-developed appreciation of the aesthetic, was boosted. But the focus was away from religion, disciplined through formal university procedures, even though, at a personal level, emotions still ran high.

The project also provided the opportunity to reward the evangelical group for compromises they had to make. For example, the removal of sectarian notice boards was rewarded with the provision of office space, at the expense of the chaplains, whose contractual time on campus had been reduced anyway. It was important that the evangelical group were not driven underground, but given equal rights to the meeting spaces.

⁶ It is important to note that these understandings were not preconceived. Rather, they developed intuitively.

4. Collaborations

The refurbished centre also created opportunities for the university to use the centre. The International Student Services Unit began to use it for the orientation of new arrivals and soon collaborative programs emerged, like social activities for international students (morning teas and celebrations) and English Conversation for spouses of international students.

So by engaging the higher power of the university, introducing a common project which engaged all users, creating a public website, injecting third parties who ameliorated the dominance of the most powerful group while affirming equal rights, and forming new collaborative partnerships in service to others, a culture of mutual respect was gradually developed. This transition took over ten years.

No doubt word got out among religious communities outside the university about the opening of space for others. The Pagan Association negotiated with the Christian chaplains to appoint their own Pagan Chaplain, the existing Christian chaplains asking only that the Pagans agree to the existing code of practice for university chaplains. An appointment of a Buddhist chaplain soon followed, under the same conditions. Other faiths were then invited to consider appointing chaplains. The retirement of Dr Abul Farooque from the School of Education became an opportunity to invite him to consider becoming a Muslim chaplain.

Today the multifaith chaplaincy at Flinders comprises Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Pagan chaplains, and Jewish, Sikh and Bahai associates (who are not able to provide representation on campus, but respond to referrals and opportunities for representation at official occasions). These are all voluntary positions, save the Christian chaplains who have inherited paid positions.

The first multifaith collaboration occurred in 1999. Suparto, President of the Islamic Students Association, and I had been emailing each other about the situation leading up to the vote for independence in East Timor. I had become aware that Australian students were expressing their anger towards Indonesian students on the campus, brought on by news of the killing of innocent civilians in East Timor by militias backed by the Indonesian army. Suparto and I agreed to hold a public meeting in the Religious Centre to denounce the use of violence by affirming our faiths as faiths of peace. The staff of the Department of Asian Studies supported us, as did the Flinders University Students Association. The Pagans brought flowers to decorate the centre and helped distribute hundreds of pray-for-peace candles across the campus.

In the week that followed, the centre was opened to the university for prayers for peace to be said each day at noon, led by a different faith group each day. For some people this was their first experience of joining with someone of another faith in common prayer. For me, it was also my first experience of a Buddhist loving kindness (Metta) meditation.

This gathering around an external situation that impacted on students, whether this be an outbreak of war, tsunami, earthquake, fire or flood, has been a hallmark of our collaboration across faith boundaries. Such observances exercise capacity for empathy and compassion, contributing further to a true culture of peace, consolidating the expectations of mutual respect in the Religious Centre.

As others were invited into the centre, balancing the dominating effect of the evangelical group, and as the needs of the growing number of international students were becoming more obvious, the understanding of the purpose of the centre began to shift to include cultural and social aspects of student life.

This led to reconceptualising and re-inventing the centre as *Oasis – faith, spirit, community*, which was finally inaugurated in 2008. (An overview describing aspects of *Oasis* today is attached as Addendum 2)

Theoretical Considerations

The years of conflict challenged understandings of how we understood ourselves, and provoked a search for understanding the notion of tolerance and peace building. The following theoretical considerations helped me in understanding the dynamics at work with regard inclusion and exclusion. This search for understanding was supplemented by visits to the Centre for Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa, Church and NGO reconciliation agencies concerned with Protestant-Catholic conflict in Northern Ireland, The First Global Conference of University Chaplains in Vancouver, Canada and the *Cross Currents* Consultation in New York City, USA, all in an international trip in 2000.

Traditional Chaplaincy

The model of chaplaincy adopted by the churches, what I call traditional chaplaincy, could be illustrated as follows:

Fig. 1 Traditional Chaplaincy

Traditionally, religious bodies (almost invariably Christian) commission chaplains to represent them within the university. Each chaplain carries the religious culture and agenda of their commissioning religious body and is accountable to that body.

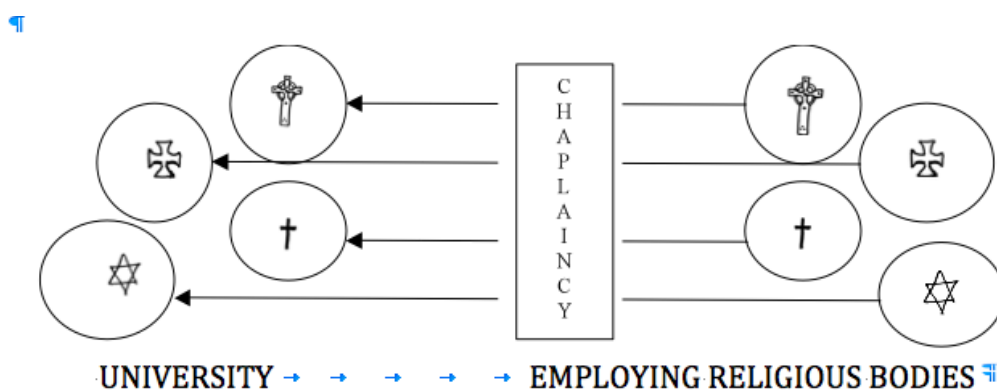


Fig.1 Traditional Chaplaincy

Catholics, for example, would understand this as the priest bringing the Mass to adherents geographically displaced from the Catholic Church. For all Christian denominations, traditional chaplaincy essentially means pastoral care to one's own, in

places geographically displaced from established centres of ministry, whether to those detained in prison, laid up in hospital or away from home in the armed services.

Traditional chaplaincy might therefore be represented as separate circles, each chaplain, representing their own religious tradition. Although the chaplains might respect each other and agree to work together on occasions, essentially they work independently within the institution to which they are commissioned, carrying out the mandates of their respective employing bodies and transmitting their cultures.

In the past, the understanding between the churches and the secular university seems to have been based on the assumption that if the university hosted a variety of chaplains from the various Christian denominations, each ministering to their own adherents, then the religious needs of the whole university would be met. The sum of the parts, in an essentially Christian society, would add up to the whole – minus non-believers and ‘others’ - who were considered not in sufficient numbers to count!

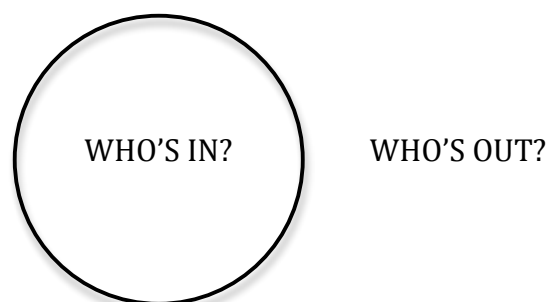
The Evangelical Group

The evangelical group at Flinders University may also be represented by a closed circle. They were led by a person appointed by an external para-church body, but without any reference to the churches or the university itself. They also differed from the ‘closed-ness’ of the chaplaincy sponsored by the traditional churches by the aggressive proselytisation with which they attempted to convince people to join them by changing their beliefs and culture, and their reaction against beliefs other than their own.

Hiebert’s Bounded Set Model

Paul Hiebert⁷ described the dynamics of Christian belonging and identity according to mathematical Set Theory. Typically, closed or hard-line religious groups work within a bounded set mentality.

Fig. 2. A “Bounded Set”



⁷ Paul G. Hiebert, *The Category 'Christian' in the Mission Task*, International review of Mission 72 (1983): 421-27, 424. This idea is taken up by Australian Baptist, Dave Andrews in his book exposing Christian violence in history, *Christi-Anarchy, Discovering a Radical Spirituality of Compassion* (Lion 1999), and developed in my unpublished workshop paper *Celebrating the Differences* presented at the First Global Multi-Faith Conference of Tertiary Chaplains in Vancouver in June, 2000.

The bounded set model is an “either-or”, “in or out”, “black or white” model. Those who are “in” are required to share a set of common characteristics. In the case of the evangelical group, membership of the group required rigid adherence to a set of prescribed beliefs.⁸

In the case of the evangelical group at Flinders, much of their energy and attention was focused on protecting the boundary of who is “in” and who is “out”. This exclusion was particularly painful for Christians who disagreed with any of the beliefs of the evangelical group, and frustrating because there was no avenue for negotiating the boundary or the set of beliefs demanded for membership.

Once “in”, no variation in belief or right behaviour was permitted. Non-conformity was resisted, any non-conformist expelled.

Hiebert’s model, which focuses on belief, has been developed as a psychosocial model by Eric H. F. Law.⁹

Law’s Boundary Function

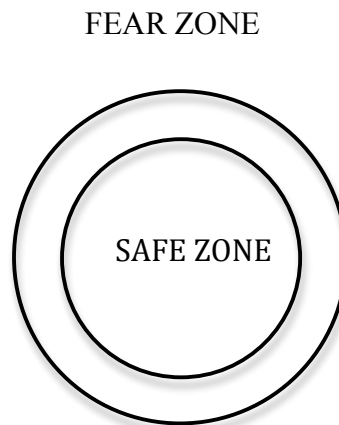


Fig 3. Law’s “Boundary Function”

For Law, the “boundary function” (implying a moveable boundary) enables a community to define itself and to maintain its existing boundaries so that the community can continue to function and accomplish its stated purpose.

In his schema, the inner boundary protects members of an organisation. Within the boundary members feel safe and secure. Only those who do not present a threat to the organisation may enter. The “fear zone” is the world “out there” that presents threats to the safety and stability of the organisation. The space between the “Safe” and “Fear” zones represents a space for dialogue, exploration and negotiation. An exclusivist organisation would allow little or no liminal space between the two zones.

⁸ The evangelical group required a person to sign a statement, swearing the person to a set of beliefs. Anyone who is not able to sign the statement is forbidden from speaking to the group. I.e. only those who are “in” may communicate with those who are “in”. This kind of hard-line evangelical group is sometimes known as Conservative Evangelical, because there is no mechanism for changing either the bounded set structure or the belief gateway into membership.

Conserving a set of beliefs becomes an important function for the survival of the group. This is achieved through the exposition of a narrow range of Biblical texts or the interpretation of Biblical texts through a narrow lens. Friendship becomes a means of bringing others to the edge of the circle to expose them to a seemingly watertight belief structure.

⁹ Law, H.F.Eric *Inclusion – making room for grace*. (Chalice Press 2000)

In Law's schema, the boundary function is controlled by three basic mechanisms.

1. Comparison with a prototype

This is equivalent to Hiebert's orthodoxy-orthopraxis¹⁰ requirement, but Law broadens this to mean "a set of required elements against which it measures newcomers to determine whether they are 'qualified' to be part of the organisation." (Law p20) In the secular world, job interviews would be an example of this function.

2. The legal operation

Probationary periods in organisations allow for expulsion even if a person fits the prototype but fails to follow all its rules and procedures. Following the rules is crucial to remaining in the organisation.

3. The political operation

Even if a person fits the prototype and follows the rules, exclusion may occur if the person does not get on with those who exercise power and authority – the gatekeepers in the organisation.

The exclusive boundary function is very appealing because it is such a simple way to deal with differences. Do you measure up to the standard? Do you follow all the rules? Do we like you?

For Law, the hard line boundary of Hiebert's "Bounded Set" is softened by expanding the liminal space between "Safe" and "Fear".

However, there are other kinds of mathematical sets!¹¹

Hiebert's "Centered Set" Model

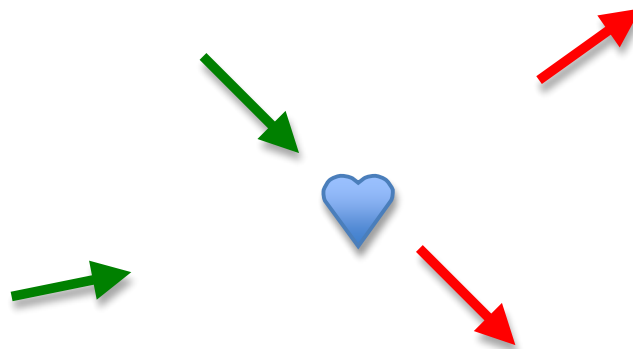


Fig 4. A "Centered Set"

A centered set is created by defining a centre, and the relationship of things to that centre. Some things may be far from the centre, but they are related to or moving

¹⁰ orthodoxy – right belief, orthopraxy – right action

¹¹ Hiebert also mentions "Fuzzy Sets" in which it is difficult to distinguish any boundaries. Multiple identities and multiple belonging might be described by "fuzzy" sets.

towards the centre; therefore, they are part of the centered set. On the other hand, some objects may be near the centre but are moving *away* from it, so they are not a part of the set. The set is made up of all things related to or moving towards the centre. In the diagram above, the arrows to the left of the centre are part of the set, the arrows on the right are not.

However, there is no simple uniformity within the set. Variation (distance from the centre) is recognized and accepted.

Centered sets are dynamic sets. It is possible to change direction — to turn from moving away to moving towards the centre, and so from not being part to being part of the set. Also, things may move closer to or away from the centre even though they remain headed towards or related to the centre.

Two important religious dynamics may be recognized. First there is conversion, or turning towards a new God. Second, there would be maturation, or the movement towards that new God in knowledge and obedience.

I found this notion of centeredness helpful in exploring how others of different faiths (focused on different centres) may be respected and honored while maintaining religious integrity and identity (focused on one's own centre and not demanding change of the others' centres).

Exclusion and Embrace

I also found the writings of Croatian-born Christian theologian Miroslav Volf helpful¹². He had been undertaking a theological exploration of religious conflict in the face of atrocities perpetrated in the former Yugoslavia. Having grown up in Serbia he had firsthand experience of the bitterness and hatred of opposing religions living in a common space.

Volf postulates that we need the other, we need difference, in order to be more fully ourselves. Others are part of my true identity. I cannot live authentically without welcoming the others – the other gender, other persons, other cultures – into the very structure of my being.¹³

The evangelical group on the campus would not use the prayer room that had been set aside for general use. For them, its use by others, particularly the Pagans, contaminated the space. Nor would their leaders join in any activity, Christian or otherwise, that was shared with others.

Their objection to the kind of inclusive “embrace” that Volf was proposing was that to give any credence to others would be to ‘let the team down’; to befriend a Pagan or a Muslim, let alone grant them equal rights and status, would be to deny one's own

¹² Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: Theological Reflections in the Wake of “Ethnic Cleansing”*, in William A. Dyrness (Ed), *Emerging Voices in Global Theology*. (Zondervan. 1994)

This chapter was developed into the book: Miroslav Volf. *Exclusion and Embrace*. (Abingdon 1996)

¹³ Volf's Christian theological rationale for embrace of difference is based on the Christian concept of the Trinity – the three persons of the Godhead, each distinguishable persons, yet ‘dancing’ together in unity. The three persons in the Godhead need each other for wholeness, (or the Godhead is incomplete without the other persons of the Godhead). Since I am created to reflect the personality of the one triune God so I need the other to be more fully myself.

faith; it would be compromise. Their fear was syncretism – the absorption of another belief system that would damage the integrity of their own. I was told that any act of inclusion would give the message that one faith is as good as another. Their leader thought that cooperation with others, those who were not members of his own evangelical group, would be setting a bad example, leading others away from Christ.

Purity

As I began to think about these objections to engagement with others who are different, I began to be reminded of some of the arguments used against Jesus, the Jew, by those who seemed to be stricter followers of the Jewish law. In the Gospels, these objections often seem to be framed around arguments for religious purity. Purity is sustained by maintaining boundaries, which must not only *not* be crossed but, for a public figure, must be *seen* not to be crossed.

Maintaining purity of faith and doctrine was absolutely essential for the evangelical group. For them, that which is different contaminates. Sin contaminates. And their whole mission was about salvation from sin. One must therefore separate oneself from the other who is different. A favourite verse quoted to me was, “There is salvation in no-one else (but Jesus), for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved”. (Acts 4:12.) They therefore had no need of others, who were obviously “wrong”!

In his theological reflection on ethnic cleansing Volf comments:

In the Palestine of Jesus’ day, “sinners” were primarily social outcasts, people who practiced despised trades, failed to keep the Law as interpreted by the religious establishment, and Gentiles and Samaritans. A pious person had to separate herself from them; their presence defiled because they were defiled. Jesus’ table fellowship with social outcasts, a fellowship that belonged to the central features of his ministry, turned this conception on its head: The real sinner is not the outcast but the one who casts the other out... sin is not so much a defilement but a certain form of purity: the exclusion of the other from one’s heart and one’s world. In the story of the prodigal son, the sinner was the elder brother – the one who withheld an embrace and expected exclusion. Sin is a refusal to embrace the other in her otherness and a desire to purge her from one’s world, by ostracism or oppression, deportation or liquidation. The exclusion of the other is an exclusion of God.¹⁴

As I began to spend time with the leader of the Pagan group, as with my growing number of Muslim and Buddhist friends on campus, I found their humanity called my own prejudices into question and my own fears of ‘the other’ released. This engagement with them was not a syncretism - rather, it had to do with an *enlargement* of my world and an *enlargement* of my understanding and life with God as a Christian. God welcomes *everybody* to God’s table!

The Multifaith Model at Flinders

Within the traditional chaplaincy paradigm (of bounded sets) it followed that as the university became religiously plural, there could be a number of ways the religious and spiritual needs of students and staff within the university might be met by chaplaincy.

¹⁴ Ibid p30-32

1. The Christian chaplains might broaden their mandate to include advocating for the needs of other faiths¹⁵. No chaplains of other faiths need be employed. This was the model I first adopted when I discovered other religious groups on campus. However, ultimately this is a model of assimilation, with all the dangers of manipulation, knowing or unknowing, by an external authority (the chaplain). Also, it is unlikely that a chaplain of one faith might be familiar with the nuances of the various traditions and sensitivities of all the other faiths.
2. Chaplains of different faiths might be included to maintain the ‘coverage’. The chaplaincy would become multifaith inasmuch as chaplains of many faiths would be present on campus to minister to their own adherents. In the diagram of traditional chaplaincy it was simply a matter of diversifying the Employing Religious Bodies. This was probably the model we had in mind when we first invited chaplains of other faiths to join us at Flinders.

So, for example, a Muslim chaplain employed by the Islamic Association, would relieve me of any obligation toward Muslim students. Each of us would minister within our own bounded sets.

Diversity and Pluralism

It is worth noting the distinction between diversity and pluralism made by Diana L. Eck, of the Pluralism Project at Harvard¹⁶:

- First, pluralism is not diversity alone, but *the energetic engagement with diversity*. Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettos with little traffic between or among them. Today, religious diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement. Mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies.
- Second, pluralism is not just tolerance, but *the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference*. Tolerance is a necessary public virtue, but it does not require Christians and Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and ardent secularists to know anything about one another. Tolerance is too thin a foundation for a world of religious difference and proximity. It does nothing to remove our ignorance of one another, and leaves in place the stereotype, the half-truth, the fears that underlie old patterns of division and violence. In the world in which we live today, our ignorance of one another will be increasingly costly.
- Third, pluralism is not relativism, but *the encounter of commitments*. The new paradigm of pluralism does not require us to leave our identities and our

¹⁵ Many traditional chaplains adapt to the liberal university environment. Michael G. Maness, who has written on the Christian origins and development of chaplaincy in the USA context, makes a distinction between traditional chaplains and those who minister more broadly, whom he calls professional chaplains. Some will be fulfilling the role of the “Traditional Chaplain” in providing service solely or for the most part within their own faith perspective. Other Chaplains will be fulfilling the broader role of the “Professional Chaplain” that includes the functions of the Traditional Chaplain with the additional responsibilities and duties inherent to respecting the issues of freedom of religious choice and facilitating religious expressions of minority faith groups. http://www.preciousheart.net/chaplaincy/Meaning_Chaplain.htm#Professional%20Chaplains. (Accessed November 26, 2009)

¹⁶ http://www.pluralism.org/pages/pluralism/what_is_pluralism
Accessed August 19, 2012

See also her discussion on the difference between diversity and pluralism at http://www.pluralism.org/pages/pluralism/essays/from_diversity_to_pluralism

commitments behind, for pluralism is the encounter of commitments. It means holding our deepest differences, even our religious differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another.

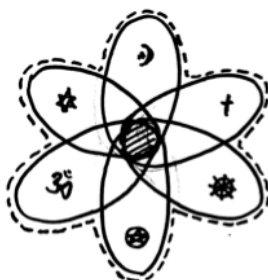
- Fourth, pluralism is *based on dialogue*. The language of pluralism is that of dialogue and encounter, give and take, criticism and self-criticism. Dialogue means both speaking and listening, and that process reveals both common understandings and real differences. Dialogue does not mean everyone at the “table” will agree with one another. Pluralism involves the commitment to being at the table -- with one’s commitments.

In other words, the appointment of chaplains of different faiths to a university does not necessarily lead to collaboration. Such chaplains may tread the same floors and be polite to each other, but they may continue self-interested ministry to their own and engage in the silent violence of exclusion, behaving as separate “bounded sets” (as illustrated by figure 1, “Traditional Chaplaincy”). Silence, or even lack of conflict, between different faiths does not, in my view, constitute peace. Rather, a culture of peace in the face of religious diversity can only be built by positive engagement between different faiths – Eck’s “pluralism”.

The multi-faith chaplaincy at Flinders evolved out of a context of conflict. Reaction against exclusion by the dominant evangelical Christian group drew the chaplains together, and sensitized them toward becoming a community of embrace and harmonious cooperation. This was the surprising but unexpected gift the exclusionary evangelical group gave the chaplains! It forced the chaplains together. As the chaplains embraced each other, each respected the identity and independence of the other and resisted the temptation to change the other to be like them; and each experienced a growing understanding of being enriched by the other’s uniqueness and difference.

As the chaplains engaged with each other, not with the primary concern of trying to protect their boundaries, as one might have expected if one assumed they were conditioned by Bounded Set thinking, the chaplains discovered they had much in common – what might be considered universal human values.

The model which emerged was one in which the chaplains acknowledged their individual religious identities but also recognized what they shared in common – the shaded centre portion of the Flower Diagram (Fig. 5). What they discovered they shared in the common centre provided the basis for their collaboration as colleagues, creating the unity of the chaplaincy service. They were enacting Eck’s Pluralism. This common sharing was expressed in a weekly meal together, during which the chaplains debriefed with each other, planned collaborative initiatives or invited others to share their world with them.



¶

Fig. 5. The “Flower Diagram”

A Multifaith Hospitality Model

The practice of hospitality is understood among religions. Each faith has a rich and continuing tradition of hospitality. Arguably hospitality is also understood by the university as it welcomes and cares for its students and sends them on their way enriched by shared experiences. But above all, hospitality was the key to creating multifaith chaplaincy at Flinders in the first place, as initial mutual respect grew into collegiality and friendship. Hospitable attitudes and practices, highlighted against the exclusionary practices of the evangelical group, created and sustained the chaplaincy and became intrinsic in the transformation of the Religious Centre, previously used by various religious groups acting as separate bounded sets and often in conflict with each other, into *Oasis*, a centre where all faiths or none may come and feel at home, enjoying acceptance from the host. (This ethos is portrayed in *The Oasis Myth*, Addendum 3)

The overlaps in the *Flower Diagram* represent the relationships the chaplains create with each other, as they are hospitable to, or host each other. So the *Flower Diagram* may represent a *Multifaith Hospitality Model* of chaplaincy – many faiths collaborating through hospitality to each other.

Nouwen’s Conception of Hospitality

In a classic exploration of hospitality, Nouwen¹⁷ proposes that hospitality is making space for the other.

Hospitality... means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines. It is not to lead our neighbour into a corner where there are no alternatives left, but to open a wide spectrum of options for choice and commitment. It is not an educated intimidation with good books, good stories and good works, but the liberation of fearful hearts so that words can find roots and bear ample fruit. It is not a method of making our God and our way into the criteria of happiness, but the opportunity to others to find their God and their way. The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt a life style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find their own. (p. 68)

Teasing out the strands of hospitality is beyond the scope of this paper but suffice to make some observations here.

1. Hospitality created the multifaith chaplaincy in the first instance. The chaplaincy developed its life from the mutual engagement of the chaplains as

¹⁷ Nouwen, Henri J.M. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements in the Spiritual Life* (Collins 1976)

they hosted (made accepting space for) each other. Without generous hospitality, multifaith chaplaincy, in the sense in which it has developed at Flinders, would not have been possible.

2. The radical collaboration of the chaplains arose, not theoretically, but out of praxis – the day-to-day, week-by-week, engagement in ministry to the university and the chaplains’ reflections on that engagement with each other. Hospitality was the means of creating the common ground enabling the chaplains to share their practice as chaplains and, in the process, discover shared beliefs and values. Today’s *Oasis* provides nourishment that fosters the growth and blossoming of the multifaith flower.
3. Hospitality is a tradition among all religions.¹⁸ It is understood by each chaplain through his or her own tradition. Hospitality is understood positively among the university community, particularly because of its hosting of international students. So a shared understanding of hospitality with the university establishes expectations about the practice of pastoral care on the campus; hospitality becomes the metaphor for undertaking and reflecting on pastoral care.
4. Because it is a common tradition, a chaplaincy built on hospitality at its core opens up the possibility of chaplaincy becoming a ministry that may be undertaken by all faiths. Chaplaincy becomes not just a Christian occupation. A Buddhist offering pastoral care and spiritual support is just as much a chaplain if pastoral care is offered hospitably. It was therefore possible to build an equitable collegial life among the chaplains of various faiths.
5. When the chaplaincy is viewed externally, its internal life is evident. The consistently hospitable ethos created and sustained among the chaplains themselves is, of itself, a significant contribution to the life of the university. The value of a non-judgmental, hospitable space in the university, even if rarely accessed by students and staff, should not be under-estimated. It serves as a reassuring presence. A place of sanctuary and support is available to all.

If hospitality is a significant characteristic of each of the world religions then the religious sources of hospitality ought to be recognized and valued. The maintenance of the religious integrity of each chaplain is therefore inherently important for the maintenance of this multifaith model of chaplaincy.

Put another way, each world religion has honed its beliefs and practices, some over thousands of years, to provide a framework for human sustainability for their respective communities. It should not be surprising that religions that survive over time contain beliefs and practices that ‘work’. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, for one, there is no greater injunction than to offer hospitality to the stranger. Any imagined chaplaincy, if it is also to be sustainable, needs to take into account those aspects of faith that have proven to contribute to human sustainability. The change in culture from a *Religious Centre*, that was an arena for competitive conflict, to *Oasis* as a

¹⁸ For examples of hospitality within Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Judaism, see <http://www.slideshare.net/naveemk/definitions-of-hospitality-in-religions-regions-presentation> (viewed 13 April 2010) and also: Hospitality in *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved December 7, 2010, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hospitality&oldid=400739011>
World Scripture – Charity and Hospitality <http://www.unification.net/ws/theme141.htm> (viewed 13 April 2010)
The Basic Buddhist Virtue – Dana <http://ratnaghosa.fwbo.net/danatwo.html> (viewed 13 April 2010)

centre of hospitality, I suggest, was catalyzed by the welcome of others from diverse faiths for whom hospitality was already a way of life.

But theoretical considerations aside, the great enjoyment that can be had in hosting each other and the satisfaction felt in the service of hospitable support to others has been justification enough.

A Multifaith Ministry Charter

As these realizations about radical collaboration became clearer, a Multifaith Ministry Charter was formulated and offered to the chaplains by Prof Norman Habel, Professor Emeritus of Theology at Flinders University¹⁹. The chaplains themselves have added further principles to the Charter.

A multi-faith ministry is informed by the following principles:

1. Principle of Mutual Recognition
A multi-faith ministry recognizes the right of all faiths to meet the needs of their respective members in any given community.
2. Principle of Mutual Concern
A multi-faith ministry intends to meet the pastoral concerns of, rather than convert, members of the various faiths.
3. Principle of Mutual Understanding
A multi-faith ministry seeks to understand the values and beliefs of each faith in a given community rather than to pass judgement on them.
4. Principle of Mutual Service
A multi-faith ministry is committed to serving the spiritual and personal needs of each member of each faith tradition in the community.
5. Principle of Mutual Advocacy
A multifaith ministry is committed to advocacy for people of other faith traditions in terms of what is known to be in the best spirit of each tradition.
6. Principle of Mutual Deference
A multifaith ministry encourages direct contact with authentic sources of information rather than mediating in any investigation of one faith tradition by a member of another.

With changing personnel over the years the chaplaincy has gained new insights along the way. All that has been formulated remains open to adaption. This emphasis on process and change, on the evolution of ideas and management structures, is embedded in the history of Oasis and the multifaith chaplaincy that is at its heart.

¹⁹ Norman Habel nhabel@esc.net.au 17 August, 2006

Invitation by the Wider Community

By the year 2000 the chaplains at Flinders had declared themselves a multifaith chaplaincy. Although they had not anticipated it, by the time of the events in the USA known as “9/11”, they were in a position to respond to requests for information about religions other than Christianity from authentic sources of such information – from within the Flinders chaplaincy and by mobilizing appropriate students. Not only did the chaplains have the capacity to offer the university forums for understanding the religious dimensions of such events as “9/11” and the decision of western countries to go to war in Iraq, for example, they were also in a position to respond to requests from the wider community. As such invitations were received, the chaplains realised that they were the only practicing multifaith collaboration in Adelaide. So increasingly, interfaith enquiries began to be directed to Oasis, some even from other parts of Australia.

In 2007, the Hindu chaplain, Dr Carl Belle and I came across a report from the USA about the monetary value of faith in the workplace. The report used the phrase “faith friendly” to describe workplaces that valued people of faith within their workforce.²⁰ I had a discussion about this with Prof. Norman Habel, who had helped produce the Multifaith Ministry Charter and he proposed a “Charter for Faith Friendly Communities”.²¹ Prof. Habel developed an initial draft and then I convened a working group to develop it.

The idea of the Charter is to provide a resource for ordinary people, to shift the discussion of interfaith relations beyond the bounds of professionals engaged in interfaith dialogue. Any group could become “faith friendly” – a school, a neighbourhood, a small business, even a church!

The Faith Friendly Charter was launched by the Chairman of Multicultural SA, Mr Hieu Van Le, in 2008. (A copy of the Faith Friendly Charter is included in Addendum 3).

Recently I was contacted by the Principal of a large metropolitan state secondary school about chaplaincy in that school. Chaplaincy in state schools has always been Christian. However, this school is very multicultural. Could there be a multifaith approach to chaplaincy in her school?

I gave her a copy of the Faith Friendly Charter and encouraged her to talk with the School Council about whether her school might be a Faith Friendly School. The Charter gave the Council a way forward to employ a person to be a chaplain in the school who would act in accord with its principles. The school is now planning activities that support the values contained in the Charter.

Conclusion

The experiences of the last fifteen years at Flinders University show that the amelioration of the aggressiveness of the hard-line evangelical group was achieved only with patience and by including them in an inclusive response to the question

²⁰ http://money.cnn.com/2007/01/16/news/companies/faithfriendly_companies.fortune/?postversion=2007011707

²¹ <http://faithfriendlyaustralia.org/>

“how can we live productively together in a shared space? It could not be achieved by theological debate. Intra-faith animosities between the evangelical group and the chaplains needed to be treated like animosities between different faiths. Bringing the external values and rules of the university to bear meant that the question of co-existence could not be avoided. The collaboration of the chaplains with each other and their collaboration with other university agencies demonstrated that radical hospitality could be a primary means of achieving peaceful co-existence. The evangelical group have not changed their beliefs and nor have the chaplains. But the process of changing the dominant symbols from self-interest to hospitality, from *Religious Centre* to *Oasis*, has encouraged the development of a new culture of peace and goodwill, an ethos we enjoy today.

Addendum 1

Multiple Perspectives in Religion

Oasis Conversation, May 2, 2012.

I am delighted to engage in this conversation today with Adib Abdushomad, particularly because of the friendship we share and our common concern to promote the benefits of our faiths for the common good.

Because the Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are all so-called 'religions of the book' – that is, the foundational texts, The Torah, the Bible and the Qur'an inform the life of each of these faiths, I thought that I might begin my contribution to the conversation by giving a brief overview of one thread within Christianity in which there are multiple perspectives with regard to how texts may be interpreted.

This has always been an issue, but, let us start early in the Twentieth Century. German theologians, in particular, had been asking some serious questions about the Bible as a text. Could it be read as history? (Did creation happen in six days, for example, as we read in Genesis?). How might discrepancies between the four Gospels, which record the life of Jesus, be accounted for? How to make sense of literature like the Book of Revelation, which is full of apocalyptic images and seeming predictions? And so on.

One of the consequences of the work of these scholars for ordinary people, particularly Protestants, has been uncertainty. For many ordinary people, trust in the text, and ultimately in the legitimacy of faith itself, were undermined by a need for specialized knowledge. A simple surface reading of the text to understand its meaning could no longer be trusted.

Would God want this situation where the tools for understanding the text had become available only to the scholars – that only the scholars had the capacity to interpret the meaning of the text? This was tantamount to a return to the situation prior to the Reformation and the invention of the printing press, when hand copied copies of the Bible could only be accessed by the priests. Ordinary folk could be kept in the dark by the self-interest of the church. The Reformation, that gave rise to the Protestants, at the time of the invention of the printing press, affirmed the **equality** of all believers and **accessibility** to the Bible and to God.

A reaction to this situation took place in the USA early in the twentieth century. Purporting to defend orthodox Christianity, a number of Protestant scholars contributed to a collection of essays called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*. This group believed that the uncertainty the German scholars had created, with the resulting drift of people away from the church, could only be redressed by recovering the authority of the Bible as divinely inspired and without error. The Bible should be read and taken at face value. God would bring understanding of the text to the reader.

This well-meaning movement back to the basics, back to the fundamentals of the faith, become known as *Fundamentalism*. The "ism" indicates that this reaction to the scholarship that asked questions about the origins, context and structure of the text itself, had become an ideology – by nature, a *reactive* ideology – a reaction against any system, thought or person outside the boundaries set up by “The Fundamentals”. The created a closed system. Only those who submit to its rigid conditions may belong.

As a result, the Protestant church became divided into so-called Evangelicals, who tended to read and interpret the Bible literally, at face value, and so-called Liberals, who understood the Bible openly, and particularly as metaphor, embracing the insights of the biblical and secular scholars.

I mention this history to bring two issues to the initial conversation.

One – what is the place and purpose of scholarship with respect to faith, and in particular, how we interpret our Scriptures that claim a divine inspiration?

Two - what are the consequences and potentialities of the two approaches – closed and open?

Addendum 2

OASIS – an overview

August 2012

Vision

As a unique interfaith collaborative, Oasis promotes peace and understanding among the people of diverse cultures, faiths and backgrounds who form the tapestry of campus life in Australia today.

Mission Statement

Serving students and staff of all religious denominations and traditions as well as those whose values are secular or atheist, Oasis aims to provide a welcoming, enjoyable and helpful environment in the promotion of friendship and wellbeing on campus.

Oasis is both a facility and a community.

(1) Oasis as a facility

Oasis serves a diverse number of users (refer Appendix 1) and provides spaces for both formal and informal use:

(a) Formal use

- Meetings of religious and cultural clubs and societies
- One-off seminars, observances and celebrations
- Regular hospitality or information sessions hosted by the chaplains, ISSU or other university staff

(b) Informal use

- drop-in for respite, refreshments, friendship
- quiet space for prayer, reflection, rest
- crisis support
- enquiry – information, advice, advocacy, referral

Administration

By agreement with the Vice Chancellor, Oasis is situated within *Flinders One*, which entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Oasis, effective from November 2009. (refer Appendix 2)

Oasis Coordinator

Cathy Romeo is employed part-time by *Flinders One*, and facilitates the use of Oasis by assisting visitors and staff. (Refer Appendix 3)

Oasis Committee (formerly the Religious Centre Committee)

Meets as required to make decisions about the centre.

(2) Oasis as a Community

Life within Oasis is facilitated by three groups overseen by a coordinating chaplain. Their roles are as follows:

(a) The Chaplains

Chaplains are nominated by religious communities and recognised by the Vice Chancellor according to protocols developed by the Tertiary Chaplaincy Forum (SA). <http://www.flinders.edu.au/oasis/chaplains/home.cfm>

Faiths currently represented are Pagan, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian (Uniting and Lutheran) and Muslim. Jewish, Sikh, Bahai and Mormon representatives are Chaplains in Association. They do not have a campus presence but respond to invitation and referral.

The chaplains provide a first point of contact for staff and students with religious or spiritual needs. Appendix 3 provides a detailed profile.

Chaplains do not offer clinical counselling or the application of therapeutic interventions addressed to particular problems, but they are available to 'journey with' people supportively through difficult times.

At Oasis, chaplains of different faiths collaborate for the common good of the entire University community. While they serve the needs of members of their own faith, they also work together to promote and model peace and harmony by developing projects in common and otherwise collaborating to make Oasis a welcoming and safe place to all who enter.

One dimension of this is the shared weekly lunch attended by all chaplains. This provides a strong presence at Oasis and an opportunity for anyone to join in or engage with the Oasis team.

These lunches, also, provide a social forum for other services and groups to attend by invitation or request as a reciprocal learning process whereby services come to know each other better.

Initiatives of the chaplains over the last twelve months include a Harmony Day concert and open 'Conversations' with visiting guests on topics ranging from *Post-colonialism, Multi-faith Perspectives on Organ Donation, the Impact of 9/11, Suicide and Multiple Perspectives in Religion*.

The chaplains host the monthly *Service Providers Forum* for university staff in collaboration with Health and Counselling. They also collaborate with ISSU in monthly social activities for international students and weekly English Conversation for spouses of international students.

Chaplains are members of the Tertiary Campus Ministry Association, the tertiary chaplains' professional body.

(b) Leaders of Religious Clubs and Societies

- Are students appointed or elected by students in accordance with rules for clubs and societies
- May be externally sponsored persons at the invitation of religious clubs and societies

(c) Students, staff and volunteers who support the vision and mission of Oasis

- Act in relationship with the chaplains
- May be volunteers invited by the chaplains for specific activities
- Those who use Oasis for activities within the spirit of Oasis

The Coordinating Chaplain

The Coordinating Chaplain brings the Oasis community together both internally and externally, liaising with the wider community on behalf of all who are involved in or participate in Oasis.

Over the past twelve years, the incumbent Coordinating Chaplain has presented a number of papers about the development of Oasis at conferences and workshops both in Australia and abroad. These papers about Oasis, and their resulting dialogues, led to publication of the book, *An Improbable Feast – the surprising dynamic of hospitality at the heart of multifaith chaplaincy* (2010).

Appendix 4 lists this and a number of other publications, presentations and consultations through which the Coordinating Chaplain has represented both Oasis and the University. Notably, other chaplains also represent both Oasis and the University, not only to their host communities but also to the public in terms of their personal involvement in social, government and non-government organizational processes in the wider society²². Such engagement in turn feeds back into and informs the quality of service offered by Oasis.

²² These are to be collated for future reference.

APPENDIX 1

Users of Oasis 2011, 2012

- ISSU – International Student Information/Arrival sessions, Morning and afternoon teas.
- Friday Morning Conversation Class for spouses of International students (ISSU-Oasis)
- Service Providers Forum - monthly (Health and Counselling - Oasis)
- Flinders University Choral Society
- Overseas Christian Fellowship
- Flinders University Islamic Student Association
- Indonesian Students Association
- AISEC
- Pagan Society
- English Corner
- Catholic Students' Fellowship
- Seventh-Day Adventist Student Group
- Gnostic Society
- Flinders Evangelical Students
- Vietnamese Students Association
- Laughter Yoga classes
- Himalayan yoga classes
- (SA) Timorese Students Group
- Flinders University Writer's Club
- Chinese Christian Study Group

APPENDIX 2

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

**FLINDERS CAMPUS COMMUNITY SERVICES INC
and
OASIS COMMITTEE**

This Memorandum of Understanding is made between Flinders Campus Community Services Inc and the Oasis Committee at Flinders University.

The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding is to enable Flinders Campus Community Services Inc to assist Oasis more effectively fulfill its role by providing administrative support.

The role of Oasis within the university is expressed in its mission statement:
Oasis a centre for faith development and spiritual refreshment, providing a forum and home environment for the development of genuine community

FCCS is not to be involved in Oasis operations other than to attend Oasis Committee Meetings, and undertake tasks or assist with events as agreed at these meetings. Oasis is to retain its own identity.

Flinders Campus Community Services Inc will:

1. Administer funds deposited with FCCS for use by Oasis;
2. Provide clerical, website and room booking support from the Hub;
3. Provide day to day stationery and printing support;
4. Liaise with the university on behalf of Oasis for building, funding, maintenance and other issues as decided by the Oasis Committee;
5. Assist with events agreed on between Oasis and FCCS.

These services will be provided at no cost to Oasis.

Any assistance outside of this scope is to be agreed between the parties and may include a fee for service as appropriate.

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

This document is a statement of understanding and is not intended to create binding or legal obligations on either party.

The agreement will take effect from November 2, 2009, reviewed after six months, and thereafter annually.

.....
Signed on behalf of Oasis Committee
Name & Position

.....
Signed on behalf of FCCS
Name & Position

Date

Date

APPENDIX 3

Oasis Coordinator

- Maintains the front desk and phone service and provides a continuous visible presence within Oasis.
- Greets and assists those who enter Oasis
- Coordinates, administers and promotes activities and functions offered by or through Oasis.
- Day to day maintenance and Occ. Health and Safety issues
- Maintains the Rooms Bookings System.
- Provides secretarial support to a variety of meetings.
- Provides administrative support to Oasis Chaplains.
- Works with FCCS staff to coordinate stationery, finance and maintenance issues.
- Updates and maintains the Oasis website content and Oasis databases.
- Coordinates volunteers as required.

Chaplains

- Offer unconditional and confidential pastoral care at a person's point of need
- Link with a network of contacts for referral and complementary support for students and staff
- Minister to students and staff of the chaplain's own faith, and provide support, regardless of faith
- Assist the campus community at times of celebration, mourning and transition and facilitate student engagement and social activities
- Create opportunities for personal and community spiritual enrichment
- Model and promote mutual respect for, and appreciative understanding of, diverse religious and cultural paths and traditions
- Support those who are working for social justice, giving priority to the marginalised or disadvantaged
- Contribute to the university or the wider community with teaching programs, consultancy or public religious representation

Coordinating Chaplain

- Is elected from among the chaplains
- With the Oasis Coordinator, is the first point of contact for the university and the wider community, and represents and promotes Oasis
- Liaises with service providers, administrative and faculty staff and other appropriate agencies within the university
- Works closely with the Oasis Coordinator

APPENDIX 4

Oasis Social Involvements²³

Publications

2010 Boyce, Geoff. *An Improbable Feast – the surprising dynamic of hospitality at the heart of multifaith chaplaincy*. Self-published.

List of consultations by Coordinating Chaplain in the past 12 months

- Order of Australia Committee (SA) - Australia Day Multifaith Celebration
- Schools Ministry Group – multifaith approaches to state school chaplaincy
- 9/11 Tenth Anniversary Public Observance
- The Interfaith Working Group – Public Memorial Observance - Asylum Seekers Who Have Lost Their Lives
- Taylor, Cullity, Lethlean, Landscape Architects – grief and loss

Conferences and Workshops

- Oasis at the Conference of European Chaplains (Debrecen 2011)
- ‘Inclusive Futures’ Conference (Macquarie 2011)
- The Global Conference of University Chaplains (Yale 2012)
- “Friday at the Library” (Flinders 2012)

Key Achievements

- Invited by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia to present a paper at the International Symposium on the Strategic Role of Religious Education in the Development of a Culture of Peace in September 2012.
- Incumbent Coordinating Chaplain invited as Board Member to the Adelaide College of Divinity that has recently initiated a discussion about religious literacy and multifaith education that might include participation by Oasis.
- Oasis initiated “*A Charter for Faith Friendly Communities*”, launched by the Chairman of Multicultural SA in 2010.
- The Coordinating Chaplain has recently been engaged in a consultation with Woodville High School and Schools Ministry Group about a multifaith approach to pastoral care among secondary school students and staff within the context of the Charter for Faith Friendly Communities. <http://faithfriendlyaustralia.org>

²³ At The moment, this Appendix pertains only to the present Coordinating Chaplain. This list will be expanded to include the roles of other chaplains who similarly represent Oasis and the University to the wider public.

Addendum 3

The Oasis Myth

Tired travelers in the desert are searching for palm trees in the distance. They are looking for promised rest and refreshment. They have a more distant destination, but their gaze is intent on the hope that lies immediately ahead.

As they come near the oasis, they are anxious for the welcome and acceptance they need for rest, and for cool, clear waters of refreshment for themselves and their caravan. They hope that desert protocol has been maintained. For without it, travel in the desert would be well nigh impossible.

But they are also looking beyond mere survival on their journey. When the camels have been watered and the tent has been pitched there will be celebration with food and music and the swapping of stories under the bright night sky. Strangers become friends. Important questions are discussed. Knowledge of the desert is as vital to survival as the waters of the oasis itself. They will stay a while and then move on. But while their tent is pitched beside the still waters they themselves will receive other weary newcomers and provide the necessary hospitality that ensures the ongoing viability of desert travel.

There is a small band who stay in this place. They are holders of desert wisdom. But they do not hold it to themselves. They have gathered knowledge from the many travelers who have told their stories of desert life over time, whose stories have proven life giving to journeyers of all time. This oasis community acts as host for the ongoing sharing of wisdom that ensures survival in the desert. The respect won by these sages is a moderating influence against the ever-present threat of waters being muddied by ignorance or greed, and wisdom distorted by the self-important purveyors of mischievous mis-information.

The travelers pack their camels to continue their journey. They have been safe here. They are grateful for rest and refreshment. But now they must risk new adventures. They mount their camels holding deeply memories of storytelling under a cold starry night. Life long friendships among once strangers have been cemented. The wisdom of the sages has supplemented their desert wisdom, informing their ongoing journey.

They point their camels toward the next destination with confidence and gratitude. The sages offer their blessing and the caravan departs into the glare of the future.

Addendum 4

The Faith Friendly Charter

www.faithfriendlyaustralia.org

The Vision

An Australian society of ‘faith friendly’ communities.

In this pluralist society, people of all cultural backgrounds, religious faiths, spiritual persuasions and worldviews are open to each other and respect each other.

The Australian Context

Democracy

Australia values democracy, the equality of all individuals before the law, human dignity and the freedom for all citizens to explore ideas and debate openly.

Diversity

Australia values a diversity of cultural backgrounds, religious faiths, spiritual persuasions and worldviews, including those of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as significant contributions to a rich Australian ethos.

Equality

Australia values fairness and equality in a context where all individuals and groups are free to choose and practice their beliefs, faiths and points of view in a tolerant society.

Education

Australia values those agencies of the community which enable individuals, young and old, to gain an understanding of the diverse faiths, beliefs and points of view in our society and the requirement to act responsibly and ethically.

The Principles of the Charter

Principle of Mutual Respect

A faith friendly community seeks to respect the diversity and differences of faiths and beliefs of all in the community.

Principle of Mutual Understanding

A faith friendly community seeks to learn about, and so understand, the values and beliefs of world religions and diverse spiritualities.

Principle of Mutual Concern

A faith friendly community provides opportunity for individuals and groups to meet their religious and spiritual needs and to work in harmony for the common good and a sustainable world.

Principle of Mutual Responsibility

A faith friendly community has a responsibility to facilitate a context of goodwill in which individuals and groups are free to differ peacefully, choose an alternate spiritual path or practice a traditional faith with integrity.

Achieving the Vision

Endorsement

Businesses, companies, educational bodies and other institutions endorse the Faith Friendly Charter and explore appropriate ways of developing policies within their respective contexts that would enable faith-friendly communities to emerge.

Implementation

These same bodies introduce specific vehicles to enable each faith community to celebrate its respective rites and practices within the relevant work, educational or social contexts.

Support Services

The necessary support services needed to implement these policies and practices be the responsibility of the company, educational institution or other relevant community rather than the individual faith communities as such.

A Faith Friendly Blessing

May the pulse of life
that animates our planet,
the dream of peace
that sustains her peoples
and the spirit of hope
that inspires her faiths,
create within her children
a desire for friendship.

The Faith Friendly Charter Working Group

Dr Paul Babie, Director, Research Unit for the Study of Society, Law and Religion, Adelaide University

Mr Geoff Boyce, Chaplain, Flinders University

Prof Norman Habel, Flinders School of Theology

Mr Kris Hanna

Dr David Kranz, Quest Partners

Rev Nicholas Rundle, Chaplain, Mission Australia (SA)

Dr Vicky Sanders, Quest Partners