

# OPINION & COMMENTARY

## UPEI's Home Away From Home

Will Cooper  
News Editor

If you're anything like me, you've probably wondered about that little building in the middle of campus with the big white cross on it. It's the UPEI Chaplaincy Centre.

If, like me, you are not a religious person, then you may have thought to yourself that a church, or Chaplaincy Centre, or whatever they want to call it, has no place at a university.

Universities should be neutral, unbiased institutions, embracing and supporting people of all cultures and faiths. So, the other day, I went in to the Chaplaincy Centre to get the whole story – with the full intention of exposing our university for participating in, and perhaps even getting *paid* for its participation in the religious indoctrination of youth.

I was in for a surprise.

First, I met and talked with some of the students who make use of the Chaplaincy Centre. There were about fifteen of them there: kicking-back, chatting, eating their lunches, some of them even sleeping on big comfy couches in a lounge area designed for that purpose. I sat down with them and got ready to ask my questions. I admit I was feeling guarded; I was prepared to retort any arguments I might hear about the importance of accepting Jesus into my heart.

My wariness, however, was unnecessary. I heard no mention of God or Jesus the whole time I was there. (...And I was there for quite some time.) Explaining that I wanted to write an article for *The Cadre*, I asked students what they like best about the UPEI Chaplaincy Centre.

"It's like a big open family," said student Gordon MacRae. "I just leave my guitar here all the time, and anyone who wants to can come and use it."

Neal Gillis, student president of the Faith Society, described the Chaplaincy Centre as "a community that is open, friendly, welcoming, and warm... but not *too* warm... not like *disgustingly* warm. Just comfortable."

He then expressed disappointment that more people, regardless of religion, don't make use of the centre. "Lot's of people are scared of it. They think people will think they're a bible-thumper if they see them going into the building."

Apparently no bible-thumping at all goes on at the UPEI Chaplaincy Centre. In fact, there is a healthy flow of people from all religious walks of life, including five Muslim families that go there daily to pray.

The consensus among students who know about the Chaplaincy

Centre is this: It's the greatest place on all of campus to be. And that's not just because of the comfy couches or the Nintendo Entertainment System, complete with oodles of games. According to the students, the best thing about the Chaplaincy Centre is its chaplain: the much-loved, practically famous Father Charlie.

Formerly a professor of Biology, Father Charlie has been at UPEI before UPEI even existed. He taught at St. Dunstan's University, which later became the University of Prince Edward Island, between the years 1959 and 1997.

The students describe him as "...a friendly, caring man who is easy to talk to and whose door is always open."

A man who is so dedicated to his job that he has not taken a vacation in the past two years.

"Most students have very little knowledge of the Chaplaincy Centre," says Father Charlie. "And that's too bad, because it has so much to offer."

Besides daily mass and a quiet Meditation Room for the use of all, some of the services Father Charlie and the Chaplaincy Centre have to offer are:

- A Food Bank, from which students can come in and take whatever foods they need, no questions asked.
- A Clothing Bank, which works likewise.
- Help for students who need it in furnishing their apartments;
- Free chili lunches (including vegetarian chili), bowls of candy in the library, and prayers for students during exam times.

The list goes on and on. There are also a number of events organized by the centre such as yearly student retreats and the Shrove Tuesday Pancake & Sausage Meal that will be served around noon on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February (and paid for by Father Charlie).

"The goal of the Chaplaincy Centre," says Father Charlie, "is to bring people together and take care of the needs of students."

So, as it turns out, it's really not such a scary or negative place at all. The few fundamentalist-type believers there are on campus apparently won't even go near the place on account of its tendency toward openness and acceptance. What it is, rather, is a place where students can go to find support, comfort, and reprieve from an often less-than-hospitable world.

To borrow the words of student, Amanda Stewart: "It's a home away from home."

## Marine Institute

Go Further with a MI Advanced Diploma

Take your career to the next level with a one-year Advanced Diploma from the Marine Institute. Specialize in one of these areas:

### Sustainable Aquaculture

Join the field of aquaculture environmental managers, technicians and researchers in the fastest growing food production sector in the world. Learn about aquaculture operations and undertake applied research and on-site work placements.

### Integrated Coastal and Ocean Management

Learn how to manage our aquatic resources and gain an international perspective of the issues affecting coastal environments.

### Water Quality

Become a water quality specialist with the only post-graduate program of its kind in Atlantic Canada. Learn about the ecological issues impacting our water supplies and gain the knowledge to treat, maintain and use our aquatic resources safely and efficiently.

### Food Safety

Learn how to inspect, analyze and monitor the quality and safety of food products to start a career as a food inspector or quality assurance manager.

Applications are now being accepted for programs starting September 2006.

For more information and to apply, please contact:

Registrar's Office

P.O. Box 4920, St. John's, NL A1C 5R3  
(709) 778-0600 or (800) 563-5799 ext. 600  
admissions@mi.mun.ca



[www.mi.mun.ca/programs](http://www.mi.mun.ca/programs)

## DOMINO'S PIZZA NOW OFFERS GREAT STUDENT DISCOUNTS!



Get great prices on pizza when you present your UPEI student ID

566-9000

large pepperoni - \$8.99    large 3 toppings - \$9.99  
large 5 toppings - \$10.99

Delivery to UPEI campus, Browns Court and surrounding areas only. Must present student ID.