



President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR)
Religious Inclusion Working Group (Extended)

Friday, February 14, 2025
3:30-4:30 pm TEAMS

Minutes

Attendees: S. Brazeau, Fr. D. MacGillivray, S. Parks, E. Yeo, and J. *Sylvester (Recording Secretary)*

Regrets: I. Ahmed, A. Hopkins, J. Levin, B. MacKenzie, M. McIntyre, C. Tohidian, D. Trembinski, Moran Wortman,

The meeting was called to order at 3:34 PM by E. Yeo, who extended a welcome to all attendees. The agenda was accepted as presented. The draft minutes from the January 17th meeting were also accepted as presented, along with the current meeting's agenda.

Fr. Donald prepared a detailed report outlining the current activities and responsibilities of the Chaplaincy Office. The Chaplaincy team made up of a fulltime Chaplain and voluntary community clergy provide spiritual and pastoral support to students and the broader StFX community, through services, ecumenical and interfaith gatherings, and an active campus presence. Chaplaincy is dedicated to fostering connection and support for students of all backgrounds.

Catholic Centered Worship and Activities

Chaplaincy offers Sunday Mass and as needed other Catholic religious services. Chaplaincy also offers programs and other activities to support the faith needs of Catholics students.

Ecumenical Activities (For Christians of all Denominations)

Annual Chaplain's Prayer Breakfast takes place in November of each year and the speaker is invited to reflect on how their faith influences their lives. Past speakers have been Sylvia Parris, CEO Buddy Daye Learning Institute, Janet Hazelton, President, Nova Scotia Nurses Union, Dr. Nathan Chiarlitti MD, StFX Men's Varsity Hockey Team (2020-2013).

Taizé Prayer is a unique prayer form consisting of silence and sung chant and it is celebrated all over the world. It was created in the ecumenical religious community in Taizé France. This community focuses on reconciliation and young people from all over Europe go to Taizé.



Emmaus Road Retreat is a student lead retreat weekend centered on participants sharing their faith. Emmaus Road is about creating a supportive environment where faith stories can be spoken and celebrated.

Christian Mediation and Centering Prayer are opportunities where we can practise the art of sitting in silence and getting in touch with our true self.

Theology on Tap is where we meet at Piper's Pub and listen to talks in areas of religion, theology, spirituality, philosophy and ethics.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is marked in the Antigonish community every year and the StFX Chapel is always involved.

Interfaith (For people of all faiths)

How does your faith feed you on your journey in life? This was a session where students were invited to answer this question, we had Moslem, Hindu, Sikh and Christians participate.

Heroes and Heroines in Faith. This is the beginning of an interfaith series where we will feature notable faith figures who have made an impact on society. At this gathering we considered Mahatha Gandhi and Dorothy Day. We had Muslim, Hindu and Christian involvement.

Harmony Week. In 2010 the first week of February was declared by the United Nations to be World Interfaith Harmony Week. Stfx Hub and Chaplaincy are marking Harmony Week by having a gathering where we will celebrate the many faith traditions that make up our university community.

Community Outreach (General programing for students)

Men's Weekend. This yearly event provides a safe space for male students to discuss with one another what it is like to live as a man today.

Wellspring Chat. Conversations and reflections for female students lead by Wellspring.

Ministry of Presence. Our Chaplain lives on campus, and I have my meals with the students in Morrison Hall. This an opportunity to be with students and to interact with them and help them to know that they are available for conversation, and to assist them with "the stuff of Life."



Public Prayer

The Chaplain offers prayer at university ceremonies such as: Xavierian Welcome, Xaverian Farewell, X-Ring and Convocation. I use the prayer form that was developed by the Canadian Armed Forces for public prayer.

The X Ring is a tangible symbol of all that we hold dear as Xavierians. To receive this ring today connects us with all those who have walked these halls, who lived the Stfx experience, and who wear the ring. I would now like to offer a prayer upon this gathering, and I do so, knowing that we are a diverse group who gather here to celebrate the reception of the X Ring. Yes, we who gather here represent many different experiences, perspectives, and beliefs, and we respect the freedom of conscience and religion with which we have been blessed.

I invite you to join with me now in prayer, or to spend the next few moments in silent reflection while others pray. So let us pray. God, Holy One whose presence we honor, you give us good things as we make our pilgrimage through life. We know Holy One the source of all JOY that you are the giver of all the gifts that we receive on our life journey. Today, we are grateful for our years here at Stfx., we pray that we will see our X RINGS always as tangible reminders of that Stfx. has been for us. It is in this spirit gratefulness that I call God's blessing upon these rings; may you all wear them well as you live out your lives. We ask this of you Gracious God, source of all Good, because we believe that you love us and are with us forever and ever.

The committee unanimously agrees that Fr. Donald continues to make a significant impact in his role as Chaplain, providing strong spiritual leadership and fostering a welcoming environment for students in their faith journeys. His work ensures that the Catholic heritage of the university remains a meaningful part of campus life while also supporting opportunities for ecumenical and interfaith engagement and dialogue.

Discussion ensued regarding additional programs and services that could further support the diverse spiritual and faith-related needs of the campus. The committee reaffirmed that religious events and traditions play an important role in shaping student development, wellness, and cultural and community experience of the university. While Catholic traditions continue to be a visible part of campus life, it is also essential to ensure that students of all faith backgrounds—or none—feel included and supported in their spiritual development.

A key area of focus is enhancing religious literacy across the campus community. This includes deepening awareness of Catholic heritage at StFX while also fostering understanding and respect for other faith traditions. The Chaplaincy remains committed to providing Catholic sacramental and liturgical experiences, while also ensuring that students of different backgrounds have access to meaningful discussions on faith, purpose, values, and belonging.



The committee also discussed the opportunity to rebuild the presence of visiting chaplains, which diminished during the pandemic. These chaplains could complement the existing chaplaincy by offering additional pastoral support, particularly for students from diverse faith traditions, while maintaining alignment with the university's Catholic heritage.

It was agreed that there is value in updating the Chaplaincy scope, mandate, vision so that the Chaplaincy is well positioned to planning and develop.

Action Items: E. Yeo to share a Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education document which outlines the essential elements of a multifaith chaplaincy which could be a helpful tool to assess our current practices and evaluate whether there are any gaps in meeting these standards. Sara Parks had also shared documents that will be helpful in considering next steps by outlining different chaplaincy models (or other ways that campuses support religious literacy, spiritual wellbeing, and religious inclusion). We will circulate those documents to the full committee for consideration. This will be a future agenda item this term.

Action Items: The group will come to the next meeting prepared to engage in a discussion about the concept of heritage and how it is expressed within our community and, time permitting, through ceremony.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place February 26, 2025.

The meeting adjourned at 4:34 pm