

College & University
CHAPLAINCY
21st Century ^{*in the*}

A Multifaith Look
at the Practice of Ministry
on Campuses across America

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new rapport together. At the heart of these recommendations is the belief that engagement with the other through meaningful dialogue confirms one's identity even as it grounds it.

I hope that this set of reflections will prompt discussion, critique, and adaptation among my colleagues. *Ad Majorem Dei Gloria.*



“WHAT HAS ATHENS TO DO WITH JERUSALEM?” The Professor Chaplain

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“Only connect.”

E. M. Forester, *Howards End*

The chapel at Queens University sits on one corner of the campus. It is a classical building with Doric columns in front and floor-to-ceiling side windows made of individual handblown panes of glass that diffuse the sunlight and create a warm, inviting interior space. Until this year, the chapel was the first building one saw when driving to campus from Charlotte's city center. Now, a new “green” science and health building rises in front of the chapel, in formerly open space once occupied by trees, grass, and azaleas. If we were given to symbolism (and alas, I am one of those people), we might interpret the prominence of the new science and health building as

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a metaphor for the many ways science and scientific thought have taken over the intellectual and cultural landscape since the Enlightenment. Even in our "postmodern" era, we still give lip service, if not a wholehearted embrace, to a scientific worldview with its reliance on empirical data, and we dismiss, either explicitly or implicitly, and marginalize a religious or spiritual worldview. And so we might lament the passing of an era when chapels, chaplains, and religious commitments were front and center on many campuses, at Queens and in other universities.

Another interpretation of this new arrangement, though, might be to see the chapel, representative of things spiritual, as being embedded more deeply, if less obviously, into our campus culture. Such an image would reflect findings of a recent UCLA study on spirituality. Surveying over 14,500 college students at 136 colleges from their freshman to junior years, UCLA researchers found the following:

Today's entering college students report high levels of spiritual interest and involvement. Four in five indicate "having an interest in spirituality" and "believing in the sacredness of life," and nearly two-thirds say that "my spirituality is a source of joy." Many are also actively engaged in a spiritual quest, with nearly half reporting that they consider it "essential" or "very important" to seek opportunities to help them grow spiritually. Moreover, three-fourths of the students say that they are "searching for meaning/purpose in life."¹

So while the shifting geography of our campuses symbolizes a change in our cultural approach to religion and spirituality, researchers like those with the UCLA study—and university chaplains—recognize that questions of faith remain alive although they may be buried or hidden behind other concerns. This shifting landscape obviously has implications for me and for other chaplains.

As I ponder the chapel's "new location" on campus—is it still the cornerstone of the university? something overshadowed by "science"

and dismissed? or important but in less obvious ways?—our new campus geography raises questions that have echoed through the ages, and that form a framework for my chaplaincy. In the third century CE, Tertullian, one of the early Christian church fathers, raised questions about the relationship between reason and faith. He wrote:

What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from "the porch of Solomon," who had himself taught that "the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart."²

Tertullian was concerned with truth and knowledge, and he was worried about pagans and heretics leading Christians astray. He was also concerned about the priority of a Christian's commitments. In a hierarchy of faith and reason, for Tertullian, faith should come first and would guide and direct the explorations of reason in the academy and in life. Tertullian was among the first to voice a concern about the relationship between faith and reason.

Centuries later, in the opening line of his *Institutes of Christian Faith*, John Calvin would articulate this relationship differently:

Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern. In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God, in whom he "lives and moves" [Acts 17:28]. For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves; indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God.³

Calvin understood the complexity of the bonds between knowledge of self and knowledge of God, which although not coterminous with

Athens and Jerusalem, reflect some of the same tensions and questions. For Calvin, though, everything is of God. As noted by some Calvin scholars, "because all reality and life is God's ... there are no sacred places, if this implies that other places are profane. All the world is sacred."⁴ The modern, Western tendency to see the world in a series of dualities—sacred and profane, reason and religion, Athens and Jerusalem—would for Calvin have been a curious perspective. Like Tertullian, Calvin would give first priority to Jerusalem, knowledge of God; but unlike Tertullian, Calvin sees not a hierarchy but a complex relationship where the sacred forms the context for all exploration.

Similar questions about faith and knowledge lie behind both Tertullian and Calvin's thinking: Are these two central arenas of human life in conflict with each other? Does one have priority or dominance over the other? Are they separate realms that should not mix and mingle? Or is there perhaps yet another, third way, a paradoxical relationship not yet seen? Tertullian concluded that one (faith) should have priority over the other; Calvin's vision here is of the interrelationship of faith and reason. Over the years, many other voices have joined into this debate, and it is one that chaplains in particular confront in various ways.

What indeed does Athens have to do with Jerusalem? As a chaplain whose call includes a faculty appointment where I teach two courses a semester, this question is of more than historical (or now geographical) interest to me. During my interview for the position of chaplain, the college president, Dr. Billy O. Wireman, said to me, "We want a chaplain with academic credentials. We want someone who can hold her own with the faculty, especially as we develop our core curriculum." He continued, "One of your challenges will be to make sure that Queens's historical commitment to religious and ethical values is an integral part of that program. That means you'll have to find ways to work with the faculty." My PhD in English (with a minor in religion) is the "entry card," as it were, into the faculty guild, and it puts me on equal footing with my faculty colleagues.

To further Dr. Wireman's vision of a chaplain as one whose role includes teaching, I not only preached a sermon in a local church as part of the call process required by my Presbyterian denomination, but I also taught a class to a group of American literature students and faculty. Teaching a class is required for all applicants for tenure-track faculty positions, and Dr. Wireman knew that any chaplain with faculty status would have to pass the "teaching test." Dr. Wireman envisioned a large part of my chaplaincy to be involved in the academic side of Queens in exploring and developing the connection between Jerusalem and Athens in the curriculum and beyond.

ATHENS AND JERUSALEM: CURRICULUM CONCERNS

The question "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" was answered early in my time at Queens when I encountered some faculty colleagues whose actions suggested that their answer to this question is "Nothing!" I had proposed a new course titled "Christian Pacifism." How exciting it would be, I thought, to offer students an opportunity to explore the ideas and lives of people like Dorothy Day, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King Jr., John Howard Yoder, and Bishop Desmond Tutu. I was surprised, then, when several faculty members raised informal objections to this proposal on the grounds that I would be "teaching a point of view." "Hmmm," I thought, "and when my colleagues teach a course called 'Peace and War' or 'Market Capitalism,' they're not teaching a point of view?" I remember being surprised and upset by the assumptions and conclusions some of my colleagues voiced about my course proposal.

My colleagues' real fear, I suspect, was that I would be using the topic and classroom to influence people's beliefs (which I wouldn't do in the sense they feared) and that I would expect students to be "converted" (although no one used this language) to being Christian and pacifists. (Some probably wouldn't have minded if I were to convert students to pacifism, but most would have had serious concerns about any hint of faith conversion.) In addition, they may also have thought that an apparent faith topic like Christian pacifism

could hardly be the stuff of serious academic endeavor. I didn't pursue the idea of teaching the course.

But as it turned out, several years later, after I had been at Queens for a while, I submitted a similar course proposal that was approved without a murmur; more recently, my department and others developed a minor in "Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution." A benefit of years of working together meant either that my colleagues had changed their opinions on the place of faith topics in a classroom (hardly likely in some cases) or that they had begun to see some possible connections between Athens and Jerusalem that did not portend the end of the academic world as they knew it. The debate and tension about the connections between Athens and Jerusalem continued to arise, however, at other points in those early years, so my faculty colleagues and I had had ample opportunities to explore each other's views.

Similar tensions arose as I attempted to fulfill the charge President Wireman gave me upon arrival: to integrate religion into the Queens core program. These discussions and debates often revealed not only the tensions in the academy between Athens and Jerusalem but also the rift in individuals' lives between their own faith and spirituality and how that connects—or not—to their lives as professors. In these discussions sometimes, as Freud noted, "a cigar is just a cigar," but other times it represents something deeper.

When a colleague, in my first few years at Queens, opened a teaching-team meeting with the seemingly innocent comment that "we need to cut some of the units here," I sensed something more than a concern for the number of pages we were assigning the freshmen. So I asked, "Are you referring to all the units or specifically to the Bible unit?" That unit was relatively new at the time, and this professor had expressed doubts about including it at all. "Well, the Bible unit, yes," my colleague responded. "It's too long. We need to shorten it." Objectively that wasn't true; we were assigning most of the *Iliad*, most of Dante's *Inferno*, and four short selections from the Bible. Some other concern lay behind my colleague's objection.

I wish I could say that at the time I recognized the complex, multilayered nature of this resistance to teaching the Bible. Our core program, like most interdisciplinary programs, is built on having faculty teach outside their field of expertise. What we were teaching by example was an attitude of mind, a spirit of inquiry as much as any specific content, but faculty are often nervous about teaching texts in a discipline remote from their own. And as chaplain and religion team member, I had (I thought) addressed my colleagues' fears about teaching the Bible by providing a weeklong seminar on "How to Teach the Bible in Core Programs," bringing in expert teachers and scholars like Dr. James Tabor from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and faculty from Duke and Colgate and other similar schools.

The concern about teaching the Bible in our core program opened the door to larger issues, both personal and pedagogical. Like my proposal to teach a course on Christian pacifism, the idea of teaching the Bible—especially in a Bible Belt state—raised the ongoing pedagogical question of objectivity in the classroom. On another level, it also touched a nerve for some of my colleagues and raised questions about their own faith journeys. To be sure, as a religion professor wisely said once, teaching the Bible is—and is not—like teaching the *Iliad* or the *Inferno*. The Bible is one of the single most important literary sources for reading and understanding centuries of English literature and Western culture, and so it has a rightful place in any academic curriculum. On the other hand, no one is likely to see the *Iliad* as a living scripture and use the detailed descriptions of ritual sacrifices to Apollo or Aphrodite as instructions on how one should conduct one's own life. Like a charged electron of an atom, so the Bible enters a classroom, creating indeed a different, even exciting, but also difficult classroom situation. And teaching the Bible in a university like Queens, which at the time drew the majority of its students from the South, meant the Bible was an even more charged topic than it might have been in a different context.

The resistance was, I gradually realized, not only intellectual but also emotional and personal. This connection became clearer on

the day when another religion colleague and I had the team faculty do an exercise we planned on using with our students. We asked everyone to describe an early memory or experience with the Bible or religion. No censoring, just free-write, we instructed. From that exercise we heard stories of a colleague's great-grandfather who had been a Methodist preacher and circuit rider who had traveled throughout the mountains of North Carolina. Another talked about the home altar and icons her Italian grandmother set up in her bedroom, where she burned votive candles and incense. Others talked about fire-and-brimstone preachers recollected from childhood. At the time (it would no doubt be different now with a younger generation of faculty), everyone had a vivid story, some disturbing, some pleasant. But many of these stories, it seemed, had been packed away in a box and stored deep in their memory. Teaching the Bible—as a literary and cultural text—opened the door to those memories and left my colleagues uncertain what to do with their dusty but vivid recollections. The exercise had raised a practical question in their own lives of how to connect Athens and Jerusalem.

Dr. Wireman as college president liked to remind the faculty that the Chinese character for "crisis" also meant "opportunity." When questions like that about the Bible unit were raised, it felt at times—at least to me, at least at first—like a crisis. From my perspective, finding ways to connect Athens and Jerusalem seemed to offer a richness and depth for our students' academic experience, but obviously some of my colleagues saw things differently, or at the very least were suspicious of faith entering a classroom. These early discussions about curriculum concerns challenged me to find a way to stay true to the charge that Dr. Wireman had articulated when I first arrived as chaplain, but also to respond with pastoral sensitivity and academic integrity to my colleagues' concerns. With time and ongoing discussions, I came eventually to see these challenges as opportunities.

ATHENS AND JERUSALEM: OUTSIDE THE CURRICULUM
Even as I was trying to navigate the waters between Athens and Jerusalem in curricular matters, other avenues for exploring this link

presented themselves. At the opening faculty meeting of every academic semester, I introduce myself by using the old line that a chaplain's role is to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." At times when a student or another community member dies, my pastoral role to comfort the afflicted is obvious. But sometimes an "affliction" may be as simple as a yearning for a deeper sense of God's presence, a yearning to connect the various parts of one's life.

Because of my accessibility as chaplain to everyone in the community, it seemed natural that during my first few years at Queens a lot of faculty and staff kept stopping me to ask what I thought of the then-popular book *Care of the Soul* by Thomas Moore. To be honest, I had started reading Moore's book and was not impressed. But I could tell by my colleagues' questions that they weren't really looking for me to say, "Well, I think it's a bit thin," or "I really couldn't get into it," or "Maybe we should read the other Thomas More?" While I didn't join with my colleagues' enthusiastic accolades, I also didn't try to squelch their obvious excitement. Finally, someone suggested I gather a group together to discuss Moore's book.

This suggestion formed an ironic counterpoint to the discussions about the Bible curriculum that I had been having at around the same time, especially since some of the same people were involved in both discussions. As a way to stop the seemingly endless barrage of queries and comments about Moore's book, which I knew by that point I'd never read on my own, I agreed. So a group was born—long before book clubs were the thing to do. The idea was simple: everyone who was interested would bring a lunch to a separate dining room, and for six weeks we would talk about the book. And we did. I suggested some basic ground rules: no attention would be paid to titles or campus hierarchies, anything discussed was confidential, and we would meet for only six weeks. While divisions between faculty and staff are not very pronounced at Queens, it was still unusual to have the academic vice president sitting next to a data-entry person and across from the president. Other staff and faculty members were regular attendees, including a chemistry professor who regularly took on the academic vice

president in faculty meetings—but for these discussions, everyone left campus politics at the door.

After the first year, some folks said, “Let’s do that again, let’s have another ‘Care of the Soul’ group,” as they called it. They claimed the title from Moore’s book, and it seemed to capture what everyone wanted but didn’t really know how to articulate: a different way for our community to gather and “care for our souls,” a way to move beyond the defined disciplines and roles we each filled and see ourselves whole. The second year we asked interested faculty and staff to come up with ideas (thankfully no one wanted to reread *Care of the Soul*), and that year we read Wayne Muller’s *Sabbath*. At different times the group included a Sufi practitioner, conservative and liberal Christians, seekers, and agnostics, who all came to talk—not about Queens’s problems and challenges but about their reactions to Muller or to Henri Nouwen’s *Beloved* or about holiday practices and rituals different from their own religious traditions. Folks came because they recognized at some level that we are not only rational academics but also people with a spiritual core.

As week followed week, I had to admit to myself that it ultimately didn’t matter that I wouldn’t have chosen *Care of the Soul* as our companion for that first journey. What mattered was what emerged as we began those first tentative steps in learning how to care for others’ as well as our own souls. What mattered was that we discovered together how God moves in and among us in unexpected ways and that together we could discern the traces of the Spirit’s movement in our midst. What mattered was that each of us heard an invitation to move deeper into the mystery of God’s presence and that each of us found our own life story expanded and enhanced. What mattered was that together we discovered the wonder and mystery of our lives and the world. The group had found its own way toward a different answer of the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem. The apparent dichotomy, even hostility, between Athens and Jerusalem that would arise in curriculum discussions became less pronounced as colleagues explored this question from a personal perspective. Everyone felt free to define how they experienced the Spirit, the

transcendent, the ineffable, and how they connected those experiences with their intellectual lives.

In many ways, “caring for the soul” involves caring not only for the people at the university but also for the university itself, and this responsibility defines in many ways who I am as chaplain. As I occasionally say to our current president, Dr. Pamela Davies, she and I are the only two people who have as our job descriptions to care and focus on the *whole* university. That care can take different shapes at different times, but it always means looking for ways to encourage and support connections that move us out of our narrow compartments toward a wholeness that will integrate head and heart, mind and soul, the tangible and intangible (or any of the other false dualism that can define our lives). Athens and Jerusalem need each other, just as each of us needs to find ways to nurture our own spirits and strengthen our souls, especially in this era that privileges the quantifiable and that threatens to domesticate the Mystery that lies deep at the heart of creation.

Caring for the “soul of the university” suggests a more grandiose image of my role as chaplain than exists in reality. When pastoral concerns arise—an accident, death of a student, cancer—most everyone welcomes the chaplain and looks to me to take the lead. Caring for the soul, and linking Athens and Jerusalem, can also mean raising questions about the moral center of our corporate lives. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your point of view, I feel more kinship with Prufrock, who would say, “I am no prophet,”⁵ than with a William Sloan Coffin. I’m not sure how I would have fared as a chaplain in the 1960s when chaplains like Coffin were the prophetic voices challenging universities to demonstrate their values through their actions in the board rooms and in the streets. Instead I find myself (along with others at Queens) raising questions, often behind the scenes, about what is right: Are we paying our service employees a living wage? Are we (the university) making decisions that flow from and reflect our core values? Is the financial bottom line, though important to be sure, always the final trump card in crafting university policy? Being seen as a spokesperson for

Jerusalem means raising these and other questions as I attempt to care for the soul of the university. It means seeking ways to make sure that we will not lose our way—or our soul—amidst the pressures of a market-driven world.

Caring for the soul means challenging everyone—the university, faculty and staff colleagues, and students—to find ways to connect parts of their lives that we may have compartmentalized but that are meant to be together. Our educational system encourages that compartmentalization to a large degree in spite of university mission statements that talk about “educating the whole person.” Having a “Care of the Soul” lunch discussion group created an opportunity outside the normal academic curriculum where folks could explore the connections between Athens and Jerusalem informally. The challenge always lies in making those connections within the classroom.

ATHENS AND JERUSALEM: THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND

The tensions between Athens and Jerusalem heighten, as I was well aware during my early years at Queens, when we try to introduce this exploration into the classroom and curriculum. Historically, faculty and students have learned, appropriately perhaps, to be engaged and even passionate about learning, but to keep our personal lives separate from the classroom. When everyone agrees to focus on the subject matter at hand and to leave anything too personal or spiritual for some other venue, classrooms “work.” Is it really relevant to a classroom discussion of the ethics of steroid use, for example, to have a student share about his or her recovery from a different drug addiction? Isn’t that “too much information,” as many faculty members would lament? In this Facebook era, we are experiencing a shifting of these public/private boundaries. If Calvin was right that wisdom consists in “knowledge of God and knowledge of ourselves,”⁶ should that search for wisdom and connections between what might appear to be a purely academic subject and students’ own lives and souls be confined solely to chapels, fellowship groups, or therapists’ offices?

Classrooms are not, nor should be, group therapy sessions (most faculty would shudder at the thought). On the other hand, students do desire to find connections between their academic lives and their inner lives, as documented by the UCLA spirituality study, among others. Students’ sometimes inappropriate comments indicate both the depth of their yearning to be whole and, at times, the pain they live with in our divided and compartmentalized world. Students, like some faculty, seek a middle territory—a third way—between a purely “knowledge for knowledge’s sake” approach and a “confessional, group therapy” classroom where anything goes. (Both extremes send chills down my spine.)

Barbara Walvoord identified this gap, what she calls “the great divide,” when she researched the teaching of religion in 533 introductory religion courses across numerous universities. She defines the “great divide” as the gap between the goals that faculty regard as primary and those that students prioritize. Faculty generally listed their primary goal for their classes as developing “critical thinking,” while students most frequently aspire “to learn factual information, understand other religions and/or their own, and develop their own spiritual and religious lives.”⁷ Walvoord continues in this groundbreaking study to further observe, “What happens when students who want to work on their own spiritual and religious development meet faculty members’ demands for critical thinking? The broadest answer is that colliding worlds create energy.”⁸ Are Athens and Jerusalem “colliding worlds”? And if so, is the creation of energy from that collision worth the initial disruptions?

Certainly, my educational philosophy, created in the cauldron of the late 1960s’ upheavals on college campuses was shaped by reading thinkers like Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire and by seminary professors like Katie Cannon, Nancy Jay, and Harvey Cox, who taught and lived their theology and welcomed me to explore and experiment with worlds or arenas that potentially might collide. During my undergraduate years, some of my professors took our “readings” to the streets, as they invited their students to protest against the Vietnam War. Consequently, I saw what could happen when universities

or professors looked beyond their traditional ivory towers. In these settings, classroom readings and academic assignments can begin to connect to something deep within one's soul and to the world around us.

My undergraduate days laid the groundwork for the later questions that I would find myself pondering: In what ways can the resources encountered in the classroom begin to enrich, expand, and shape our students' lives and stories in meaningful ways? The best professors, of course, are always concerned about challenging their students to integrate academic knowledge into their lives. In recent years the rise of experiential learning seems like one answer to how professors can encourage that integration. A unique feature of the Athens/Jerusalem dichotomy arises because of the focus on the spiritual or faith dimension. In an academic setting, we rarely reflect on how our students can unite these disparate parts of their lives. In my own movement toward some insight into these potentially colliding worlds, I began to explore ways to connect Athens and Jerusalem that would honor the integrity of both realms.

ATHENS AND JERUSALEM ABROAD

One of my ongoing challenges as chaplain is to provide the context in which students, faculty, or staff are encouraged to explore these connections and look for ways to move toward wholeness. In the early discussions about course offerings and the Bible unit in our core curriculum, we as a faculty moved toward one answer: approach "Jerusalem" academically and let students discover for themselves any connections to their inner, spiritual lives. The "Care of the Soul" group offered a different answer for faculty and staff, providing an opportunity for folks to do that exploration on their own terms. Over time, I saw another way to explore these connections—by mixing the academic and the spiritual in overseas trips. Queens has a commitment to offering our traditional undergraduates a three-week overseas trip with faculty members as a way to broaden their horizons and encourage them to become truly global citizens. As chaplain, I built on that international commitment and

began offering trips designed to include a spiritual component: a "Peace and Reconciliation" trip to Northern Ireland, and a spring-break trip to Guatemala. Currently we are exploring another connection, with Cameroon.

Combining an academic focus with a spiritual framework for overseas trips creates a space for connections that do not happen regularly in a typical classroom setting. During a trip with students and staff to Northern Ireland to learn about how that country has developed and sustained its peace and reconciliation process, one team member found that questions of reconciliation were not always about political matters. In our evening Bible study reflection one night in the middle of our trip, one participant paused, obviously overcome by an unexpected realization: "As we have been learning about the political and religious reconciliation processes going on here, it occurred to me that I may need to look at my own life. My biological father left when I was a toddler, and I've never wanted to know him. Now I can see that I have some reconciliation work of my own to do." This colleague had taken one step closer to breaking down the barriers he had unconsciously constructed in his own life. He had taken a step toward connecting the external processes of peace and reconciliation we were learning about and the divisions in his own life and soul. Trips like the Northern Ireland "Peace and Reconciliation" trip offer all of us an opportunity for such movement.

No single endeavor in my chaplaincy, however, embodies this opportunity more than our chapel mission trips to Guatemala. Like the Northern Ireland trip or the "Care of the Soul" group, the Guatemala experience offers students and faculty an opportunity to discover how their faith and spirituality connect with their academic lives as well as how our lives in the United States relate to the lives of indigenous communities in developing countries. Queens began its connection with Guatemala in 1993, but because of Guatemala's civil war, we suspended our trips until 2000. At that point, I began offering an annual chapel mission trip to Guatemala during spring break. The trip is part of a three-credit-hour class on Guatemala

that is required of all students going on the trip, and the semester's readings and activities (from academic readings to intensive team building to spiritual disciplines) challenge students to connect the dots in their lives, to let themselves be transformed by living in the tensions between Athens and Jerusalem. With the academic course and the trip, students and faculty are challenged to see their lives in different ways.

Over the course of fifteen trips to Guatemala (plus the one to Northern Ireland and another to the Dominican Republic), students have entered into the experience as a way to find answers to life's larger questions—about the purpose for their lives, or how they can participate in easing the world's suffering, or where God is found amidst struggles for peace and justice. By “moving outside their comfort zone,” as the students say, students, faculty, and staff who participate in these trips can find their assumptions and worldviews unsettled. Some participants have momentary insights on these trips, but upon return, “normal” life envelops them, and the changes they experienced can become buried. For others the shock waves of their experiences overseas create more permanent and obvious changes. I saw this happen one year on our return from a trip to Guatemala.

The van had just turned into the main street leading to the university. Queens is located in the Myers Park area of Charlotte, an area known for its tree-lined boulevards and gracious, stately homes. It's the area where “old money” lives. No neighborhood could be intentionally designed to contrast more vividly with the dirt-floor, bamboo-walled two-room homes that we had stayed in while in Guatemala. Everyone in the van that night was tired and sad after leaving our new friends in Guatemala. The well of emotions had made us silent for most of the trip back from the airport. Then, as we turned the corner into the Myers Park area, one student half stood, looked out the windows at the signs of wealth and luxury, and shouted, “I can't take it, it's too much! Why do we have so much and others so little?” Then she started crying. Later in her dorm room, she tore down all her posters reflecting our entertainment- and consumer-oriented

culture, and she sorted through her closet to find clothes to give away, crying the whole time, and muttering about the disparities she had recently experienced. This experience, plus others, led her to spend two years in the Peace Corps in Africa and then to become a midwife so that she could help provide health care to those in the United States who can't afford it.

The contrast between the relative luxury of our lives in the United States and the poverty of many in Guatemala challenged this student in her core. For her, life could no longer be compartmentalized, and spiritual questions about the meaning and purpose of one's life were no longer abstract questions about career choices. The depth of faith that we encountered in the people of Guatemala, even as they faced poverty and political oppression, opened this student's eyes to a way of being that connected all aspects of one's life.

A similar experience happened to a faculty colleague who was an adviser on one of our Guatemala trips. As a child, my colleague knew the “Power of Being Quiet,” as she entitled a talk she gave in chapel for our “This I Believe” series. This childhood attitude was reinforced in later years by her Quaker experiences. But one event during the Guatemala trip cast these earlier experiences of quiet in a different light. She describes the experience as follows:

The wonder, the curiosity, the instinct to see and to listen—those more secular consequences of being quiet have never disappeared, never left me. But, after Iximiché [a Mayan ruins] they no longer function in my life as narrowly as they did before. Though they continue to guide my intellectual life, my secular life, they also enrich my spiritual life. Indeed, the power of being quiet has led me to realize that these “lives” are not separate, but instead are integrated and interdependent.⁹

For these travelers, the spiritual was no longer consigned to a Sunday experience; instead they, along with many more like them, returned to the United States and to the classroom with their eyes open to new ways of being.

WHY ATHENS AND JERUSALEM? MY STORY

My colleagues' reflections prompted me, too, to wonder why the Athens/Jerusalem tug-of-war spoke so deeply to me. Why over the years have I persisted in raising these questions—for myself, for my colleagues, and for my students? My undergraduate experiences obviously offered me a window into a way of moving beyond this apparent dichotomy, and my seminary education was equally as important. I went to seminary as a “second-career” student, leaving a career in academia as a professor of English. In seminary, questions about what shape my life's story would take as a result of this change were foremost in my mind. Many of those questions, I now see, were ones about how the various parts of my life connected.

During my first year in seminary, I was an intern at the Women's Lunch Place, a program that offered daily lunches to Boston's homeless women. During my year there, I came to know Alice, a woman in her seventies, who had grown up just outside of Boston. She was a college graduate who'd taught music in high school for years. As with many of the women at the Lunch Place, a series of losses meant she found herself on the street for a time. When I knew her, she actually had a small studio apartment, but her financial situation was precarious enough that she couldn't both pay her rent and buy food. The economic realities of her life presented her with difficult choices, but even without these realities, she probably would have come to the Lunch Place in any case. She wanted and needed the companionship of the regular guests, volunteers, and staff at the Lunch Place. Mostly she wanted someone to listen to her, to pay attention, and to walk with her—to listen to her story and to accompany her on this part of her journey.

Her requests were rarely grand: “I'm having trouble cutting my meat today, Diane. Can't you sit down and help me just for a minute?” That request was usually an easy one. On most days, I welcomed Alice's company and pleas for help. It meant I could sit down for a few minutes and have a conversation with her and the other guests. At other times, like when a volunteer group scheduled to help didn't show up at the last second, the few staff people and interns would

be left trying to create menus, cook, and serve a hot lunch to over one hundred women. On those days, even Alice's simple requests seemed too much.

And there were other requests. Alice would often be “slow” about gathering her things at the end of the lunch hour, so she'd be one of the last guests to leave. Then, she would grab my arm gently and in her patrician Boston accent say, “Diane, can't you help me carry my bags to my apartment?” Her apartment was about a fifteen-minute walk from the Lunch Place (although Alice could make it into a thirty- or forty-minute endeavor), and her bags certainly weren't heavy. They were plastic grocery bags filled with leftovers she'd gathered for later meals. Her request was hardly unreasonable, but at the end of my eight-hour shift, I felt exhausted. I wanted nothing more than to get on the “T” and be whisked back to my clean apartment, my well-stocked refrigerator, and my Cambridge seminary world.

Now, reflecting back on those experiences and thinking about Athens and Jerusalem, I realize that seminary had become in some ways my “Athens.” Ironically, even though we were spending all our waking hours (or so it seemed!) reading, writing, and discussing sacred texts, world religions, and new theologies, we were absorbed by ideas, by the life of the mind. We met amazing people who were doing amazing things, both literally through various speaker series and metaphorically through our studies, but somehow all that I was learning had not yet made the movement from my head to my heart. The “messy” stuff of life (Jerusalem), in an odd way, had ironically been scrubbed and domesticated when it entered our seminary's hallowed halls.

At the Women's Lunch Place, Alice's requests challenged me to see how I, too, had compartmentalized my worlds. I had my seminary world, where we engaged with exciting and challenging ideas, faculty, speakers, and other students. And I had my “service” world, where several times a week I would leave my academic cocoon and go to the Women's Lunch Place. The trip on the “T” nicely kept those two worlds neatly separate, and I had unconsciously made certain that I was in charge of that movement.

Alice's tug on my arm and her requests to walk her to her apartment tugged on the unseen walls I had built between my two worlds. "But as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these ..." (Matthew 25:40). Jesus's words and the Gospel stories, which had become my story, too, over the years, echoed in my ears. For others the tug might be in the language of a different religious tradition, or it might be in the unformed yearning for "something more." When Alice would ask me to walk her to her apartment, which I sometimes did and sometimes didn't do, I had to answer in practical ways. There were other questions, too, that arose during those seminar years.

No one captured those questions better than Gordon Cosby of the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C. During my early years at Queens I took students to D.C. on a trip called "Searching for Prophets." During that trip Gordon posed a question to my students that captured vividly what my seminary experiences had encapsulated: "Am I going to be a participant to help God pull off this creation of his reign of peace and justice now, or am I going to watch from the sidelines?" In other words, am I going to keep Athens and Jerusalem separate, or am I going to find ways to connect these two parts of my—our—world and my life? The Gospel stories and Jesus's examples can lie lifeless on the page unless we embody them, and that means letting ourselves walk with people like Alice or with the homeless people my students encountered in D.C. It means letting go of my (our) need to compartmentalize and control all parts of our lives.

But maybe seeking connections between Athens and Jerusalem isn't quite the right way to conceive of this issue. Parker Palmer, a Quaker writer and theologian, explores the contradictions of our lives in his book *The Promise of Paradox*. Early in the book, Palmer suggests a way out of the contradictions that trap us. He writes:

But there is a third way to respond. A way beyond choosing either this pole or that. Let's call it "living the contradictions." Here we refuse to flee from tension but allow that tension to occupy the center of our lives. And why would anyone walk this difficult path? Because by doing so we may receive one of the great gifts of the

spiritual life—the transformation of contradiction into paradox. The poles of either/or, the choices we thought we had to make, may become signs of a larger truth than we had even dreamed. And in that truth, our lives may become larger than we had ever imagined.¹⁰

Not Athens or Jerusalem, but both, connected or at times in tension, but the tension is ideally one that can indeed lead us into a deeper truth where "our lives may become larger."

The integration of our spiritual and our secular lives continues to be a challenge that we postmoderns face. Like the new science building standing so boldly in front of the chapel at Queens, these two solid structures challenge me to discover a deeper reality than any apparent contradiction between the two. Athens and Jerusalem at times may appear as totally separate and in conflict with each other, or at other times as connected in myriad ways, or even as a paradox to be lived at a deeper level. As Palmer says, by living the contradictions we may discover that "our lives may become larger than we ever imagined." And isn't that what universities are for? And even more: isn't that an ideal role for a chaplain?

