



When the Doors Are Opened Again

Van Wai-Chuen Lo

“...But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

~ Matthew 6: 33-34 ~

After the COVID pandemic, regular hospital visitation and chaplaincy services were gradually resumed. However, the scope and pace were varied among clusters and hospitals. Passing through such an unusual pandemic experience, some recently revised hospital policies brought opportunities and challenges to chaplaincy services. As Louis Pasteur says, “In the fields of observation, chance favors only the prepared mind.”

What should chaplaincy teams be prepared for? During COVID pandemic we used to describe our experience as the new “normal”. When those restrictions were lifted, reconnection became the key to successful resumption. In addition to the reconnection with the hospital management, staff members, volunteers, churches and patrons, more importantly, chaplains needed to reconnect themselves to their calling, pastoral identity and competences.

A New Era and a New Generation

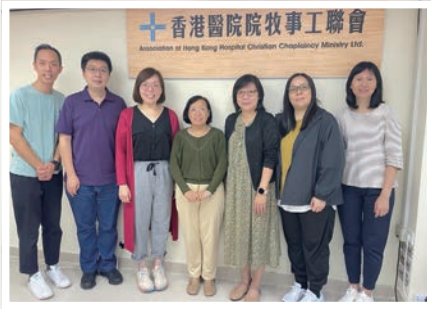
Resumption does not mean to go back exactly to the pre-COVID situation. In fact, the ministry context is never the same. The change of hospital executives, church and community personnels requires chaplaincy teams to establish new partnerships with those who may have influence on the services. Some of these new partnerships are promising, and some are not. Due to a prolonged suspension of volunteer service, a portion of chaplaincy volunteers shifted their interest to other ministries. Many chaplaincy teams had to recruit and train new classes of volunteers.

We are grateful for the group of novice chaplains who have joined the ministry in the last few years. The Association continued to provide chaplain continuing education programs which were not only for the transmission of ministry skills, knowledges, and concepts, but also the sense of fellowship embedded with communal vision and support.

Month	CCE Programs / Seminars	Counts
Jan-Apr	Spring CPE for Staff Chaplains	6
February	Reflection at Sandy Ridge Cemetery	30
Mar	Grounding the root — reflection on the needs and paths for indigenization of spiritual care in non-Christian culture	61
May	Can Do Better? An ethical reflection on local medical policy	47
June	The 19th Chaplains’ Day: His-story & My story	109
July	Chaplains In-charge Day: Post-COVID’s Growth	24
July	Reflection on the Conversation about Ghosts and Its Implication to Spiritual Care	56
September	Interfaith Hospitality and Interreligious Chaplaincy — a research in Hong Kong	44
Sept-Nov	Fall CPE for staff chaplains	6
November	Spiritual Awakening: integration of spiritual care and hospital chaplaincy	60



Spring CPE for Staff Chaplains



Fall CPE for Staff Chaplains



Chaplain Seminars



The 19th Chaplains Day



Chaplains In-charge Day



Manpower is the Most Valuable Asset

Learning from the statistics, over 60% of the current staff chaplains will reach the age of fifty-five or above in the next five years, and about 80% of our chaplains are close to age of fifty now. The passing of the torch is needed desperately. Nowadays, many industries are understaffed seriously. Hong Kong government has opened up to recruit employees from overseas and mainland China. In the medical industry, some tasks and procedures can be performed by artificial intelligence. However, spiritual care is not the case. Personal encounter and human touch are irreplaceable essence of spiritual care. In extreme situations, tele-chaplaincy may serve as a substitutional mean of care. A “human living document” always prefer personal-living interaction. How to recruit and nurture our next generation?

The task of matching up a right person to a right position is never easy. Chaplains are expected to be vision-motivated, mission-committed, and people-oriented. Resumption of hospital CPE programs and the visitation scheme for seminarians provide an experiential learning context that has helped both the chaplaincy teams and the students to make valid discernment.

With the resumption of regular hospital visitation, one chaplain sought for certification in 2023. The application was granted. Since 2012, there has been a total of 32 chaplains who applied for certification. The passing rate is 84%.

In the beginning of 2023, there were 91 chaplains who have registered with the Association, included 29 Certified Chaplains, 36 Registered Chaplain I, 24 Registered Chaplain II, and 2 Auxiliary Chaplains.

Month	Events / Programs	Counts
Jan-June	Pastoral Education Program for 2022-23 ABS Chaplaincy Team (4 lessons)	80
February	The 12th Pastoral Care Symposium for the Seminarians	100
April, July	Congregational Seminars, “Loss and grief, how far it is to me?”	160
April	Chaplains’ Seminar, “Expanding God’s kingdom by collaboration	12
June	Spiritual Care Seminar for Public, “Listen to the deeper voice: assessing one’s spiritual needs”	50
Aug	Pastoral Care Course for Congregation, “Reflection on what is meant by healing by faith.”	120
Oct	Health Talk, “Comforting the dying and the surviving.”	25
Oct	Congregational Seminar in China, “Loss and grief, looks afar but is close indeed.”	60
Oct	Pastoral Care Program in China (3 sessions)	70
Oct-Nov	Pastoral Education Program for 2023-24 ABS Chaplaincy Team (2 lessons)	30
Nov	Pastoral Care Seminar for Chaplaincy Volunteer, “Utilizing religious resources wisely”	40



The 12th Pastoral Care Symposium for the Seminarians



Pastoral Education Program for
ABT Chaplaincy Team



Congregational Seminar & Pastoral Care Programs in China

Conclusion

Approaching the 40th anniversary of Christian chaplaincy ministry in public hospitals in 2024, the Association commits to make our best effort to line up all Christian chaplaincy teams to celebrate this milestone of ministry. People can either help sharing burdens or causing troubles. Every chaplaincy team has her own history and story. Synergy is more than the sum of individuals. Unity is strength. To unify different parties to work together, we need one vision, one dream, and one goal consolidated from different voices, values, and priorities.

“.....because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” ~ Philippians 1:5-6, NIV ~

January 31, 2024.

Corporate Honorary Overseas Consultants:

Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE)

Association of Professional Chaplains, Inc. (APC) & its subsidiary Board of Chaplaincy Certification, Inc. (BCCI)

Individual Honorary Overseas Consultants: The Rev. James T. Pollard, The Rev. Dr. Theodore E. Hodge, The Rev. Kjell Aas, The Rev. Dr. Mark E. Jensen, The Rev. Dr. John H. Moody, The Rev. Kathy A. Turner, The Rev. Dr. Dennis E. Kenny, The Rev. Dr. Hendrik Adriaan van Sluijs, Chaplain Robert Kidd, Chaplain John K. Swift, The Rev. Sandra Yarlott, and The Rev. Rodney W. Seeger.

Individual Local Consultants: Professor Simon Kwan, Professor Jason Yam, Dr. Raymond Chen, Dr. Beatrice Cheng, Dr. Cheung Tak Hong, Dr. Susie Lum, and Mr. Ng Kin Yuen.

Rev. Lo is Board Certified Chaplain of APC and Certified Educator of ACPE. He currently serves as Supervisor (Professional Development and Pastoral Education) of the AHKHCCM. He can be reached via vanwclo@hospitalchap.org.hk.

Address : G/F., 4-6 Heng Lam Street, Lok Fu, Kowloon, Hong Kong Tel : (852)2339 0660 Fax : (852)2339 0966

Email: profession@hospitalchap.org.hk Web: www.hospitalchap.org.hk