

**EXPLORATION OF CONNECTIONS
BETWEEN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
AND WORKPLACE CHAPLAINCY**

by

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Introduction

Having responded to the call to deepen my faith journey through the SGM spiritual direction formation programme I now find myself responding to another call to workplace chaplaincy. How does my spiritual direction formation training equip me for this role and what skills required for chaplaincy will be similar? In understanding how the roles are different and similar I hope to make best use of the skills learned in spiritual direction for the role of chaplain in the workplace. Also I will take a broader look at the way the spiritual dimension is encountered in the workplace and possible application for spiritual direction.

Definition of terms

Spiritual direction can be expressed simply as focussing an awareness of God in the midst of life's experience¹ or with greater complexity as "a process, carried out in a one-to-one interpersonal context, of establishing and maintaining a growth-orientation (that is direction) in one's faith life."² There seem to be as many descriptions of spiritual direction as there are writers on the subject and also many understandings and interpretations of who Jesus is and who or what God is.

Workplace Chaplaincy can be defined as "making available to every person in the work place quiet counsel and confidential assistance which helps individuals discover and employ their power to survive crisis, conquer challenges or achieve previously unthought of goals."³ Here again there are variations on emphasis and focus.

¹ Quote from Shirley Fergusson 'Workplace Support Seminar 2004'.

² Sandra Schneiders IHN, *The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction*, (Reprinted from Chicago Studies, Spring 1976), pp. 119-135, in *Spiritual Direction Formation Programmes 2003-2004*. (Spiritual Growth Ministries).

³ Workplace Support, *Brandprint*, part of statement from Waikato Staff Support Manual 2004.

Spiritual Direction Model

Christian Spirituality is following Christ on a journey of personal transformation. It is primarily a journey to the inner self where God's presence is experienced.

In spiritual direction:

- The directee is helped to see, hear and respond to God.⁴
- The person who receives direction must always retain personal responsibility⁵ and the director must resist the urge to help.
- The principal issue in conversations is the experience of the directee and the director needs to be experienced in the difficult yet simple art of inviting conversations about religious experience.⁶
- Religious experience is to spiritual direction what foodstuff is to cooking.⁷
- The fundamental task of the director is to listen.⁸
- This is carried out in a relaxed atmosphere where a relationship of trust develops over time that allows a person to reveal feelings, not only to the listener but also to self, thereby enhancing self-knowledge, which is growth.⁹
- Spiritual direction is also a prayer process.¹⁰

⁴ Jeanette A. Bakke, *Holy Invitations*, (Michigan: Baker,2000), p.18.

⁵ William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1986), p.11.

⁶ William A. Barry, S.J. *God and You, Prayer as a Personal Relationship*, (Paulist Press New Jersey 1987), p.78.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁸ Madeline Birmingham, R.C.,& William J Connolly, S.J. *The Art of Spiritual Direction* Reprinted from *Human Development*, Vol. 8, 1987 pg. 13-25. in *Spiritual Direction Formation Programmes 2003-2004*. (Spiritual Growth Ministries).

⁹ Schneiders, op.cit.

¹⁰ Schneiders, op.cit.

- The spiritual director feels called and is trained in the art of spiritual direction. This requires a journey of deep self-awareness and surrender to the divine power at work in us all.
- Skills are required that facilitate attunement to God by encouraging those who seek direction to attend to their experience of God/Jesus; God’s presence with them; God’s attention to them; God’s revelation through scripture and God’s revelation through their dreams¹¹, through creation or however else it may come.

Workplace Chaplaincy Model

The first ecumenical Industrial chaplain in New Zealand was appointed in 1965 at the Manapouri Hydro Electric Power Project as a result of growing concern to provide pastoral care for the workers and their families who would live at the hydro village.¹² The present model of chaplaincy provided through the Inter-Church Trade and Industry Mission (ITIM) was set up in 1971 and has grown and been shaped by the changing industrial environment.

The National Mission Statement adopted in principle in 1998 reads: “Our mission is to help create a healthy work environment for all people in Aotearoa/New Zealand”. This model relies heavily on the faith and witness of those called and selected to be chaplains in the work place and a workplace chaplain’s spiritual role is more subtle and less demonstrative than in spiritual direction.¹³

¹¹ Fergusson op.cit.,

¹² Seton Horrill, *Forging a Workplace Mission, The ITIM Story 1979-1995*, (Red Beach Orewa 1995). The history and development of what is now Inter-Church Trade and Industry Mission which has five autonomous regions throughout NZ trading under WorkPlace Support, began in NZ in 1890 with a royal commission set up to investigate working conditions resulting in the Factories Act legislation of 1891, and while very interesting is too complex to include in this essay.

¹³ Staff Support Manual, Workplace Support, Waikato.

In workplace chaplaincy:

- Chaplains embrace the spiritual dimension of being human and take account of people’s physical, mental, relational health as well as spiritual health. “It is who we are rather than what we say”.¹⁴
- Chaplains are employed by the Service Agency (ITIM) and assigned to workplaces that have engaged the agency to provide support to employees and employers.¹⁵
- The chaplain firstly builds a relationship by regular visits to the workplace.¹⁶
- Faith dimension to life is modelled by being accepting of all people, friendly, non-judgmental and interested in all aspects of people’s lives.¹⁷
- Chaplains are a spiritual resource.¹⁸
- Listening is the fundamental task.

Commonalities

Spiritual direction and chaplaincy have both come out of the Christian tradition and are modelled on what is understood from the Gospels to be the way Jesus conducted himself.¹⁹ They both require a high degree of confidentiality and rely heavily on listening skills. A deep and deepening faith life of the chaplain or director is an integral component to the effectiveness of these callings. A respect for all expressions of faith without judgement is at the heart of preparation for God’s unconditional love to be experienced. Both require a sense of a trusted relationship before any sharing of deep feelings can occur. An ability to operate out of knowing

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

one's weaknesses will help keep the director or chaplain dependent on their prayer life and their communication with the Divine Source. This will also be of help in knowing when to refer people on to professional agencies where God can continue God's healing love.

Professional supervision, which is a requirement of both ministries, benefits and protects both the practitioner and the recipients of her/his work. Both rely on a healthy awareness of self and are about the other person's wholeness and both are non-denominational and respect all the streams of Christian thought.²⁰ A sound knowledge of the stages of personal development and personality traits is vital too. Both are on the cutting edge of Christianity and not constrained by specific dogma beyond the understanding of a God of unconditional love.

Differences

A chaplain is sent by the agency to fulfil a role in the employing workplace developing relationships with employees and, through caring and resourcing, fostering a positive work environment that adds value to the workplace²¹. The spiritual director is sought out by someone wishing to deepen his or her relationship with God. The process is always initiated by the directee for the explicit purpose of personal growth. Mostly spiritual direction happens during regular (monthly sessions recommended) intentional meetings²² whereas chaplaincy begins with the casual encounter and has no specific agenda except being available as a trusted friend to listen. Both roles may, when appropriate, lead to discussion around

¹⁹ More will be said about early models of spiritual direction later in this essay.

²⁰ In Chaplaincy this would include respect of other faiths and cultures. I am not sure to what extent spiritual directors in the Christian tradition are ready for this move of faith in an expanding image of the Creator God although many do work with this same respect.

²¹ Workplace Manual Waikato. Op.cit.

²² Spiritual direction conversations can and do happen outside this setting and can involve groups. However the deepest work is expected to happen following the process of regular, one with one plus God, meetings.

possible actions for problems and resources that may help. This problem facing focus is more part of the chaplain's role as is offering support to family members and a chaplain may become more involved in significant family occasions where it seems appropriate. By supporting people with their personal issues, whether arising from workplace or home, workplace chaplaincy is designed to create a better functioning workplace which benefits both employee and employer. Chaplains have no mandate to speak of their faith unless invited but are called by God to live that faith. They may meet persons who may be seeking the assistance of a spiritual director and will be able to refer them on as they would for any other service deemed appropriate.

Growing Edges of my understanding

For the Christian, spiritual life is faith-life, the relationship of the person with God in Christ through the power of the spirit within the believing community²³. As I exercise my ministry in the workplace I feel a yearning to better understand spirituality in a secular society and how it might be named and explored. In chapter one of *The Art of Spiritual Guidance*, Carolyn Gratton says it is possible to have spiritual guidance or counselling that is formative for life yet is not necessarily bound to any of the great faith traditions.²⁴ This challenges me to be both true to my Christian tradition and understanding while embracing more fully the mystery of God in the world at large and how people from different traditions, or none at all, experience and express what is mystery to them. Soul and spirit can perhaps best be understood in terms of a relatedness to all that is. It matters for the life of the world for us to understand what it means that the human person is spirit. We need to learn

²³ Schneiders, op.cit.

²⁴ Carolyn Gratton, *The Art of Spiritual Guidance*, (The Cross Road Publishing Company) pp. 7 – 21. Spiritual Direction Formation Programmes 2003-2004, Spiritual Growth Ministries.

to dwell with gratitude on this human capacity to connect with the Mystery that embraces everything.²⁵ The phrase “*Waking up to Freedom and Wholeness*” used in the course notes expresses for me the challenge for understanding the people I will meet in the workplace.²⁶

I have come to the conclusion that the more I know the more I know I don't know and that there will always be growing edges to be welcomed and explored. In spiritual direction, whether giving or receiving, I am aware of an acceptance that whatever space or stage I am in, that is where God meets me with compassion and unconditional love. I am first loved and then invited to go deeper. If, by grace, I can live in that knowledge and live that truth with all I meet in whatever circumstances I find myself in then I may well meet with many searching souls. Brian Hamilton quotes Eugene Peterson when writing about ‘the casual encounter’ “In every visit, every meeting I attend, every appointment I keep, I have been anticipated. The risen Christ got there ahead of me. The risen Christ is in that room [place] already. What is he doing? What is he saying? What is going on?”²⁷ How does my training in spiritual direction help my mindset when exercising chaplaincy in the workplace? By expecting God to be already active in a seeker and in a non-seeker alike, gives me the ability to trust what is, and allow each to choose their response to that reality.

Seton Horrill tells an engaging story in his history 'Forging a Workplace Mission' of Horst Symanowski, a German industrial chaplain who was hosting a visiting American clergyman also connected to industry. "What is the work you are doing?"

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Eugene H. Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, p.127, quoted in ‘Spiritual Direction as Model for Pastoral Ministry – Listening for the Soul’, Brian Hamilton. *Refresh – A Journal of Contemplative Spirituality*, Winter 2003 Vol. 3 No 1.

he asked. "I am taking God into industry", replied the visitor. "Oh", said Symanowski, "how very interesting for God. And tell me where are you taking God next?"²⁸

Negotiating spiritual expression in the workplace is the topic researched by Marjolein Lips-Wiersma and Colleen Mills and they begin by arguing that spirituality is already present there. Many individuals have spiritual beliefs but struggle to articulate or enact these beliefs in the workplace, stating as the reason for this the lack of safety in expressing spirituality at work.²⁹ Lips-Wiersma, in another paper dealing with the influence of spirituality on career behaviour, suggests that deeper meanings of life have not been adequately expressed by traditional theory and research.³⁰ She distinguishes between decision making and 'meaning making' and quotes Fowler (1980) as seeing the journey of life as a journey of faith, which he describes as the making, maintenance and transformation of human meaning. Fowler views the process of meaning-making as a process of learning about faith, life and self.³¹

The distinguished writer M. Scott Peck uses and defines the term 'civility' as consciously motivated organisational behaviour that is ethical in submission to a Higher Power".³² His book *A World Waiting to be Born, Civility Rediscovered* Peck seeks to guide us to a deeper and richer understanding of our lives within our families, our workplaces and our communities.

²⁸ Horrill, op.cit., p. 20.

²⁹ Marjolein Lips-Wiersma and Colleen Mills, 'Coming out of the Closet: negotiating spiritual expression in the workplace', University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, Printed in *Journal of Managerial Psychology* Vol. 17 No 3, 2002, pp. 183-202.

³⁰ Marjolein Lips-Wiersma, 'The Influence of Spiritual "Meaning Making" on Career Behaviour', Printed in *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 21 No 7 2002, pp. 497-520.

³¹ J. W. Fowler, (1980), as quoted by Marjolein Lips-Wiersma 'The Influence of Spiritual "Meaning Making" on Career Behaviour', Printed in *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 21 No 7 2002, pp. 497-520

In an article in *Presence*, the journal of spiritual direction international, Liz Budd Ellmann outlines a plan for group spiritual direction in the workplace. She writes³³ of using alternative words such as ‘Mystery’ for God, ‘creativity’ for spirituality and ‘facilitator’ instead of spiritual director. Ellmann says of her program “group spiritual direction in the workplace offers tools and a safe place to look for meaning by tending to the spiritual journey both individually and as a group.”

Possible Implications for Spiritual Direction.

The history of Christian spiritual direction, for the purposes of this essay, is of interest to me in that part of the model used today seems to stem from the Desert Fathers and Mothers of the 4th Century. St Anthony of Egypt first attempted to establish a monastic lifestyle by living in the desert in his search for God. While this is significant, what is equally important and relevant is that others were inspired to seek him out for spiritual guidance.³⁴ It is the stance of spiritual direction as it is taught today that directors do not actively seek out clients. The work is done by the Holy Spirit inspiring people to seek out a spiritual director.

The early Celtic church (4th century), pre –dating the Franciscan & Dominican Monastic Orders of the 13th century followed the lead of the Desert Fathers and Mothers of searching for God in places of seclusion or retreat³⁵. From the monasteries, often built in isolated areas, they sent friars out into the villages,

³² M. Scott Peck, M.D., *A World Waiting to be Born, Civility Rediscovered*, (Bantam Books U.S.A. 1993) p. 53,54.

³³ Liz Budd Ellmann, ‘Tending to Spirituality in the Workplace’, printed in *Presence: The Journal of Spiritual Directors International*. Vol.7. no 2 June 2001.

³⁴ Course Notes on the History of Spiritual Direction SGM 2003/04, Monasticism. p. 8. This is an extremely simplified explanation of this rich part of Christian history.

³⁵ Celtic Spirituality in Christian Context, Course notes CHTH/X 402, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Otago 2003, p.124. There being no desert in Ireland it is recorded that the monk Cormac sailed out to sea to ‘find a desert in the ocean where one could be alone with God’.

moving from place to place. Their intention was to draw all the faithful into a life of spiritual growth and they

offered spiritual guidance wherever they went. Even lay people were included in this mission as they did their best to meet the quest for a simple Christian life lived in poverty of spirit while they sustained their bodily needs.³⁶ This model has similarities to the current practice of workplace chaplaincy.

The traditional church model is of a village where the church is the centre of the village. The people are born, grow up, attend church, work, marry and die all within the confines of what it meant to live in a village. In contemporary society people may live in a suburb but work for a corporation or industry. Many find this takes over much of their lives. The relationships in their working life are sometimes more important than relationships in the suburb where they live. They may play sport, socialise, share meals, receive medical benefits all supplied or connected with their place of work.

One of the features of post-modernism is an increased searching for spirituality and a distrust of organised religion. It is not surprising then that in our secular society, and in particular the workplace, the importance of people being in touch with their spiritual centre and values is becoming much more a primary concern. In that environment the workplace chaplain is in a position to offer spiritual guidance. Maybe there is an invitation for the spiritual direction formation program to include specific training to enhance this model or be pro-active in offering the workplace, or wider community, access to spiritual immersion programs. These could include programs in understanding our soul's needs, self knowledge in a spiritual context and other spiritual stepping stones for people coming from a secular understanding

of life to a connectedness with creative energy that allows God's presence to be owned and grown how God may choose.

In a recently published book *The Dance of Leadership* Peter Cammock, management consultant and academic, explores the connection between personal and public leadership, of rationality and feeling, head and heart, mind and soul.³⁷ He writes about becoming whole, and then maintaining that centre under the pressures of the leadership process.³⁸ Leadership was defined for him by his six year old daughter who, when asked if she knew what leadership is, responded:

“Dad, anybody can be a leader! Anybody! Because the teacher doesn't tell us... we can walk up and we just are the leaders. We don't have to ask and we don't have to be told either. We can do whatever we want! Anybody can be the leader...”³⁹

This delightful and accurate definition of leadership moves the focus of soul tending from just management to include us all.

Cammock talks of meditating, journal keeping, walks in the park, connecting, listening and reflecting as ways of slowing down and 'seeing the whole'.⁴⁰ This is fertile ground indeed for religious experience. In defining the soul, Cammock quotes Jung “who emphatically rejected the Christianity of his father, spoke of the ‘intimacy of the relationship between God and the soul’ and asserted that, ‘the soul must contain in itself the faculty of relation to God’”⁴¹. ‘Leadership as a call and a journey’ is the title of a chapter on awakening the soul to a new type of leadership,

³⁶ *ibid.*, p.124.

³⁷ Peter Cammock, *The Dance of Leadership, the Call for Soul in 21st century Leadership, Second Edition* (Pearson Education New Zealand Ltd, 2001,2003, p ix. introduction.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p ix. introduction.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. x. introduction.

⁴⁰ *ibid.* p.48

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.76.

one that embraces service, surrender and selflessness.⁴² Is it possible that in the future the workplace may be more like church than church? Might the work place become the place where we are encouraged to be in touch with our spiritual selves? With spiritual direction on offer as company policy? Is this a possible or impossible dream?

Spirituality is alive and very well in parts of the workplace and in the world both because of and in spite of the Christian Church. I am tempted, as I contemplate this to ask ‘does God want us to be more legalistic or more loving?’ Spiritual Direction and Chaplaincy both honour the unique presence and work of God in each person’s life and both need to be open to the ‘movement of the spirit’ in future opportunities for serving the God of All.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 103.

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