

CHAPLAINCY  
IN A MULTI  
FAITH  
CONTEXT

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## **Introduction**

This is an attempt to recapture the essence and spirit of a ministry which is archaic but which is necessarily vital to the link between the Church and the World. We study and reflect upon several aspects of the school system and the work of the Chaplaincy. We hope that this will indeed lead into more fruitful discussion and furtherance of this ministry.

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## **Foreword**

Chaplaincy is a key aspect of Christian Ministry. It is so because it is the constant engagement of Christians with those who may not be Christians. When we look at places where Chaplaincies minister such as prisons, universities, schools etc we find the reality of it. There has been a renewed interest in Chaplaincy as a specific subject and this work leads us towards that direction in reflection. While commending this unto God's glory we hope that this will indeed promote effective discussion on the subject.

Ven George Melder

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## *1. What is Chaplaincy?*

A very effective manner to define what a Chaplaincy is will be to discuss how Christian jurisdiction in parishes or dioceses function. We are mindful now that Chaplaincy is not necessarily reserved for the Christian faith alone but also for other religions as well. However understanding the idea of the Christian ideal would definitely help us to get to know this ministry better.

At the beginning of the Christian ministry a jurisdiction or a Church area was merely defined by the name of that certain geographical area. The idea of the Church in the early times was merely not the place but rather the crowd that congregated. For an example the church of Corinth did not necessary mean a building or a place in that ancient town in Greece. It was more of the people who would have come for worship or for a celebration in that time. Surprisingly the Church of Corinth could also be easily in Athens even though it was quite far away from Corinth! When we hear that churches were established across Asia in the time of St Paul, it did not necessarily mean that there were buildings in those areas where services were held. In the New Testament we find that almost always the meeting places were in houses. So the same congregation who would move away to another

house was also given the same name as that of the town. While this may sound quite novel to us in the modern day where we treat buildings as churches, the Greek word and the definition certainly contradicts us. But let us also go back and see how this came about.

To know about the Christian faith as an organized system we must go just as much as half a millennium later than the first apostles being the founders of the faith. And come to the time of an emperor called Constantine and then Theodosius both ruling the vast Roman Empire, who made Christianity an official religion which was till that time a very much oppressed faith. At this time the historian would tell us that the most expansive and the systematized frame working of any faith in history took place. This is said not because that there was no precedent for such an expansion but it was not only that particular continent of Europe that was affected but rather even this stemmed into colonialism and imperialism. Many a Christian historian would probably be in amazement that the very humble ministry of its Jesus suddenly became so influenced with wealth as in Churches, status as in Bishops called the princes and the nobility reserving the right to be clergy, struggles in war for the holy land and slavery and most of all with power which made the Church become extremely

politicized and had a say in almost all matters of life and death. This has being the topic of several books and pondering on such would be a totally different reflection and we must end it here. However this was in fact the beginning point in which the Church became systematized.

This systematization spread initially as provinces rather than countries, regions rather than dioceses (or as it came to be understood later). With the entire continent either being recognized as the saved and the good and the lost and the heretic (an outcome of the above power factor) the vast geography needed a system of administration and with it a large number of persons who had to be involved in that same administration. When the current pope Francis relieved three hundred people from the Vatican palace we need to be mindful that it was not merely an extension of luxury but the bureaucracy of the Church had reached a level that made it possibly the first global business enterprise, the business of saving souls and maybe a bit of financial gain!

This led into what we would call the ecclesiastical reordering in which provinces grouped under dioceses were also called an Episcopal see. However in the times gone by Bishops eventually took over the role of a

governor and the spiritual and the secular rule had a very thin line of separation. The diocese meant that a certain Bishop had one's jurisdiction or as in the olden day authority over that region. The regions which were quite large had huge populations and it was necessary for parishes or individual churches to be built to minister the sacraments and care. This led to the concept of what has come down to us as an Incumbent, vicar or priest in charge.

Therefore the priest or the minister was in charge of a geographical selection, which was also part of a geographical selection within the order of the Church. Then the question props us as to what happened to Christian faith administration in a geographical location which was not under the jurisdiction of a diocese. And it is here we find the genesis of the Chaplaincy and specially related to travelling parties. Travel at that time was possibly on sea vessels, army disciplines in search of conquering and colonialization in search of land. The question naturally arises of the jurisdiction that a clergy travelling with them will have and here we encounter the chaplaincy ideal. It is a position in which jurisdiction of a clergy person is extended which may not specifically be part of the geographical locality. One may wonder whether this is also true of hospital, school and prison

chaplains since these can be inside dioceses. We can explain it by saying that still these geographical sections are indeed categorized in the sense that the local clergy will not interfere in such pastoral commitment unless requested. Today we find such positions in parliaments, cruises by ships, police departments and even in veterinary circles.

To recap the coming of the term of a chaplaincy we can state that it was initially a geographically based position which later became developed as a special ministry within the Christian Church. Now it is not unheard of to find chaplains of many faiths and stretching away from the traditional sectors of education, health and military posts.



## *2. Theology of Chaplaincy*

In the Christian academic circle we tend to be more and more in-depth and thereby chasing most of the faithful away from an intellectual deliberation. Since this book is primarily a short introduction as such it would not be of need at this particular time. Some resources appear in the appendix which may prove worthy resources for the interested reader in that regard. Some themes alone with some reference appear to explain bit further in this subject.

### The God of the Travel

The Israelites were and are a heavily geographically concerned people. When the temple of theirs was lost through war, foreign occupation and exile they indeed had a certain dilemma as to how God can be worshipped. In the book of Exodus we read about God's commitment to listen, feel and assist in the times of trouble. This in fact led the people to realize that their God was omnipresent and omniscience. This later also led into the idea of how God's justice can be shown through humans and it led to the times of the prophets and judges in the Bible.

### God The Builder

In the times of the Kings and the subsequent reigns that followed we find the ideal of God who works with the people in God's kingdom. It is also the time of much unrest and calamity as rulers chosen fail miserably save for a few. The Book of Nehemiah was such a case where he ministered in the building of the former majesty. The building ministry was a task of relationships, dedication and resilience. If the persons fulfils God's ministry God guides them to complete same.

### God the comforter

We find the psalms in the Bible as testament to human frailty and God's comforting voice. Struggles are an inevitable part of human life. Unless struggles become evident in God's plan, crises of faith are usually encountered. In Psalm forty two we find one of many such instances. There is a longing in the human which awaits God's consolation and which could devastate the limited human component. God comes to us in varied manner to console us and heal us. We might never find the one way on which we choose to be delivered but God never lets us out of God's sight.

## Prophecy

The voice of the prophet lingers throughout the Bible. The one who pronounces and the one who challenges. This is the business of initiative sometimes of unpopularity. Unless everything goes as well in a utopian context the human greed will overpower and it will need people who need to put the enterprise on the original track. God's power on those who challenges the system is never missing in the Bible, Daniel is a good example of how God works through people in prophecy.

## God and reconciliation

We believe that all faithful are called to be reconcilers. If there is no reconciliation there is no hope. Christians are specially called to be reconcilers as Jesus himself came to this earth to reconcile human and God. Reconciliation itself is a combination of several characteristics which are needed for the purpose. Jesus in his earthly ministry lived all these such as love, forgiveness, upholding, respect, comforting, trusting, selflessness and care.

## The God of Transformation

There is little but hope for the faithful, if life is fixed and we merely act what has been decided for us. Life as we know is a different ordeal after all. We need to keep learning and we need to be ambassadors of the reign of

God. There are many unjust structures, situations in which integrity of creation is jeopardized and caring service to be rendered. In a time where everything seems to lose ground, God's reality has to be remembered and practiced. The book of Acts and the witness of St Paul are probably the most striking in this manner. It is a story of great change, the change that can only be expectant due to ultra human experiences. God is ever wanting people to change and has kept a permanent space in which transformation can occur.

God, Spirit of encouragement

Humanity is by nature gregarious and the need of community is an idea that has entrenched us from the time of antiquity. The epistles talk to us of the nature of the first Christian communities and the issues that surround a faith culture. We in this book are going to discuss not only 'a' faith culture but several faith cultures and even non faith cultures. The distinction of well being might sound a bit tedious to decode amongst cultures in the Eastern context but we must try our best to understand how communal harmony and goodness should prevail when we are all having different backgrounds. In the words of our Lord if a city is divided it will fall and the more togetherness we might have it will result in fruitfulness. The spirit of God encourages

us to reach beyond boundaries as in our Lord's encounter with the Samaritan woman and to understand the role of each practice as in Paul's visit to Athens. If God does indeed encapsulate humanity as creator and redeemer God must also be its sustainer. There cannot be anything more encouraging than this hope.

The Theology of a Chaplaincy is both a factor of presence and development of the person as well as the community. It is both of evangelism and multi culturism. It is to encourage and comfort. It is also to prophesize and transform. While we cannot compare and contrast its work from the work of a priest or a faithful it does call on us to carve out its uniqueness.

### *3. Branches and Duties of Chaplaincy*

The Branches of Chaplaincy although now spread into many areas are going to be discussed as the primary four as we might call it from its beginning. These would be military, hospital, colonial and school/higher education.

The first branch which was mentioned above came to be in military occupations. The non Christian reader might be amazed to find this unusually coined term. Military would mean war and chaplaincy would mean a priest, it would either mean the priest fought with the army or he as it was always then had to be given a special privilege or pass to fulfil the obligations. The root of this also has an interesting beginning. The ideal of a need for the cross to accompany a warring party was not always the norm it was hardly common at all.

The emperor Constantine had a vision of the cross which made his turn around but it also became to be depicted more and more literally and in practice as belonging to a certain faith. The word crusade in its bloodiest sense implies to us and as we may now assume became the time to take the cross to show difference to the other party at war. When we look at the ancient images of the cross paraded in front of the battle group we also realize

that the main theme if the war was a conquest of the faith rather than of the land for which usually humanity has shed blood. The ideal of the cross then had to be accompanied with the administration of the faith which was primarily in the sacraments, advise and sometimes in pastoral care.

In the terms of Roman Catholicism the Chaplain was the ‘shepherd, priest and pastor for the travelling party. Unlike being a ship chaplain this post would have had some sort of danger attached to the post. The fact all these matters of faith were done in times of a war probably had the requirements of a trained personnel as well to survive in those circumstances. Now the military chaplains are able to arrive when needed but the situation was quite different then. This probably led to the infusion of combat styles in coats of arm, naming of certain battle fields, remembering martyrs within the church lectionary and even the recognizing of the work of priests who have spent time in the battle fields.

The main contribution of military chaplaincy was probably its own reflection back at the Church that war was indeed a waste and destruction of the integrity of God and God’s goodness gets totally wiped off. However it may go on to show that God’s presence must

be found even amongst war and destruction and a Chaplain must never support the cause but be ready to support the devastated in spirit. This will of course returning to the above point does not in anyway present any causes worthy of a 'just war'.

### Hospital chaplain

The hospital is but one place people see more agony than in a battle field. It is also a place where we start to question more of the 'why' when causes are unknown and the sufferers are not deserving agony. The presence of all priests are found in hospitals which gives us the impression that the faithful and even those who may not be of the faith have to come to terms with these situations with a spiritual view.

There is a rich history of Christianity being in the forefront of medicine which might seem a quite strange consideration that the faith stood in strong defiance of the evils of the body such as witch craft, paganism and the like. There was a strong link with the early church and the subsequent histories of the church which followed the bodily wellness as one of the commandments of Jesus himself. There are traditions where the monasteries and local church institutions were used to maintain the rich practices of healing and when



universities took form it was absorbed and even there are a large number of hospitals and institutions which are run today in Church terminology on 'divine goodwill'.

When colonization occurred the hospital became part and parcel of the threefold ministry of the Church where spiritual, mental and physical aspects were looked after and herein the physical by the hospital. However this was not the genesis of the hospital chaplain and its root is also found in the matter of jurisdiction as a hospital while it may remain in a diocesan area can be constituted as a premise which can be different from the other locations in the diocese. The role of the Hospital chaplain has been depicted as a one of a comforter and a minister of presence. It is not uncommon for the persons belonging to non Christian faiths as well who would want some presence and prayer to which the ministers attached respond non hesitantly.

The Hospital chaplaincy work is also in line with the sacrament of extreme unction. The Church follows seven sacraments in general and this becomes possibly the last in the life of a person where the commitment of the soul is performed. Disease and death are two elements that continually test the human understanding of the divine. It is not unheard of for people to solely leave a theistic

faith on the basis of non comprehension or the inability to accept the set interpretations of the religious faith. In that regard Chaplaincy is a theological centre for the continuing of faith education whether the beholder accepts its tenets or not. But then again emotion wise it is also a centre of hope and encouragement two very important matters that help the affected and his/her family.

### Colonial chaplain

We might wonder why this would end in this main categorization bypassing prison, parliament and such regions. One reason for this is that it is the epitome of the chaplaincy role. A second reason can be that it was only preceded by military chaplaincies. Going to the first point the biggest issue invading colonizers faced was how to understand the role of their faith in a foreign land. It was natural for them to share the faith they inherited or to call more plainly evangelization. But they still faced the issue of jurisdiction and colonial chaplains mostly priests, were authorized in a special manner to share in this task.

Also Colonial chaplaincy was by no means the most comfortable of all the chaplaincies mentioned. This is because it was a struggle with a foreign element as well.

The keen reader will be able to trace the arrival of the Anglican missionaries in Sri Lanka through four chaplains who were sent to the four corners of the country. The battles that they had to contend with was nowhere near what they would have endured at a training college back home. It was a survival with the elements of physical, human and most surprisingly spiritual as there was much rejection and despise at the work of the missionaries. When we hear of the schools and the churches which came about it was possibly with the strong handling of the administration which was also at that time foreign and attuned to the needs of the missionaries, which made most of the practicalities work out for their benefit.

The colonial chaplains also had another special task. It was to cater to the foreign nationals in the country, whichever it maybe. The first chapels were homed in state offices for that matter as churches per se were not built at that time. Spiritual nourishment of the foreign nationals was indeed a task which got larger as times went by and it was then handed over to the specialized missionaries to carry on the work of evangelism and to reach the corners of a country where foreigners resided. In Sri Lanka for that matter we still find the old registers with and records full of the names of such chaplains and

foreigners signifying their presence from the time of over two centuries past.

Colonial chaplaincy provided also a direct experience of evangelical ministry. It might have provided more but more than other ministries it was a bearing up service. It called for the person to directly live up to the faith as handed down. This was so because such chaplaincy was done in a vacuum away from other ministries or institutions.

#### School/Universities

Religiosity and education, are not two different paths. In both we look at mentoring, counselling, teaching and learning. In the Christian faith education has been a strong consistent mark for millennia. We understand God as a teacher and how the subsequent kings, judges and prophets have also taken part in this aspect. We read in the poetic books the need of teaching and instruction and how much wisdom is needed instead of knowledge. In the New testament teaching is in fact a gift of the Spirit and Jesus is known commonly as the ‘teacher’.

In the post New testament arena we find how faith was preserved through literature and oral instruction. How these actually meant that one had to put one’s life on the

knife's edge to preserve faith. The post Constantine era marked an expansion of knowledge at the higher level which means that it was available for priests, scholars and theologians who at that time were always the same people. The coming of the prominent theologians such Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Gregory Nazianzus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose of Milan, Jerome and Origen of Alexandria was made possible. Monasteries then took on the task in the middle ages of becoming rich knowledge preservers and then in to pre renaissance era we find that education was indeed almost powerful tool as it bound the faith with every part of life in Europe at that time. Sponsoring of learning and writing in the faith became established, the concept of universities became a reality. With the Church and Kings granting this as a service it became even more popularized.

With the reformation and the technology that followed the expansion of knowledge took with it the Christian faith as well. It poured even into the conquering and the evangelism of the far away lands. We understand that schools came to be part of this movement as it was not only a humanitarian effort to improve the ethical life of the person but it was also a tool of evangelical education.

The cathedral schools in its origin were for the poorer children in the villages which made it possible for them to by pass this under privileged- ness. This was also an objective of the school under colonial rule as it was done with the aim of inclusive education. The end of same could be disputed for the local view but certainly not from the foreign view as naturally the overpowered culture will have its setbacks when the overpowering culture is made to seep into the hearts and minds of people in a country.

The Universities and the schools became in the Christian view also places of congregation where for most parts religious instruction was laid out. It was also the same for the universities predating the renaissance era. The care of the souls in that area by the jurisdiction of the Bishop was handed over to chaplains. It is not uncommon to find universities even today in Sri Lanka having chaplaincies established whilst some have gone into a more secular humanistic chaplaincy with more counselling orientedness.

As we are going to discuss this topic further we might not spend more time or fact here but in theology let us look at the main points as to help us understand the concept. Pastoral care is of prominence in the theological

understanding and as unlike war, prison or hospital we deal with persons of a younger nature and who are more adventurous as in the beginnings of their careers. The talks of ethical and evangelical ordeals also seem to fit in then quite unconsciously into this picture. As a possible third it helps to be a meeting point of secularism which is education in this regard and how a conservative faith ideology can also be reached in the process.

#### *4. The Schools Then and the Now*

We will first look at the general work of the chaplaincy in a school. Here we are not looking at the Asian context or the Christian majority context for this matter. We need to go back into the times when school chaplaincy was introduced in England and what were the goals and roles of that special ministry.

According to a well established chaplaincy school guide the following are highlighted but with some room to re think some of these in a different manner.

Firstly the Chaplain provides liturgical assistance. This can be quite the most important of same because it is something a priest can do rather than a lay person. We must also remind ourselves that Chaplaincy is possibly only relevant to Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. And in both of these denominations the priestly role is very elevated and this makes it also liable to the new movements that we see around today of elitism. However it is not unusual to find several services of faith held across a school spanning from daily offices to special gatherings. These fall under the direct overview of the Chaplain.



The second aspect would be Spirituality and it is the affective part of ministry while the liturgical section being the more visual cognitive element. A school has a wide community of persons attached to it. They could belong to the above Roman Catholic and Anglican or other faiths. They could also belong to several hundred of other Christian denominations who may fall under umbrellas such as evangelical, main streams and even those who do not. There are also persons who belong to other faiths and in western contexts on a large scale those who do not fall into any faith category. All of them as being human yearn for a spiritual connection. This is not said in juxtaposition to the topic at hand but even the atheist need to have a longing with some connective element which may or may not be human. When we lose this connection we become disillusioned and such will be a discord between the person and his or her well being. The task of building spirituality is a very hard task if at all possible.

Probably on the lines of the above but maybe denoting a practical sense of spirituality be the Pastoral perspective of the Chaplains work. A Pastor rooting from the word shepherd in Latin is the general work and not only Christian but the support extended towards all in an institution and maybe even for those who are outside but

related to it. In today's society we encounter newer and newer problems people face. These could be physical, social, ethical, personal etc and most times not spiritual. A Chaplain needs to be the supporter who assists people through these issues. In a way it can be equalled to a social service assistance as we are not looking at a specific religious goal but rather a practical, counselling motivated building up exercise.

Next we come to an important section of a Chaplain's occupation as it aligns with the work of the organization. This is in fact a joint effort he or she engages in and that is teaching. The Chaplain will have set time slots in which he or she would have to engage in classroom styled teaching. This could be away from the class room but maybe even in confirmation candidature training. This remains an eminent activity in that there is a religious person who imparts knowledge other than lay persons.

The final two aspects worth pondering above are probably the most vital in terms of mission. Mission even when considering secular aspects is what can be noted as an intention and the manner in which this intention is to be exercised. In that regard missional would mean promoting what is correct and also

challenging what can be not. In both regards the Chaplain needs to be a prophet. In a school setting we would find the Chaplain being the only person who has direct ties with the Church even if the school is a Christian oriented one. In that way the task of being a prophet is doubly hard. Because it is to speak of the truth and promote the values of the Kingdom. It also means rectifying where such has not being the case and this is a context of clashes. At most times the Chaplain would have the backing of similar minded persons, who would revert any such clashes but it's hard to think of same in a multi cultural setting.

And quite adjacent to it we find the missional perspective of a Chaplains duty. This can refer to the discussions at board meetings or even to the casual chats one may have with well wishers. This is to align the work of the school with the work of the Church or to go beyond the secular to align with the work for the Kingdom of God. A major accusation that gets thrown at schools with a Church backing is that they outline the 'reign of God' is not to be found either integrally or in the work done externally. When such an allegation appears we also question the prayers and the religious nature we immerse ourselves day in and day out but faith at this outward action. Hence if there is one person in a

school who should be a better director of mission it must be the person in the Chaplaincy as we believe that such a person has got acclimatized with the work that needs to take place in sense of mission. However the Chaplain alone does not figure out the mission of the school and at times he or she may not be called to participate in all these activities. As the school gets larger and larger the need becomes even more forth coming and it needs to be team oriented at most times.

## *5. Chaplaincy issues in schools*

We are now equipped with a slightly better understanding of the subject of Chaplaincy and we can narrow down to school chaplaincies. In the Asian context when schools of the foreign origin became centres for the Church's mission as it must rightly be so done today as well, the Chaplain was not in a minority of one. This was said because starting from the Principal down to the non academics the practicing Christian ethos was found either in the converts made or the foreigners themselves present.

With the tide of nationalism and taking over of schools and the subsequent calamities of the private schools in Sri Lanka, the Chaplaincy became a vital component not merely in faith administration but also of general administration. To put it simply the visual presentation of the Chaplaincy at a place of stature was a requirement. This of course will lead us into the first of the issues we will discuss regarding schools. The technicalities of being a school chaplaincy must indeed be learned otherwise it must be acquired. Unless this happens there is little provision for the person to match up to what is needed of the person in a philosophical, psychological,

ethical and administrative capacity in being part of the misional aspect of the school. Unlike in the home country of origin the Sri Lankan chaplaincies are not in fact a specifically trained unit in that there is much conflict between Church work and chaplaincy and hence this dilemma remains.

The second of the issues worth mentioning will be the stratification of ministries a Chaplain is now called to conduct. This is a historical issue as in the times of a British administration or a majority Christian population arena the work of the secular and sacred may have a very thin line that separates. However as we move a bit forward into the times modern we might encounter a slightly mixed up situation where certain officials are always elected or appointed to look after certain aspects of the administration. In that regard the Chaplaincy merely corners into the spiritual while a whole deal of presence is required in other fields. To take an example the Chaplain may have a distinguished place at a procession which signifies his or her presence but may not be invited to ask for opinions in a higher meeting other than with regard to spiritual matters. Its difficult to pinpoint the exact problem with this matter but chances are that even from the Christian circle the Chaplain's expertise may fall slightly into the spiritual alone.

The third aspect of note would be the political one in which we even though reluctantly need to talk about. While being a religious but also dwelling in the secular and with relation firstly with the Church administration secondly with the school internal management, thirdly with the higher external management and then finally with the community that is served makes a person quite in the middle of the sway of matters. This can be further aggravated by the fact that the religious being is thought to have a more flexible approach and in terms of emotions be kind, bearing and non judgemental which may not necessarily be what must be expected from others. In that regard and in our context this becomes a heavy burden to carry. There have been enough experiences that resonates with the torn-ness of the person when trying to reconcile different aspects. The great deal of this flexibility must derive from one's spirituality and perhaps even from the persona one projects to the world.

The fourth aspect is probably the most worthwhile when we are treating the subject at hand. It is the eventual tug of war that may rage between a multi faith context against the Anglican context or it could be the more freer church movements who seek to capitalize on Christian schools amidst the multi faith context. Whichever way, it

results in a situation where a certain degree of bias might creep into the person in charge. There will probably be no going around it since almost all of our Christian schools have a minority representation of staff and pupils. Apart from these most of the non Christian persons may have been radicalized in the general sense of the atrocities of the British mission in Sri Lanka yet holding onto the fact that the school alone is a popular or famous one. And apart from these there is also the consideration that the country itself is viewed upon as religious related in nature. This has also been factually proved and religion is simply a bigger deal in this region. Therefore there really cannot be any considerations that a person in a religious school might not have when thinking of religions and persons of other faiths. We will look at this more in depth in the next chapter.



## *6. Multi faith issues*

Pluralism is a fact. It is not a generated hype to make sure that such a word can be coined or can be studied. Pluralism in faith is no more affective to faiths than to any other phenomenon. And here we face such a situation where there is a foundation faith and an administrative faith but the congregation faith is varied. To put this even more simply it is that a lot of ‘checking the waters’ is needed before we pilot the ship.

There was probably a time in Sri Lankan education history at least where there was time when the authority of the Church and the State which was the one British and it allowed a simple heavyweight power. When wielding this power it was easy to say, ‘either be influenced or just leave’. This was a case for jobs and this was the case for schools as well. Being in a school at that time and being in administration would have proved much like being in a majority Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim school in the modern day. There is a certain clout that carries with it when it comes to religious sidelining. In the early British days it was easy for students to be called into a chapel service because to be very frank there was no option against it. And chapel service was the norm for each and every student.

The situation that we are discussing now is of course much different. The issue which we can dismiss at the outset is that any Christian school can be maintained as was done earlier with an iron clout. This might result in the loss of religious tolerance but more than that the faith itself makes a clear case against it. There is more flexibility than rigidity in New Testament thought and more so in the varied denomination of protestant faith much more in the Anglicanism that most of these schools are founded upon.

The Sri Lankan multi faith context is nothing new. Like many of the Asian counterparts the country respects religion and holds in high esteem the concept of religion. It is held so high that there are numerous occasions where extremism also creeps in but in the same manner there is also opportunity for dialogue, forums and learning. Even though there is still room for suspicion and collaboration we would all agree that by now citizens at least are very much aware of multi religiosity than in a western context.

In an education set up there is possibility of lesser issues which may pervert peace but nonetheless it might be interesting to root out a few of these. The first and the most inevitable is that there is a certain perception that

non Christians may hold of the Christian mission . It could be something like wealthy, elitist, segregationist or even more caring, inclusive etc. While the school has demonstrated this or not the management and the personnel all need to face up to this cloud that may hand over them. It is why that education needs to be provided to new students as well as teachers on the exact genesis and progression of the private school tradition in Sri Lanka.

As there are going to be more ambassadors of non Christian faith for the college than of the Christian faith it is necessary that the community itself understands the ideology of these schools. In modern times we see that only some of these points as mentioned above become associated with these schools. For an example being wealthy. These schools are understood merely as ones that are attended by the wealthy and who focus on wealth mainly. In that regard this misconception probably owing to the fact that there have been cases based on which have got amplified needs to be eradicated for the sake of the mission of the school.

Another multi religious context proposition that we endure is of the majoritarian versus the minority situations. In Pakistan for an example the Anglican

missions manages several Church schools. From the administration to the ethic the Christian faith is highlighted. However ninety percent of the community are of the Islam faith. Naturally there are going to be issues with regard to almost everything. It could be about leadership and it could be about morning devotions. It could be about communication from the school to the allegiance it proposes to the overly majoritarian culture at play.

This is in fact a most complex situation. The schools in Sri Lanka of the private nature are simply unable to fill the admission cards only with Anglicans or Christians. The cause is both practical and ethical. In one way there cannot be that many children who are able to finance or be financed to fit the ranks of the school. While there are fierce arguments that the Church schools should give more of a free quota to the faithful this is ultimately a problem when it comes to finance, homogeneity and once again practicality.

The ethical issue that goes beyond the other faith schools is that Christian schools have always welcomed the multiculturalism and it is present even more today. The main idea of this is that these schools were never meant to be result based schools rather these are mission

schools. The importance of multiculturalism is needed as it is acceptance and respect which runs deep in the ethics of the Christian mission.

While there can be several more issues to discuss with the multi faith context we will confine to discuss one more aspect only. And this can be the pressures that are often experienced from the outside world. Above we discussed of the internal matters but as we know a school needs to be aligned with many other interests mainly of the governmental system as well as the outer world which is not of this ideology. The governmental tensions will flare in several ways such as parental agitation, petitioning, lack of respect at event, discouragement for teachers, lethargy at governmental intuitions even aggravated assaults which have been visible in the past directed at students and well wishers.

This can only be construed as agitation that fuels a hatred based on religious and elitist lines. There is also an ambiguity as to exactly this has occurred. We can use the term of projected elitism where we understand the population thinking of a certain group as having a certain characteristic within them and having a prejudice against it. This is possibly the most closest reason as in the modern day there is a whole lot more interaction

between schools and is really difficult to see any prejudice growing out of real interaction. The other way of looking at this is within the entire educational system and the shortcoming of having better relationships may instil some sort of fear within the other groups. Which can also translate into some sort of prejudice. Both of these must be handled in a chaplaincy as a majority of staff and parents could be from such backgrounds. We must imagine the struggle of the educator with all these tensions.

## *7. The Church perspective*

The Church or Diocese in this context is the other party in this discussion. Silent many be but very important. The Diocese assists with the pastoral ministry of the school as we are talking of faith schools. The Church and we must specify the Anglican church's view on chaplaincy itself has undergone a major shift during the past few decades. It has come from being a very exclusivist ordeal to a multi religious perspective and now with a few glances at the websites on chaplaincy have made a more permanent post in which it has a ministry of presence rather than an evangelical role.

What does a chaplaincy in the Anglican Church impress upon a multi cultural context. Firstly we will be motivated by the interpretations of well being, harmony and coexistence. Secondly we are motivated by the educational atmosphere and the difference that may lie in working with young minds and teachers. Thirdly it poses a theological implication. This is said because this canvas becomes a resource for newer interpretation. We will discuss these in details below.

The first of these is that the Church's chaplaincy views cannot be different from the Church's views. The Church

and we can umbrella all denominations in this regard have evolved into that stage where multi faith contexts are no longer militarized. Simply it is not a matter of agony. This might of course be met with evangelical wings who would fight the idea but would also limit their reservation to a moderate level. The reasons for this has been multifaceted. In one way secularism has made religious cooperation more possible. In another way the educational system itself with emphasis on religions, cultures festivals has made coexistence triumph.

Also it is a practical truth, for instance in the private schools when a majority are of other faiths there is no point in an evangelical drive but rather a witness drive. Some of the activities that could be done to enhance this harmonious principle can be interfaith forums and discussion, festivals with presence from all, a religious education committee to develop spirituality, joint outreach etc..

The second reason is also practical but it is also educational in the sense that schools have now become very important in the social, physical and spiritual development of the child. While some may argue it is becoming more and more crucial in the minds of educators no matter what each school may think. The



socialization of the child is also becoming a hot topic for debate in Sri Lanka. In a time when hatred, prejudice can crop up as easily as it does the question, may naturally arise for all faith schools whether to continue a hard right wing understanding of faith or less it becomes flexible and welcoming. On the other hand when we are confronted with a seed bed as vulnerable as it is with children and young adults it is also an opportunity to make religious education a meaningful experience.

There has been much written on the fact that Christian schooled education made in conjunction with a multi cultural atmosphere produces students who are more understanding, encouraging and building up. While this can be a hypothesis the practical results of this is very much present in local private school traditions. There has even been more opportunities given to students who are from these schools as they were projected as higher thinking and more broad minded.

A few more activities that could stimulate this concept would be special religious education which is multi cultural in composition, appointing student counsellors and teacher guidance centres, encouraging students to delve into scripture and inter religious studies, education of parents etc..

The final aspect we mentioned was witness. As the golden rule emphasises it is very important to do to others what you would have liked for another to do to you. It goes a long way in acceptance, humility, perseverance, friendship and care. Just because a faith school might have an upper hand with teacher posts, administrative roles, general aura of activities it does not necessarily mean that non Christians should be ostracized for its sake. While this does definitely happen in major Buddhist, Hindu and Islam schools it certainly does not mean that the Church would intention it to happen in their schools.

It also goes without saying that when the status quo remains at a certain welcoming level there is the possibility that persons would naturally feel interested about religion. But for this to happen the chaplaincy must have a firm grip on what needs to be presented . It is not necessarily a crowd pleasing matter. Speaking the truth is as an important aspect of chaplaincy as any other concern for that matter. However witnessing done in a multi faith setting provides the best form of evangelism, we might add to any hard liner who feel that the remnant of these schools should work at getting a hard border between faith and other faiths. Linking some thoughts from the second point to this as well, we might see in

reality persons from these schools who are very well versed in multiculturalism. That itself must be an achievement for the school. In practicality what can be done to enhance this will be continued emphasis and education, forums where religion can be discussed freely, promoting of this multicultural education in varied strata of society, mutual engagements whether it be in festivals or event etc..

Havind studied the models in which the Church might look at Chaplaincy in a multi faith context we cannot judge on the exactness of these policies. The simple reason being there are many interpretations for these schools. In some cases the Church may not want to intervene in the sense that the schools have progressed into an elite and club in a way which may not want their advise in the first place; On the other hand the conservative wing of the Church may find many a fault with these models owing to historicity or modernity in which to their mind more damage is caused by such policies. Overall we do have a working guide but we must be open to newer interpretations of the same phenomenon. And we must be mindful that the Church's mind is not necessarily the mind of the leaders neither the congregations. It must be its founder's.

## *8. The Multi Faith Dimension*

One of the most important factors of recognizing that there is a multi faith dimension would be listening to its concerns. It would be an easier path to force a set system on whoever may be present and wait for questions to erupt. However schools like any other organization are not merely religious structures. They are educational , management, social, cultural and even political institutions. The stir that might come in one sphere should not be related to a collapse of the entire system. In another way even faith schools have become secular in the sense that most of the business conducted have turned away from religion. But we might still attempt to view the entire setup from a multi faith dimension.

The fact that religious activities are conducted in other faiths is a reality. This may include practices, festivals, competitions and the like. The slot of a Christian service which was compulsory for all in the earlier times has now been delegated into a multiplicity of ways. A chaplaincy can indeed be part of this system as well. The difference could be that they now have to have a simplicity and humility to be observers and learners. Since all the Anglican priests are indeed trained in all religions, coexistence and even further study of doctrine

this cannot be such a hard issue. However the hard right which we try so hard not to talk of will raise reservations on this matter. Yet the ideology of a chaplaincy should far pervade a distortion of the same. The result of this may be worthwhile testing but there cannot be any promised outcomes.

Secondly we must talk of the non religious perspective as well. As students and teachers go through college it is not merely that the anxieties they face fall into labelled categories. The chaplaincy must continue with the pastoral care aspect in such a way that new and newer advocates of the system will prevail especially from non Christian persons. This is not a hidden agenda evangelism drive and which must be deposed as one if highlighted to be. It is the primary work one must engage in while being in a Chaplaincy. It must be said that this in fact enriches the Chaplaincy as well. Discussion with the other on the uses of life, how they cope up and what we can learn are as invaluable as any lesson in faith.

A third intervention in the field of multi religiosity is the possible collaboration we can have with religious bodies. This may sound as curious as some of the other matters we have been discussing but in another way religious harmony must overflow from a personal perspective into

a wider pool. This enables the critical collaboration that will have to happen with students and teachers of the school that encourages this sort of socialization and the persons of the larger bodies that have to deal with this phenomenon. This would of course also be a confidence winner in terms of religious cooperation. It is sometimes hard to see the invitation of other religious leaders at Christian faith school events and collaborations. While the ritualistic invites do go out, a self conscious attempt is yet to be found. However the story may have a few other sides to it as well. Yet this becomes a worthwhile issue of consideration and it calls for a revisiting of the traditional relationships we have had with other religious bodies. While the same may not be the case in the reverse scenario the hope is that the outreach itself might be able to develop that spiritual harming within.

Fourthly a chaplaincy must also voice for the institutional integrity. This must go without saying as the persons in a chaplaincy and in this case it is always one person should be equally voicing to concerns in the spiritual and spiritual related secular world of the school. This might look political but in terms of the mandate a chaplaincy has it is quite obvious that the welfare of all are indeed encapsulated in it. This of course must not be in schools forums alone but it must be on the public one

as well. In another way Chaplaincy must be an ambassadorship. This is a direct proposal of what we aim to present to the world at large. While anyone can do it the signs are well cleared when a religious does the same task.

It is actually very difficult to project the multi faith perspective since the writing viewpoint is very different. We always think that most of the time we can look at a perspective from another viewpoint but it becomes hard when even if we know the mentalities of another group it's always difficult to think as they would think. In simple however a multi faith background of higher percentage of faith number in the country but with a less number in school will want in some way a recognition. Not because of the majority but the Christian approach which most people think as different. Then they would also require freedom which once again goes on to show that the past is past and now faith is not administered. Thirdly they would require a more balanced approach in understanding the school ethic and the role they should play in it. Long ago the Christian school became classless and ethnic religious and culturally anonymous, It was a possibly the best example of education that was motivated towards a higher thinking and behaving citizenry. Yet now the Christian school must deal with

vicissitudes that are present within a multi religious atmosphere. We will present a few of these challenges in the next chapter and we hope that these will lead the persons involved in such ministry as well as the policy makers to ponder more on what can be done to makes matters for the best.



## *9. Challenges and the Future*

For most parts the challenges to a Chaplaincy in the multi faceted religious atmosphere has been detailed above. The challenges can be religious in nature but as well as secular. It is also hard to imagine the same challenges in the same schools owing to the contextual problems. Yet we are certain that the smooth road ahead is not indeed possible. Yet the Chaplaincy as a ministry is also not an entirely religious one. It is more in the spiritual sphere.

There it makes it possible for a Chaplaincy to reach out across religion. But this being said, we must understand the education and training that must be given to Chaplains and chaplaincy teams. Otherwise a real good thing can be made to result in adverse ways. Still the same congregations if we may allow, that are in these schools also comprise the best of persons in terms of religiosity. It could be for the sake of the occupation or the status but most persons have indeed converted their mind to view this positively. In that light a Chaplaincy does face reduced threats of religiosity as long as the education mentioned above covers interfaith and intrafaith dialogical concerns.

As regard the future, Chaplaincy itself has undergone changes in the sense that it is now considered a special ministry. Rather than involving general practitioners in the faith it is promoted to be undertaken by persons with a special training, It is also now found out to be an educational role to a major part. We rarely find persons who do not want to be in education being forced to work in chaplaincies. It promotes two ideas. The most vital is that the person undertakes the role in an educational spirit and secondly it makes him or her understand that this indeed is a learning- teaching congregation which restricts for most parts any offer of conflict.

Chaplaincy has developed in such a light in the recent past that there is also a case of integrated work where there is a chaplaincy team which can comprise of persons even of other faith. It goes on to show that there is a consensus around the table which makes it possible for the team to own the process while also taking accountability in the fray. The Church must not only look at the appointment of such teams but also counsel them to be ambassadors of the ministry. As we had mentioned earlier the traces of chaplaincy was found in several other vocations as health, armed forces and crossing of the seas. The personnel in charge of these ministries have indeed been given a different job

description in the modern day. Our hope is that while it enriches the Church at large the true multiplicity of the ministry will indeed enrich the persons concerned and the schools themselves. The more the schools concentrate on Chaplaincy for the answers the more witness it must provide.

## *A Sample Programme with References*

\* Chaplaincy has traditionally been a distinctive feature of universities and colleges and of many church-based schools. Outside the educational context, chaplaincy has been a feature of the armed forces, of prisons and hospitals and of other institutional situations. They are there for all staff, pupils, parents, governors and the community which the school serves, regardless of the faith or belief of those groups and individuals.

### \* Marks of School Chaplaincy

- *Supporting the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of students and staff*
- *Offering opportunities to worship and to explore the Christian faith*
- *Finding ways to encourage creativity, curiosity and 'poetic imagination' as ways to find what's meaningful and spiritually rewarding in our lives*
- *Supporting those in established faith journeys to grow and develop their spiritual life*
- *Offering prayer and spiritual guidance to groups and individuals*
- *Supporting the school as a place where staff and students feel cared for and safe.*
- *Building a bridge between the school and church, and between the school and the wider*

*community, including other denominations and faith communities.*

\* A Guideline for .....

<b>Role</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Specific Tasks and Time Frame</b>
Pastoral	Caring for the needs of the whole school community. The chaplaincy is available for everyone, not just Christian staff or pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Once a week time spent in College having discussion and allowing space for conversation</li> <li>* And in any urgent scenario on call</li> </ul>
Liturgical	Leading prayer and worship, preparing resources for collective worship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Term and special services</li> <li>* Once a week/month H/C</li> <li>* Daily roster in collaboration with SCM</li> </ul>
Spiritual	Leading the spiritual life of the community and upholding the school's Christian ethos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Bible studies, counseling</li> <li>* Attendance at special events</li> <li>* Retreats, prayer cycles, praying together</li> </ul>
Pedagogic (educative)	Teaching about the Christian faith	* Attending Christ Church/St Paul's

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* On invitation teaching in classes</li> <li>* Input for A/L syllabuses</li> </ul>
Prophetic	Speaking truth and promoting Christian values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* At meetings, special sessions</li> <li>* Personal discourse with community</li> <li>* Assistance in Strategic planning</li> </ul>
Missional	Commending the Christian faith, supporting faith development and working with the local church and other faith communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Concerns taken with the Bishop, Standing committee and schools</li> <li>* Working with other churches, faiths</li> <li>* Social justice, Interfaith programmes, reconciliation and development tasks</li> </ul>

Chaplaincy Team –

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## Sources

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