

The scene is a roundtable at the Global Conference of University Chaplains at Yale in June, 2012. A chaplain, who has ministered for the last twelve years at a university in Montreal, Canada, engages with other university chaplains from around the world to wrestle with the dilemma that has been preoccupying her.

*...by adopting this strategy of presence, rather than programs, how am I different to the university's own secular agencies? Am I 'watering down' the message of faith or creating something radically new and thus lighting new fires of faith and compassion?*

In the golden age of Australian universities, chaplains were enthusiastically appointed by religious bodies to universities and university colleges to represent them. Student clubs like the Anglican Society, the Student Christian Movement, the Evangelical Union, the Newman Society, Lutheran Students Fellowship and so on, became the focus for ministry that nurtured their faith brand, evangelized, energized creative worship and built future leadership for their sponsoring organizations, and, incidentally for society.

Those golden days are pretty well gone. The Evangelical clubs are still standing, making heavy weather of it into the wind, from what I see. It takes a lot of effort when many students also have part-time jobs to survive financially. University "missions" seem to end up, more often than not, a talk among the faithful. In fact, 'talking among ourselves' is pretty much the order of the day. Chaplains and religious clubs are marginalized. If one is honest about how such university chaplaincy was conceived back then, could it not ultimately ever be so?

But the memory of the golden days linger and today's university chaplain feels caught in the dilemma of what to persevere with and what to let go.

Chaplains whose brief is chaplaincy to the whole university seem to be finding that the energy of running programs conceived in the culture-transmission paradigm forbids the kind of chaplaincy conceived as accompaniment - journeying with people, with staff groups and the institution as a whole. If the cup is almost full with the 'to do's' of running programs, there is no room for a chaplaincy that is responsive to the day-to-day and emerging opportunities.

But decisively, the difficulty of attracting students to attend programs has spelt the end of the culture-transmission-by-program-through-clubs approach.

As a result, sponsoring bodies have understandably wound down or completely cut their commitment to university chaplaincy and are finding other ways outside the university to transmit their culture to their university-attending adherents. We are seeing the death of traditional university chaplaincy 'by a thousand cuts'!

The chaplain from Montreal still feels the tug of the dying paradigm but is intuitively moving toward another – one, incidentally, that has the capacity to embrace the pluralistic environment of the university in ways the dying sectarian one was incapable. Though the old model still tugs, her intuition to move from program to availability was affirmed when there was a murder on campus. None of the silo services of the university could manage

the complexity of the situation; so to whom might the university turn with the breadth of understanding, expertise and the flexibility to lead the community through that time of grief and lament but the chaplain, who had made herself known through available presence?

Chaplaincy 1.0, of the golden age of well-attended religious clubs and societies, is on life support, if not dead. The energy of trying to sustain or revive it might be better spent, in my view, on supporting an emerging Chaplaincy 2.0 (and its future updates) that embraces hospitality to all – *all!* – not just our own club!