

Reflections after Two Months -- Rev. Patricia Budd Kepler, University Chaplain ad Interim, February 23, 2012

As March approaches, I am completing two months as Interim University Chaplain at Tufts. I share just a few random reflections.

These past months have been very busy and rewarding as we in the Chaplaincy Office have gotten both Goddard Chapel and the Interfaith Center up and running for the second semester. Religious groups are planning many programs, the Chaplaincy is going forward with its own programs, and some interfaith programming is in the works. As someone said, "There are a lot of things going on."

I am grateful for and delighted with the many people I have met and work with in the Chaplaincy. Our Chaplaincy team is amazing and I am really fortunate to be part of this remarkable team. I have also met many leaders and members of student religious organizations. What a talented, creative and diverse part of our community. I am gradually getting to know faculty through their participation in our programs for which we are all thankful! Taken together, they bring rich, religious, spiritual, and ethical reflection and action to our campuses.

We are working to refine the Policies related to the Chaplaincy for greater clarity. Not the most exciting work, but necessary. Hopefully this will give us some structure to rely on that will save us time and energy over time.

Because we have such richly diverse religious communities and ethical perspectives on campus, we have an opportunity for interfaith discussions and planning. Worship services in many traditions take place weekly enabling members of the Tufts community to continue worship when they come to campus and to explore worship in other traditions. This is a great learning environment for all of us.

With such diversity, some conflict is inevitable. Our campus is no exception. From my perspective, this is not a bad thing. Everyone's voice needs to be heard and we all need to learn to deal with difference. My concern is that we treat one another with respect in the midst of often volatile disagreements and that we are transparent and open when it comes to articulating the positions we hold.

I am nourished by being in the midst of such a rich religious worshipping and learning environment. Encountering religions by interacting with people who feel passionately about them, or by pursuing questions and doubts with those who wrestle with religious and spiritual matters is essential to one's own formation and development.

In thinking about the future, I look forward to renewing connections with other Centers and Departments on campus with whom we share common interests.