

UNFOLDING: UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCY IN PRACTICE

ISSUE 2 FEBRUARY 2025

When we, the Co-editors, put out the call for this year's issue of Unfolding, we were already facing a world with war in the Middle East and Ukraine, unrest on college campuses, as well as myriad battles to protect the civil and political rights of vulnerable people in the United States. With Donald Trump's return to the Presidency in January, we are certainly living in turbulent times. As chaplains and spiritual practitioners, we stand in that maelstrom, called to be both prophets and caregivers. Often, we work alone or in small teams. Sometimes, we feel powerless in the face of great need before us. As co-editors, we wanted to craft an issue that facilitated "brave" space to address the concrete needs of our readers. Our vision of a brave space included adjectives such as welcoming, inclusive, diverse and healing. For this issue, we sought actionable wisdom to empower chaplains; case studies and articles that provided insight on how best to create space for people to be brave, practice empathy, and "see" one another's humanity in times of disagreement.

The variety and diversity of submissions that came to us was a true testament of how important it is to cultivate space to share our lived experiences. If there are broad themes that run throughout this issue, they are "relationship" and "dialogue." In this issue, you will find helpful guidance on crafting, maintaining and nurturing relationships with a variety of forms of dialogue.

We begin with Hannah Adams Ingram's case study detailing the response to unrest on campus and her role in facilitating dialogue in a community divided by matters of conscience. Like every article in this issue, themes of dialogue and relationship are the heart of generating constructive responses to turbulent times. Adams Ingram concludes with a reminder that, "every attempt [at chaplaincy] comes with its own questions about positionality, responsibility, and [the] call to justice."

In our second case study, narrative becomes the vehicle for deeper understanding. As Tracy Mehr-Muska explains, "College and university chaplains are often called upon to create spaces for intense and substantive conversations about personal values, spiritual and religious beliefs, and fundamental matters relating to participants' core identities. In these spaces, interfaith learning and civil discourse thrive." Mehr-Muska's case study provides a model off-campus retreat focused on story-telling and interfaith sharing. We have partnered Mehr-Muska's case study with a personal reflective essay by Margaret Alsup, reflecting on her role as chaplain in a

moment of distress. Alsup's narrative exemplifies storytelling and personal reflection as mediums for education. Her story is an invitation to reflect on your own work in similar circumstances.

We conclude the series of case studies with Heather Daugherty centering on a tense exchange during a structured dialogue. Daugherty reflects, not only on the process and skills brought to bear, but also on her role as a Christian and the way our intersectional identities both aid and hamper our work. Like the other case studies, Daugherty leaves us with unanswered questions as we ponder the challenging task of creating space for growth as well as tending to the needs of students.

We also asked for creative expressions that give voice to the role of chaplaincy in turbulent times. Alexander Levering Kern offers us an astute article on the role of art as an avenue for chaplaincy. He challenges us to consider the line between "comfort" and "challenge" inherent in the work of chaplaincy and offers a variety of avenues to explore crafting "brave space." Kern closes his article with a selection of his own poems that bear witness to the powerful work of spiritual care.

In his article, David Dorsey shares experiences facilitating dialogues that move land to the center of relationship. Chaplains, he notes, "are called on to connect the dots, read the times, be truthful in the fuller history we tell; to do justice and love mercy; to consider the facts and still choose hope." Dorsey's practice of "Barefoot Dialogue," reminded us of the healing work of our Indigenous siblings, bringing us closer to an understanding of our place and land.

The issue concludes with Valerie Bailey's book review of *Blessings for Your Students: Prayers for Interfaith Communities in Higher Education*, by Janet Fuller. She guides us through Fuller's text and the promise it holds as a resource for religious life professionals in diverse contexts.

As you read this year's issue of *Unfolding*, we hope that you are drawn into the conversation with each author, pondering what is left unfinished. If relationship and dialogue are the themes woven throughout, then we hope you have entered into conversation with each author in a way that deepens your engagement with your own work.

We must conclude this introduction with our profound gratitude. Each time we hit an obstacle, we were met with kindness, help, and encouragement. We had an amazing roster of peer-reviewers and cheerleaders. We offer profound thanks to Tauseef Akbar, Nathan Albert, Heather Daugherty, Joel Harter, and Stephanie McLemore. We are grateful to Alex Miller-Knaack for walking us through the process of putting this complex and beautiful journal together.

Peace & Blessings,

Liz & Preeti

Elizabeth Hakken Candido is an ordained Presbyterian (USA) Pastor who has spent her career working in interfaith and multi-faith landscapes. She serves as College Chaplain and Director of Religious Life at Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, MI. An essayist and fiction writer, Liz's work has appeared in a variety of publications including Sojourners, Presbyterian Outlook, and Psychology Today.

Preeta M. Banerjee, Ph.D. serves in Babson College's Office of Belonging and Inclusion as Associate Director for Spiritual Life. She draws on over 25 years of experience as a business school professor, corporate executive, life coach and higher education chaplain to bring together spirituality, community, innovation and entrepreneurship. Her practice is rooted in bhakti, gyan, raj and karma yoga.