The Project in a Nutshell

In response to the growing plurality of faith traditions in our midst, and connected with the church’s stated need to enhance its missional self-understanding and nature,¹ I proposed to develop a new course tentatively titled, “Caring Hospitably in Multifaith Situations.” It will focus on foundations and guidelines for pastoral ministers and caregivers (e.g. chaplains), and will be offered primarily but not exclusively to students in our M.Div. program in the Pastoral Ministry and in the Pastoral Care & Counseling concentrations. The course will aim at strengthening core competencies related to the following three areas of pastoral wisdom: (a) necessary qualities of character and presence (being, personal-spiritual formation);

¹ The stated rationale for the project included the following points:

- Our social and cultural context is increasingly diverse, including people of many faith traditions (e.g. local hospitals now register other-than-Christian affiliation for close to half of their patients). Consequently, interactions, the possibility of collaboration, and opportunities for mutual service between Christians and people of other faiths and cultural backgrounds have increased dramatically in our region in recent years.
- In recent years both Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA have done systematic reflection on what it means to be “missional” in our contexts. Issues of hospitality and welcoming strangers in church and society are a major focus of consideration calling for better understanding and greater appreciation of other traditions.
- The Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) is accountable to, and serves both national churches (Canadian and US). Our faculty has played a role in the reflection alluded to above; further, we have also considered ways to strengthen the missional dimension of our curriculum of theological education and ministerial formation.
- My own research on pastoral and spiritual care has recently focused on interfaith care, including the publication of two books co-edited with Leah Dawn Bueckert, Interfaith Spiritual Care: Understandings and Practices (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2009), and You Welcomed Me: Interfaith Spiritual Care in the Hospital (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2010). Directly connected with this ATS-supported project, I’m currently involved in a research and writing project, “Multifaith Voices in Spiritual Care” which includes the contributions from colleagues representing seven traditions (Hindu, Buddhist, First Nation, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and Humanist).
(b) understanding of faith traditions and dynamics of interfaith situations (*knowing*, academic formation); and (c) communication and caregiving skills (*doing*, professional formation). The course content will include written input provided by representatives of Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, First Nation, and Humanist traditions, who have already submitted their written contributions. Case studies will significantly inform the methodology to be employed, which will include guest presentations by a rabbi and an imam who serve in our community.

**Activities funded by the grant**

The bulk of the funds made available by the grant was used to financially compensate nine colleagues who wrote valuable contributions representing seven traditions—First Nation, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Humanist—in the field of spiritual care. They prepared essays presenting unique perspectives and visions in response to questions related to foundations for spiritual care, issues of caregiving practice including interfaith situations, and core competencies for caring well in multifaith settings. In addition to focusing specifically on the content of the essays, we were also able to maintain meaningful collaboration by phone and e-mail correspondence.

Another activity funded by the grant was consultation with a spiritual care professional with broad experience in interfaith caregiving, and a theologian whose theological education portfolio includes work on Christian theology and religious pluralism. Those two colleagues played an important role throughout the duration of the project. They read most of the material generated collaboratively and provided timely counsel and feedback as well.

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2 The names of those colleagues are, respectively, as follows: Elder Melody McKellar and Elder Roger Armitte, Pandit Dinesh Sharma, Rev. Danny Fisher, Rabbi Mychal Springer, Prof. Kathleen Greider, and Profs. Christa Aanbek and Hans Halma.

3 Leah Dawn Bueckert serves as Spiritual Care Coordinator with the North Eastman Health Association in Manitoba, Canada; as already indicated, Bueckert and I also co-edited the book, *Interfaith Spiritual Care: Understandings and Practices*.

4 Gayle Gerber Koontz is Professor of Theology and Ethics at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.
Finally, funds were also used to support secretarial and editorial assistance. This is an item that initially had not been included in the budget projections. Connected with two questions raised by the ATS grant selection committee—“Will the essays be published or otherwise made available to the broader public?”, and “How can what is learned in the project be made more widely available?”—I decided to start preparing the publication of a book. By early Fall I hope to complete the necessary work of writing and editing, and getting the book ready for publication.

Registered results
I am grateful for the opportunity to advance my research work with assistance from the ATS, and I am glad to report that this project was very successful overall. In fact, the energy invested was fruitful far beyond the limited contours suggested by the category of “course development”. Therefore, I wish to highlight the following observations and learnings.

First of all, while working on this project during the fall term, I was able to test substantive content in the settings of two public presentations I made in Cali, Colombia, on October 13 and 14 and, a week later, at a forum presentation at the Seminary. A revised theological anthropology and a model of caregiving as psycho-spiritual discipline were two of the key topics I addressed. I also designed a pastoral care workshop, “Challenges and Opportunities in Interfaith Care”, which I offered twice during the Seminary’s Pastors Week event in January (Appendix I).

Second, I had visualized incorporating material from this project into the content of my course, “Pastoral Counseling & Theology”, which would be offered during the spring term while also seeking to design a new course, “Caring Hospitably in Multifaith Situations.” Due to issues of academic load and M. Div-Pastoral Care & Counseling concentration requirements, it was not possible to offer the new course during the Spring term of the academic year 2011-2012. In any event, I was able to include a six-session unit on interfaith spiritual care for which students read most of the essays on spiritual care alluded to above. My theology consultant participated in one of the sessions as we focused on what it means and implies to care “Christianly” well, that is, competently and faithfully, for people of other faith traditions.

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5 The questions were communicated to me in a memo sent by Stephen R. Graham on July 20, 2011.
6 The presentations were made in a Conference on Psychology and Spirituality, sponsored by the Baptist University and the Colombian Psychological Association.
Third, in the course of the teaching-learning process during the Spring term, which included the case study method and role playing of interfaith care situations, not only were we able to further theoretical reflection on “caring hospitably” but also to identify necessary attitudes, character strengths, skills and approaches as well. In that setting I refined a model of wise caregiving defined in terms of core competencies under the categories of being, knowing, and doing. I also designed a simple tool to foster self-assessment and reflection (Appendix II).

Fourth, material stemming from this project informed my recent presentation—“Competence for Educating Christianly in Multicultural and Multifaith Educational Settings”—at the Mennonite Higher Education Faculty Conference.7

Fifth and finally, in light of the experience gained, I will be able to offer the new course during the next academic year (Summer, 2013, Appendix III).

**Ramifications and projections**
Our efforts in the framework of “Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices in a Multifaith Society” reinforce and are in turn supported by AMBS’s commitment to dismantle racism and to embrace diversity comprehensively. They can thus contribute to strengthen our *explicit curriculum*, especially but not exclusively, in the areas of ministerial leadership and pastoral care and counseling. We expect that our graduates will be better equipped to serve faithfully and effectively in our multifaith society. We also expect that this initiative will contribute to support our *implicit curriculum*—communal ethos, values, and practices, including a declared commitment to embrace diversity and to foster collaboration beyond denominational and theological boundaries.

As far as my further academic work are concerned, in the next two years I plan to focus on the following two endeavors: (a) making available workshops on “Caring Hospitably in Multifaith Situations” for pastors and other church leaders; and (b)

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7 The conference was organized by the Mennonite Education Agency for college and seminary faculty and was held in Goshen, Indiana, August 1-3, under the general theme, “God’s Reconciling Mission in the World”.

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starting a new research and writing project—“Case studies of spiritual care in multifaith settings”—with a colleague, hopefully leading to the publication of another text.

DS/080712
Pastoral Care Workshop: Challenges and Opportunities in Interfaith Spiritual Care

Workshop Objectives

- To recognize and affirm those virtues, attitudes and other dispositions that define the competent and faithful spiritual caregiver in terms of identity and vocation (being competencies—presence)
- To foster pastoral theological reflection by exploring the dynamics of interfaith care situations (knowing competencies—understanding)
- To identify specific skills and approaches for effective pastoral care and counseling work in interfaith situations (doing competencies—companioning)

Morning Session

8:00–9:00 Registration and continental breakfast
9:00–9:15 Opening and invocation
9:15–11:00 Introduction:
   a) A biblical case study on intercultural and interfaith care: Jesus’s encounter with a Cannanite woman (Mathew 15: 21-28)
   b) A review of new directions in interfaith spiritual care in multifaith settings

Case study:
“A Baptist chaplain cares for a Jewish family”, and presentation of the four-dimensional framework for analysis and reflection (observation, interpretation, evaluation, and application)

11:00–11:15 Break
12:30–1:30 Lunch
Afternoon Session

1:30–2:30  Case studies contributed by the participants: small group discussion, role-playing

2:30–2:45  Break

2:45–3:45  Concluding reflections and evaluation of the workshop
Appendix II: CORE COMPETENCIES

A TOOL FOR SELF-REFLECTION AND ASSESSMENT

Consider the following list of core competencies deemed necessary for caring well in interfaith situations. On a scale of 1 to 4, how do you view yourself regarding each of the competencies listed (1: “area for further growth”, 4 “area of strength”)?

**BEING competencies (presence)**

- I have a clear sense of personal and professional identity and authority
  
  1  
  2  
  3  
  4

- Self-awareness (including realistic sense of strengths and vulnerabilities related to my social status and culture)
  
  1  
  2  
  3  
  4

- My own spirituality, and experience of connection with a transcendent Source (Holy Spirit) of love and grace, truth and wisdom
  
  1  
  2  
  3  
  4

- Overall sense of personal wellbeing, integrity and worth
  
  1  
  2  
  3  
  4

- Character strengths (virtues): hospitality, compassion, respect, courage, open-mindedness, empathy, passion for justice and peace, and others (specify)
  
  1  
  2  
  3  
  4

- Appropriate curiosity and sense of humor
  
  1  
  2  
  3  
  4

- Other...
  
  1  
  2  
  3  
  4

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8 This tool does not present a complete list of desirable competencies; it is rather an invitation to further our reflection, including the possibility of adding and/or reformulating competencies in light of personal and professional experience. It may also serve as an accountability device in collegial conversation and collaboration. A simplified version could be used in volunteer training.

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KNOWING competencies (*understanding*)

- A philosophy of spiritual care, including view of human wholeness, quality of life, health, healing and dying, grounded in one’s own faith tradition (religious or not)
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- A comprehensive ethic of care
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Integration of spirituality, human and medical sciences, theological (or philosophical), and socio-political perspectives
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Linguistic-conceptual and “multilingual” competency (knowing a variety of languages, including languages from other cultures and faith traditions)
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Optimal knowledge of legal issues related to health care
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Clinical knowledge of responses to critical incidents, crisis, trauma, recovery, etc.
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Other...
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

DOING competencies (*companioning*)

- Verbal and nonverbal rapport building
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Engaging care receivers’ spirituality and skill in spiritual assessment
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Active listening and discernment of appropriate responses
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Pertinent therapeutic action
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Internal monitoring of process and self
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

- Active spiritual care partnering with faith communities, government agencies, advocacy groups, and others, including accountability structure and process
  
  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
• Ongoing critical and constructive reflection on experience and practice
  1  2  3  4
• Discipline of self-care involving spirit, soul, body
  1  2  3  4
Other…
  1  2  3  4
CHM639 – Caring Hospitably in Multifaith Situations – Two credit hours

Summer 2013 — Professor: Daniel S. Schipani

Description
This course considers biblical-theological and psychological-psychotherapeutic foundations and principles of interfaith spiritual care as a discipline of Christian hospitality. Dynamics of interfaith communication are studied together with theological and clinical\(^9\) dimensions of caregiving in congregational and hospital settings. Participants focus on the practical questions of goals, content and process in diverse instances that call for pastoral care and counseling (including chaplaincy practice): discernment and guidance, nurture and support, reconciliation and healing. Special attention is given to the task of integrating theological and psychological resources in spiritual care and pastoral theology.

The overarching threefold goal of the course is to foster faithful and hospitable care giving ministry. Students enrolled in the class are led to grow in pastoral wisdom in terms of core competencies related to three areas: (a) Necessary qualities of character and presence (being, personal-spiritual formation); that is, nurturing pastoral identity and vocation as ministering persons in multifaith contexts. (b) Understanding of faith traditions and dynamics of interfaith situations (knowing, academic formation); that is, developing the competence of pastoral and theological reflection on care ministry as hospitality practice. (c) Enhancing communication and caregiving skills (doing, professional formation); that is, whose necessary practices and approaches is to care hospitably.

The methodological approach includes lectures, case study presentation by professor and students, analysis and reflection, and role-playing. Bibliographic and other resources\(^{10}\) are combined with those stemming from the participants’ personal and

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\(^9\) “Clinical” here is broadly understood as therapeutic in the sense of aiming at support, guidance, reconciliation, and healing.

\(^{10}\) It is expected that the essays written for the “Multifaith Voices in Spiritual Care” project, including two of my own, will be available to students in book form by the time the new course is offered.
professional experience. A special feature is the contribution of an imam and a rabbi who serve in our community and make class presentations.

Requirements and Evaluation Percentages
Students enrolled complete a minimum of required reading and experienced-based assignments prior to the beginning of the Summer session (20%). During the scheduled class sessions they are expected to attend and participate actively on the basis of having completed daily different assignments such as reading, doing exercises and engaging in caregiving practices, and journaling (60%). A final paper or project (1500–2000 words) provides an opportunity for students to articulate their vision of spiritual care in multifaith situations (20%).