

## Chaplaincy Annual Report 2007-2008

The Chaplaincy is a creative partnership between the University and the three main faith communities in Bolton (Christian, Muslim and Hindu). It is led by a Co-ordinating Chaplain, an Anglican clergyman paid half-time by the Diocese of Manchester, and supported by volunteer Chaplains of different faiths and traditions: Christians of various denominations, a Muslim and a Hindu. Although volunteer Chaplains commit themselves to a few hours per week during term-time, the majority, understandably, give much less because of other commitments.

The management of the Chaplaincy is part of the work of the Vice Chancellor's Advisory Group on Faith and Spirituality, which now also reports relevant concerns and actions to the Equality and Diversity Committee. The Co-ordinating Chaplain is managed within Student Services.

The work of the Chaplaincy covers five areas: general pastoral support for students and staff of any faith or world-view; promotion of understanding between different faiths, beliefs and ethical views; encouragement of general well-being and spiritual development; giving information and advice about religion and belief which affects the life of the University; and building links between the University and local community, specifically the faith communities.

Chaplains support students over difficult periods in their studies. The Co-ordinating Chaplain has been involved in a range of pastoral issues including bereavement support, concern about project work, responding to a student crying in class and supporting a student who was suicidal. Spoken feedback from those supported has always been positive. The Chaplains work with the other support services and, without compromising confidentiality, referrals are made between the services. The Co-ordinating Chaplain made links with many overseas students through the International Society. The "Remembering with Thanks" service for University members who had died was a helpful occasion to those attending.

Greater understanding between different ethical and belief systems was promoted through:

- a discussion on "Faith & Medical Ethics" organized in conjunction with Bolton Interfaith Council and involved a theologian, GPs, medical consultants and a lecturer in medical ethics;
- three discussions on "Jesus through the Eyes of..." involving Jewish, Humanist and Muslim speakers and Christian respondents.

General well-being and spiritual development was encouraged specifically through the following events which were open to all: two Relaxation/Meditation Sessions which were part of the University's Mental Health Week Promotion – these were greatly appreciated, the University Carol Service, two Christian Eucharists and weekly morning prayer which a small number of staff find very helpful.

The Co-ordinating Chaplain strengthened links between the local community and the University by giving two talks to faith groups about the work of the Chaplaincy which included information about the University as a whole. He also made links through visiting a number of faith communities, being a member of Bolton Christian Cohesion Management Group, a member of Bolton Interfaith Council Executive and inviting the local community on campus to the Chaplaincy events.

The Chaplaincy web site has been developed to give more information about different faiths and world-views as well as giving a link to the weekly "Thought for the Week" Blog. For both students and staff, it is a source of information about faith traditions and spiritual practices.

The Co-ordinating Chaplain was involved in a number of meetings to discuss the Chaplaincy facilities which he had recommended to the University. In anticipation of such facilities, discussions were started about appointing lay "Pastoral Assistants" to join the Chaplaincy team. However, the Chaplaincy still needs additional Chaplains of any faith or belief system who can give quality pastoral support, work within a multi-faith environment and be committed to the University's policy on equality and diversity. When the Chaplaincy facilities are complete it may be easier both to attract new Chaplains and encourage them to work the committed hours.