

CHAPLAIN TODAY

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A Note From The Editors

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2005. As newly appointed members on the executive we have the newsletter as part of our brief. We welcome your ideas and encourage you to use the website (www.schoolchaplains.com) to share resources and exchange views. We are already looking at Conference 2005. There has been a wonderful positive feeling that the 2004 conference was a great success. All felt that they were among friends and that the inspiration was blended with spiritual and recreational in a very healthy balance.

We welcome all new members and trust you will see all of us members as persons whose support in the ministry is mutually enriching and a source of encouragement.

We are committed to better communication and trust our membership ranks will widen.

May the Lord bless us all in the year ahead. We thank you for your support. Keep well and happy.

Anne Rogers and Cora Guinnane

Opening Prayer

Worth the Living

Any day is worth the living
If one heart is aching less
Because something you and I did,
Helped encourage and to bless.

If some seed of hope was planted
Turning someone's thoughts above
To seek help when all seemed
hopeless,
Trusting God's unfailing love.

If we set a sad heart singing
That had lost its happy song:
If their spirits were made brighter
Because we had come along.

If our own heart was encouraged
By another's kindly deed,
Causing us to be more thankful
For our friends in time of need.

Any day is worth the living
If we first seek God in prayer,
Asking for His gentle guidance,
Leaving each day in His care.

Beverly J. Anderson



A Word from Br. Padraig McDonald

It is with great pleasure that I take over the role of chairperson of the association and lead it into the coming year. I would like to pay tribute to all the past chairpersons and those on the executive for their hard work in forwarding the case of chaplaincy in schools. I take the opportunity to thank Fr. Declan Shannon, Fr. Lorcan Kenny, Sean Wright, Amanda McCarthy and Orla Duggan for their trojan work on the executive.

I am aware at one level that I am taking on an onus task but I promise that I will do it to the best of my ability. I see it as being important, keeping to the forefront the issue for permanency for all chaplains and a chaplain for every school. While this matter will be to the forefront of my work for the coming year, I feel that the executive and I would also like to move forward the issue of communication within the association, therefore furthering the closer links with the cluster groups throughout the country, hence creating a team spirit within the association. We endeavour to advance the two-way communication to a greater level.

I hope to research and bring a motion to the association about the different levels of membership, therefore defining associate, accredited, student and full membership. The executive will also work on a code of ethics that we hope will be accepted by all members. These issues are the basis for the work of the executive for the coming year. We would appreciate all communication both positive and negative from any member of the association. As the new executive begins their work I thank the people who have remained on, Ms. Diane Browne and Fr. Arnold; Cora Guinnane, Anne Rogers, Fr. Seamus Madigan and Noreen Donegan who have come onboard and Jim Evans who remains on in fundraising on an ad hoc basis. So congratulations and thanks for putting your shoulders to the wheel to further the case of chaplaincy.

Finally, your voice as a chaplain is much appreciated, please do not hesitate to contact me at any stage.

Yours in Chaplaincy,

Brother Padraig McDonald
Chairperson.



Executive Committee

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NEWSLETTER

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Ms. Anne Rogers

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SOUTHERN IRELAND

Fr. Seamus Madigan

EDUCATION

Mater Dei
To Be Announced

WEBSITE

Fr. Arnold Rosney

FUNDRAISING (ad hoc basis)

Mr. Jim Evans
Moate Community School
Moate

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Conference 2004: Report

This year's AGM was held in the Raddison Hotel, Limerick from Wednesday 24th November to Friday 26th November. The theme for the conference was "The hand that holds on and the hand that lets go". 120 people attended the conference, which highlights our importance and strength in secondary schools today. The distance may have made it difficult for some people as we missed many of the northern delegation.

The atmosphere was positive and upbeat among the delegates for the entire duration of the conference. There was open discussion and debate on a number of burning issues, some solved and others, which will be dealt with by the Executive during the coming year. The sacred space was a welcomed oasis amidst the chaos and the goings and comings during the day.

As usual the issue of permanency for school chaplains was forefront on peoples minds, an issue which is still waiting for a decision to be made by the Minister for Education!

Workshops

There were four major workshops for people to attend during Thursday which were:

- ***Spiritual Care of Self***, facilitated by Eunan McDonnell SDB
- ***Limerick Rape Crisis Centre, Self Harm and Healing***, facilitated by Aidan Duggan, Senior Psychologist at Kedron Residential Psychotherapeutic facility and
- ***Creative Spirituality*** facilitated by Aileen Murphy. The Spiritual Care of Self, was the most popular and helpful workshop, with many people requesting further time to be given to this next year.

The overall atmosphere of the conference was successful and positive. The Celebration of the Eucharist was a high point for many. The openness of the Chaplains our Voice, was ranked as being of major importance to many of the delegates. There was very positive feedback regarding the time and space given to this section and there was consensus that it was chaired and facilitated exceptionally well.

Executive Committee

Four new people were elected on to the Executive Committee, namely:

- ✘ Cora Guinnane Old Bawn Community School, Tallaght, Dublin 24
- ✘ Anne Rogers, Christian Brothers College, Monkstown Park, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin
- ✘ Fr. Seamus Madigan Castletroy College, Limerick and
- ✘ Noreen Donegan, St. Nessans Community College, Limerick.

We wish them and the entire Executive well for the coming year!



John Lonergan

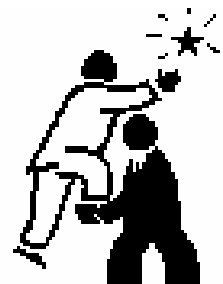
Keynote Speaker at Conference 2004

Mr John Lonergan, Governor of Mountjoy prison was the Key Note speaker. He is a very down to earth person, with some fantastic, thought provoking points to make. The following is a paraphrased version from notes taken from Governor Lonergan's keynote address.

- Today's culture has a lot to do with "Me Fein". There is so much rushing around and not just taking the time to STOP!
- We have universities, shopping centres, etc full of people but a person can still be lonely. The chaplain can be the presence needed. There is an 'opportunity' – if you are there and available for the contact. Every human being is crying out for contact.
- A survey carried out in Mountjoy Prison – 550 staff of all disciplines. A questions asked of the prisoners was "Who would you go to talk to?" The chaplains won hands down. Why? (1) Confidentiality and (2) Non-judgemental.
- The interpretation years ago was that the chaplain in a prison was there to say Mass. Presently at Mountjoy there are four chaplaincy teams. They are important because they are neutral. The over-riding dynamic in prison is the lack of trust – listening is very important. **Listening** is the greatest human therapy and is very often the most difficult of all the disciplines. We are great at giving advice. If we did the **listening only** we would be providing such a great facility.
- To be positive – makes a great difference. The difference is you can make the difference!
- There are always two sides to every story. Communications and respect are very important.
- What's popular is seldom right and what is seldom right is seldom popular.
- "Vision without action is a daydream".
- Affirmation – opportunity for us as chaplains to always find something good in a person, e.g. the student who is always giving trouble. For the struggling child, check out the creative side; this can be nurtured. To discover talent in that human being – we are all guilty of being dismissive. There is no substitute for a bit of humanity.



**“Vision without
action is a
daydream”.**



Conference 2005

Suggestions for Conference:

- Self Harm - Try again with different speaker
- Mediation – Ronal Williams, Anglican Minister
- Alcohol, Drink and Driving
- Trauma – Sexual Abuse in Young People – Sister Collette Stevenson, Coiri
- Ethics of Chaplaincy – Mater Dei
- Role in School Policies – Luke Monaghan
- How to be Happy in Today's World – Values
- Creative dance
- Bereavement, Death and Separation – the Chaplain's role
- Teenagers who Abuse – Rhonda Turner, Crumlin Children's Hospital
- Crisis Response/student support teams—Teresa Crawford, Limerick V.E.C.
- Structure/techniques for assessing students at risk
- Mental management



Possible Speakers:

- Mary Hannifin
- Mary McAleese
- Maureen Gaffney

Points to be addressed:

- Confidentiality
- Permanency for school chaplains
- Supervision and monitoring structures

Proposed Conference Dates:
23, 24 and 25th November

* * * * *

Proposed Conference Venue:
Athlone



Cluster Groups

It was evident from the conference and from my personal experience that the role of Custer Group meetings is vital, supportive and resourceful for each school chaplain.

Chaplains associated with regional groups may find it difficult to meet on a regular basis. It maybe more practical for chaplains in nearer geographical areas to meet, and form their own cluster group.

The following are important points to note regarding cluster group meetings:

- ✘ The purpose of a cluster group is to provide a mutually supportive professional environment for school chaplains to co-operate with each other. Share resources and to develop a model of best practice.
- ✘ The cluster provides a forum in which school chaplains can share their skills and begin to work on an inter-school basis to develop faith development and pastoral care projects.
- ✘ Cluster meetings would be hosted by one of its members in turn.
- ✘ Meetings would begin with a pray or reflection.
- ✘ A sharing of how things are going for each chaplain.
- ✘ There could be an invited speaker on a topic of interest to the cluster group.
- ✘ The possibility of planning projects in common.
- ✘ Provide on-going in-career development and supervision.
- ✘ From my own personal experience, it is important that your principal is aware of the importance and role of the cluster group meeting and that you have his/her support to facilitate these meetings during the school day.



The regional co-ordinators are:

Southern Region
 Fr. Seamus Madigan
 Castletroy College
 Limerick

Dublin & Northern Ireland
 Cora Guinnane
 Old Bawn Community School
 Tallaght

Western
 To be decided.

Anne Rogers
 Christian Brothers College
 Monkstown Park
 Dun Laoghaire
 Co. Dublin

 * It is hoped that the co-ordinators of *
 * the cluster groups will meet with *
 * executive members before the June *
 * meeting so that the conference will *
 * be representative of all members *
 * suggestions. All your opinions are *
 * important and valued by us. *
 * *****

Should you need any assistance, your local co-ordinator is more than willing to give any advice, support or resources that you may need.

Sacred Spaces

Over the past year to liven up the school oratory, I along with a group of students have created themed sacred spaces. The feast days, liturgical seasons and special times on the calendar year are the basis for our creations.

The liturgical colours are always a good starting point. We try to use simple yet symbolic items such as posters, signs and symbols, coloured cloths, candles, sacred texts and basic natural resources (i.e. seasonal foliage, coloured stones, pebbles, water etc). You can be as creative as your imagination dares to be!

There are many occasions throughout the year both liturgical and season such as Holy Souls, Advent, Christmas, Harvest, January, New Year, New Beginning, Christian Unity, St. Valentine, Lent, St. Patrick, St. Bridget and Easter, which can be highlighted in a sacred place. Phrases from the themed readings for Advent, Lent and Easter can be used for backdrops, screens and wall hangings. A short explanation of the particular season or symbol will add to the understanding and impact of the display. The use of effective lighting will enhance any creative display.

It is vital to remember that the students will always be your greatest source of creativity and criticism. Encourage them to get involved, brainstorm with them and it is amazing what creations they will come up with. Below are two sacred spaces, which I, along with the students, have created for Lent and Easter. It may be worth noting that it is useful to place your sacred space in a prominent position within your school, as the effects are amazing. Good luck and be creative.



Cora Guinnane
Old Bawn
Community School





The Chaplain's Office—A Refuge

In our schools today, many excellent teachers with the wisdom accumulated over years of caring and serving the needs of the youth placed in their care are looking for an 'out' because of a lack of recognition and respect from management and students. Students feel their rights are being infringed and controlled. A discussion can be replaced by serious argument. The difficulties adolescents experience are not solvable by either confrontation or intervention but by time and reflection.

The chaplain provides this safe ear and must be mindful to offer little more than an ear – or a safe confidential set of ears! It is the chaplain who knows the stuff, empathises with the pressures of teaching, and supports the student by simply listening. It is within the prayer room that the chaplain can, through reflections, visualisations, listening to music and quiet moments, help the students feel comfortable, peaceful and reach moments of prayer, mediation and worship. In the oratory, they can enter into the silence of their own hearts and meet the God who dwells there.

The chaplain can also through his/her respect for each individual student show that approval and not blame wins. In that approval the student feels cherished and valued. It is that which will fuel the young person's self image and esteem and motivate him/her to respond more deeply in their classes with teachers of the curriculum subjects.

As school chaplains we enable the students to evaluate their response, to listen to their own negativity and critical expectations or judgements on how their lives are being controlled. In learning to love themselves, they learn how to allow the love of God flow within them.

Anger in young people comes from a lack of nurturing experiences in childhood, which can lead to an inappropriate need for attention, control and power. When such deprivation manifests itself in personal problems within the school the chaplain's open door can be refuge.

Coming to the chaplain's room and telling their story enables the students release the strong emotions within – they find it helpful to be understood, valued and appreciated for who they are and who they are becoming. Their reality is in the present. Our encouragement to them as school chaplains helps them to put words on their feelings, explore options, focusing on their strengths, skills and goals.

The behaviour of other students affects the class atmosphere – dictates the teacher's response. Students should be happy in our schools. Sadly it is not always the case. A negative class atmosphere today affects youth psychologically and emotionally. What may be acutely absent is the sense of the deeper, spiritual need present in each of us.

As chaplains, our open door may be the refuge – the warmth, cosiness and peace in the oratory, the haven where a group can relax and relieve the pressure – listen with sensitivity, place the stresses in the Lord's hands. Our work is awesome, we cannot do it alone. Let us pray, Holy Spirit, look favourably on the chaplains in schools today who are actively involved in the ministry of listening. Help us to:

Heal the hurt of those who feel life is unfair,

Engage in active listening and develop a better understanding,

Act as a friend in encouraging change,

Lead and inspire the young people we meet with courage and hope and belief in themselves.

Anne Rogers, Chaplain, C.B.C. Monkstown, Co. Dublin

Lent 2005: Suggested Prayer Service

Preparation Beforehand

The following pointers may help in celebrating a meaning prayer service for Lent.

- The venue should be private and sound proof. Generally the prayer room in most schools is ideal.
- Get the students involved in preparing the sacred space which will be used. Other students may be gifted in picking readings, music, and decorating the venue. A good motto is 'Avail of the talent around you'!
- Let the students know when the celebration is taking place and where. Punctuality is also important.
- What is the theme of your celebration? Plan the readings, music, sacred space etc around your theme.

The following is a suggested prayer celebration/service to include the Penitential Rite. The simpler the celebration the better. I encourage you to use whatever works well for you. When the students are arriving into the prayer room or classroom it may helpful to have music playing to create an atmosphere. They should be given a stone which will play a part at the Penitential Rite. Once the music has ended and the students have settled down the following opening words may be useful.

Opening Part

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Today/At this time we begin a journey. A journey with Christ through the silence and nakedness of the desert. The desert is a place full of sand where there is no life. The desert is a hot place where death can arrive quickly. Christ entered this desert for 40 days and 40 nights because this time away from everybody and everything was important for him. We gather and we remember that time Christ spent in the desert. In doing so we look at our desert space that we have created which reminds us the desert is barren and bare.

In silence we think of those times when we were lifeless or feeling dead inside. We hold our stone which reminds us of our faults and failings. When we think of the wrong we have done and the hurt we caused to others. For the next few moments we ask Christ to bless us and forgive us for the times we caused hurt. We want to be friends with Christ and for this to happen we now place our stone in the bowl of water showing our love for Christ by saying sorry.

While the students are placing their stone into the bowl of water some music may help to keep the atmosphere of the gathering.

Penitential Rite

- Lord, for the times we have tried to live our lives as if we were complete without you.
Lord, have mercy.
- Lord, for the times that our hearts have been so cluttered we could not possibly hear your word.
Christ, have mercy.
- Lord, for the times we have deliberately given way to temptation and followed paths which we knew were wrong.
Lord, have mercy.



Liturgy of the Word—Suggested Readings

- *Gen 9:8-15*

In this reading God speaks to Noah. The flood is over and the covenant between God and his people is about to be made. It is God's first promise of mercy.

- *Ex 20:1-17*

The 10 commandments express the hope that God has for his people.

- *Psalm 115*

This psalm echoes some tremendous themes of the Old Testament like trust, faithfulness, life, freedom, and the readiness to show faith.

Gospel Stories -

- *Mk 1:12-15*

Jesus tells us the kingdom of God is near.

- *Mk 9:2-10*

The Transfiguration

- *Jn 2:13-25*

The cleansing of the temple.

A short reflection by a student may be given following the readings. Try and have the reflection simple and practical. Some music may be played in the background while the reflection is given.

Prayer of the Faithful

We pray for the church spread throughout the world. Give your church the love which knows no barriers of race or culture and strengthen us with your trust so that we may show your work and love to the world.

- Lord, we see our divisions, quarrels, hatreds, injustices and greed. May we in our lives show that we are all equally your children.
- Lord our God, we think of those who govern our country. May they be channels of integrity, responsibility, and care.
- Lord, bless our class and our school with kindness and acceptance. Help us to support each other and help us work to make our school a caring place to be in.
- Lord, bless all our families. Help each one of us to make our homes a place of peace. Help them and help us to make our homes a happy place.
- Lord, look after our world at this time. Bless the Middle East with peace. Help us to work hard to rid our world of violence and war. Help us to be instruments of peace.

Pause for private prayer.....

Our Father/Ar nAthair

A Reflection around the theme of Lent may be included at this time of the celebration. A student may be encouraged/invited to compose a reflection.

Closing Prayer

Lord, bless each one of us gathered here today (if a class celebration mention each students name). Help us in this season of Lent to be models and examples of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Help us to build our lives around Christ our friend. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Notes

Never Hopeless

As life goes on from day to day
And God is very near
There is no place for hopelessness
There is no need for fear.

Lift up your eyes, behold the skies
The bright, the dark, the dim
Whatever weather there may be
It is ordained by Him.

Do not despair because of some
Injustice done on you
Doubt not all other souls on earth
Because of one or two.

Do not condemn yourself too much
For wrongs that you have done
It may deplete your moral strength
In battles to be won.

Lift up your heart, have faith in God
And say a fervent prayer
For as you trust in Him, so He
Will keep you in His care.

James J. Metcalfe

This newsletter and all further editions will be available on our website www.schoolchaplains.com in the coming months.

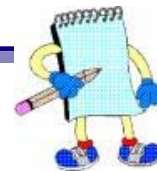
Guidelines for Child Protection:

www.education.ie/servlet/blobserve/pp_child_protection_guidelines.pdf

This newsletter is your voice and resource. Both Cora and Anne would appreciate any articles and ideas which could be included in future editions. Email Anne at blakevin@eircom.net or Cora at an-



If you would like to become a member of the School Chaplains Association, please contact Noreen Donergan on (061) 452422 or email ndonegan@ireland.com for an application form. Membership fee is €50.



At first executive meeting it was agreed that communication would be improved in the year ahead. There will be a password issued to members to access other members numbers, and the executive members welcome contact by e-mail.