

CBU Chaplaincy 2019-2020 Report

Vision

CBU Chaplaincy is there for everyone: the believer, the atheist, all students, parents, professors, staff, alumni and the community. The regular and unexpected encounters enriches our lives, as we hope theirs. We seek to **encounter, accompany and serve** all in our CBU family.

Team

Chaplaincy has a team approach to ministry. We are blessed to have Sr. Catherine MacFarlane and Rev. Brenda Drake (Anglican), along with some devoted students on our ministry team, who serve the 5500 students and 500 faculty and staff in our CBU family. Fr. Martin MacDougall has been very helpful in offering prudent guidance.

Student Joe Alen received the Fr Donald F. Campbell Chaplaincy award and 14 other students received bursaries from the Fr Bob Wickes bursary.

Multi-faith

Chaplaincy assists others in their interior spiritual life. It is where we are able to accompany others on their journey. To hear the Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Sikh and other experiences of the Divine. The students devotion to times of prayer, and their beliefs has been inspiring. We have learned so much from the diverse and multi-faith backgrounds of our CBU family.

As people of faith, there is so much more that unites us. As one rabbi said, *"today we need strong family life, community life and good morals to save our world."* Perhaps it will be people of faith who bring this to our world?

Students on our chaplaincy team created an annual calendar of all major religious festivals from all religions, as a liturgical guide to assist us in ministry with all our students throughout the year.

Catholics

We began the school year in September with a retreat at Camp Breton Dean. 12 international students from India, China, Guyana and elsewhere took part. What a moving weekend it was, with special thanks to retreat master Rev. Brenda Drake and Rev. Jackie Warren.

We are blessed with many students from India who seem to have come through the Catholic school system, so are able to be at home with us and are willing to engage in Scripture conversations, ministries, Bible study, Mass or other prayer services.

We are always trying to get more Catholics involved. Sometimes we lament the lack of encounters with catholic students from our diocese, so we encourage pastors to ask their highschool youth to connect with Chaplaincy.

Newman Society and Student Club

A few years ago Fr Greg Macleod began a Newman Society for CBU and Fr Bill Burke and Fr Dan Doucet, along with a devoted group of laity have been instrumental in developing the Society. The Newman Society hosts the Fr Greg Macleod Lecture Series, and formed a CBU student club this past year. Fr Dan Doucet is donating his home to the Newman Society, so we can provide housing to students interested in uniting faith and reason and living in a Christian ethos.

Highlights of the past year

On the 5th anniversary of Pope Francis encyclical - Care for our Common Home, CBU hosted a hip hop concert on the environment at The Pit Lounge. Artists performed on the topic of climate change and on care for our common home.

We serve students in need with gift cards, dinners, groceries and other requests as necessary based on the situation. In the fall we did our annual Clothing Drive for students. Parishes as far away as Inverness County, as well as faculty, and staff and Value Village in Sydney donated loads of winter clothing to students which chaplaincy organized and made available.

Caring Closet - A CBU student organized initiative led by the students and for students to provide free hygiene products were looking for a home base, thus Chaplaincy partnered with them. Numerous donors provided free products year round, such as: shampoo, toothpaste, razors, feminine products, soap etc. A shelving section was repurposed in chaplaincy, and students simply come in and take what they need, in a non-judgemental, no questions asked environment.

We appreciate the generosity of the Credit Unions all around Sydney and beyond who donated to make products available to students.

Tragically CBU lost two students this past year, one to a car accident in 2019 and another to suicide in August 2020. Chaplaincy organizes memorial services, and we are most grateful for then Bishop Dunn's presence at the memorial for the student from India last fall. The fall convocation took place as normal, with the Chaplain leading the invocation.

COVID-19

The second semester in 2020 to end of February was normally busy. However there was a Coronavirus conference with Dr. Strang on Feb 13th regarding care for our Chinese students returning from break and newly arriving foreign students for the new spring semester.

As transmissions escalated, by the second half of the semester in March, the virus caused numerous limitations, ultimately to the point of shutting down the university in late March. President David Dingwall thanked the *“CBU community for coming together to respond to this remarkable situation the world has found itself in. Our motto, “perseverance will triumph,” is certainly being tested at this time.”*

Everything was now online, including convocation. I dealt with students and staff at CBU by email, phone and text. There was limited student contact due to the pandemic, with the exception of 11 students who lost their apartments in a fire.

As a chaplain with a truck, Chaplaincy got them free used furniture: beds, chesterfields, chairs and groceries etc.

The annual CCCM chaplains meeting for 40 chaplains in Canada was held for the first time by zoom and we loved it. Since we were not flying to the annual meeting, it meant no carbon emissions.

In June CBU asked me for a proposal on an online chaplaincy program for the fall, since CBU were going totally on line. I am working to implement our new virtual chaplaincy. Even Sr Catherine is going to do a blog. We may actually be busier, as students are more likely to send a message via instagram, twitter, facebook or whatsapp etc, than walk into the chaplaincy office? We will see in the fall.

Peace, Fr Douglas MacDonald
CBU Chaplain