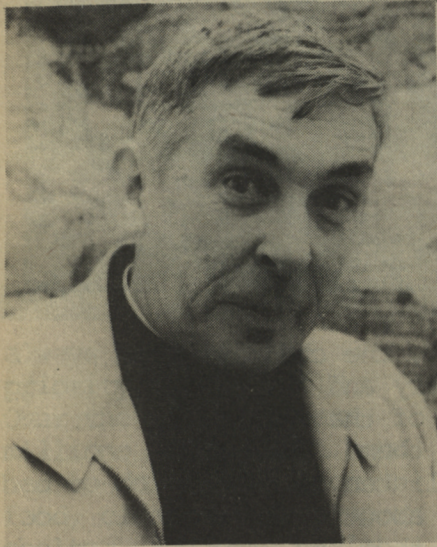


PEOPLE PROFILE: OUR TWO UPEI CHAPLAINS

by Joanne Peters

One facet of life which is not given as much attention as many others at UPEI is the religious or spiritual one. However, the Chaplaincy Centre serves the needs of many Christians at UPEI. Our two chaplains, Fr. Brendan Megannety and Rev. Ron Evans are very active in providing many services, including holding services of worship and masses, conducting programs



Fr. Brendan Megannety involving students in the community, bringing students together, and just lending a listening ear.

Fr. Megannety has been at UPEI for four years. "I should be graduating this year," he says. He belongs to an order of missionaries, the Obligate of Mary Immaculate, many of whom serve native people in the North and Labrador. Fr. Megannety feels he, "...should have been born in Ireland, but missed," and reluctantly admits that he is a native of Ontario. Besides working here, the good Father is also part-time Chaplain for Hillsborough Hospital. Before becoming a University Chaplain, Fr. Megannety was a teacher, but he says he enjoys his present type of work very much.

The Protestant chaplain on campus, Rev. Ron Evans, has been at UPEI for three years. Before that, he had a parish in Springhill, N.S. his home province. Besides his chaplaincy, Rev. Evans also teaches a classics course for the University. He enjoys the "intellectual stimulation" he receives on a university campus.

Fr. Megannety says the best description of the role of a chaplain on a

university campus was once given by an American chaplain, who defined it as "loitering with intent". The intent being to be some kind of connection between the student, Christ, and the Church. Both Fr. Megannety and Rev. Evans attempt to provide this link through weekly masses and services, and through programs in which students can put their faith in action. Some of these programs are: the St. Jean's Project, where students help slow learners; working with Senior Citizens; and doing volunteer work at Hillsborough Hospital.

A program Rev. Evans is involved in is S.C.M. - Student Christian Movement. This involves getting to know about and trying to help people in developing countries. Students can attend talks given by Christians who have worked in these countries, and international camps are held, where students from all over the world can get together. A UPEI student, Tony Reddin, attended one of these in Cuba two years ago. Fr. Megannety says, "This can come off as do-goodism, but it is a helluva good way of finding out what love really is and finding a vocation."

The chaplains agreed that for many students, at this time in their lives, their religious values are the least significant in their lives. For many, it is the first time living on their own, without their parents' influence, and it becomes a questioning time for them. Rev. Evans finds that some students are concerned about religion, but not in the traditional way. They begin to examine many different religions. He feels this is important and that students should try their wings and keep an open mind. Also he feels many students abandon their religion at university, because they are so busy with their school work and the social side of campus life. Rev. Evans feels that too often, in courses, students are given too much to learn, so that they don't have time to really think about what they are learning, which is very important. Fr. Megannety



also said though, that there are a lot of really convinced Christians here, who do a lot of work to make programs work. He also feels that those who abandon their religion for a time may re-establish a relationship with God later, when they make a commitment, whether it be to another person or to their own career.

One of the biggest problems to be overcome in establishing a harmonious community on campus is breaking down distances between students, feels Fr. Megannety. He finds the disinclination to become involved terrible. One of the main public programs of the Chaplaincy Centre the A.C.T. weekends, is concerned with getting students to meet other students, overcome their initial shyness, and talk about common feelings. However, there is often a problem in getting students to attend, perhaps because religion "has a bad name", and students shy away from these gatherings where they don't know what is involved. Anyone who I have talked to though, has enjoyed

them very much, and gained much in friendships and insights into other people's feelings, which they have found to be very similar to their own. Rev. Evans feels that students should get together more after classes to just discuss what they have learned. They should become aware that, "university is a community of scholars." Fr. Megannety regrets that there isn't more opportunity for "Christian staff, faculty, and students to get together at Christian organizations." He feels if all three sectors would come together more often, this would help to achieve a closer community on campus.

"No one has ever seen God, not even the chaplains, but we're still looking." This phrase, on a pamphlet hanging on Fr. Megannety's office wall, I feel expresses the aims and attitudes of both Rev. Evans and Fr. Megannety. They are there to help students find their own relationship with God, through other people, which is really what Christianity is all about: loving your neighbour.

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