

# 7. Chaplaincy

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## **Why is there a Chaplaincy at NEWI?**

During your time as a student or employee at NEWI you will encounter many issues that make you think more deeply about some of life's big issues (e.g., God, the nature of the universe, racial harmony or vegetarianism). A chaplain is there to help you to think about these issues and to generally promote interest in the more spiritual side of life. In addition, a higher education chaplain (like a hospital chaplain) is there to offer the opportunity for support in any difficult times that arise for you during your time at NEWI.

## **Who is the Chaplain?**

Janice Jones is the Chaplain, who works ecumenically with those of other Christian denominations and encourages other faith communities and all staff and students to explore the spiritual dimension of life. For occasions where you specifically need to see a member of your faith group, there are people known as Faith Advisors there to help you.

## **What are Faith Advisors?**

They are contact persons for your faith group, and they can take to you about issues related to your particular faith, where you feel the need to speak to a fellow believer. Currently we have faith advisors for Quakers, Adventists, Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, and Muslims. We are looking to add more advisors to this list.

## **How does the Chaplaincy relate to the Counselling Service?**

The Counselling Service and the Chaplaincy are part of Student Services at NEWI, along with others such as the Nurses, the Disability Officer and the Student Advisor/Guidance Officer. The counsellors are professionally trained to specialise in counselling, whereas a chaplain is more of a general practitioner, having been professionally trained to perform a variety of roles, one of which is pastoral counselling. This pastoral counselling, like all of NEWI's listening services, is open to anyone

studying or working at NEWI who wishes to talk in an atmosphere of confidentiality and respect. The chaplain will welcome those of any faith or none.

## **What is pastoral counselling for?**

Many kinds of experiences lead a person to seek pastoral support, including the following, whether or not they have a directly religious focus:

- transitions: leaving home, settling in, beginning new tasks and relationships, maintaining your faith away from home
- problems in relationships (now or in the past)
- distressing feelings or thoughts
- a sudden life crisis such as bereavement, divorce or redundancy
- the experience of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)
- the experience of disability
- questions of sexuality
- questions of identity
- academic difficulties, such as: loss of concentration, motivation or interest; problems with assignments; a sense of being on the wrong programme or a wish to change programme;
- anxiety about competition; fears about failing; professional or ethical dilemmas

There are issues, such as the experience of abuse where you will be advised to speak to the counsellor, but you can talk it through with the chaplain first, if going to a professional counsellor is something that you not quite ready for. You can of course discuss any specifically religious or spiritual problems arising from this experience with the chaplain, in addition to seeing one of the counsellors. Equally, you should discuss issues related to experience of disability with the Disabilities Officer but again you can talk to the chaplain first (or second).

## **Is there anything specifically religious about pastoral counselling?**

There is no requirement to discuss specifically religious matters with a college chaplain, just as hospital and prison chaplains discuss a whole range of issues with the people with whom they work. Of course, a chaplain is particularly qualified when religious and

spiritual questions are either part of the concern or part of the answer towards which you are striving. For example, in the above list professional dilemmas might have a religious aspect, such as nursing students seeking to reconcile their religious beliefs with issues surrounding abortion law or the on-going debates about euthanasia.

Pastoral support from a chaplain is as religious as you chose to make it and is offered in a non-judgemental manner. Therefore, you do not need to worry about talking about matters that you think would go against the chaplain's religious principles. The chaplain's job is first and foremost to help students and staff and this means that the starting and finishing points are your views, not those of the chaplain.

### **When would I go to see a chaplain?**

The emphasis in this guideline is on seeking pastoral support in a time of need but you can talk to the chaplain about anything at all. There is not even a need for the chaplain to know whether you are coming to discuss a relationship problem, the weekend hockey results or last Sunday's Songs of Praise. One advantage of a chaplain being a general practitioner is that no-one need ever know why you called in.

### **Is pastoral counselling confidential?**

It certainly is and nothing that you discuss will be discussed with another party unless you request that this happens. The chaplain is bound to say absolutely nothing (even to you) about what was said, apart from in a subsequent session with you. Note that there are two legal restrictions on this confidentiality:

- a High Court may subpoena the chaplain to give evidence to disclose notes
- any indication that a child (including yourself in the past) has, is, or is likely to be harmed has to be reported to the local Child Protection authorities under the terms of the Children's Act

## **How long can I meet with a chaplain?**

A meeting can last until either you or the chaplain has another appointment but in general a pastoral counselling session would not last much more than an hour as seeking this sort of help is stressful and should be taken in relatively moderate doses. It is much better to close that meeting at a time when you are happy to do so and arrange another appointment.

## **Religious Services**

The chaplaincy holds regular worship meetings, which are advertised on noticeboards and at <http://www.newi.ac.uk/en/studyingatNEWI/studentssupportservices/chaplaincy/>

As there is no chapel at NEWI arrangements cannot easily be made for baptisms and weddings. If you want help in sorting out weddings, baptisms, confirmations, etc, with local churches, the chaplain can put you in touch with the relevant people.

## **Contacting the Chaplain**

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