

# A Response to Lynne Robinson's paper

“Celebrating 40 years of Clinical Pastoral Education in Australia: Is there a Promised Land?”

Zeltner Hall, Austin Hospital 29 February, 2008

Rev David Fuller, Director of Chaplaincy Services Division Access Ministries

“May I commence with congratulations and a thank you. Firstly, congratulations on a movement of God's people who stop periodically to honour their founders, celebrate their achievements and have the courage to re assess their direction. I have just completed reading Joan Kenny's book, “A Finger pointing to the Moon: A History of the Association for Supervised Pastoral Education in Australia 1967-2000” and saw ample evidence of these processes over your 40 year history.

Secondly, thank you for inviting me into your ‘community’ for this occasion. I feel some what of an ‘outsider’ though, as I had never heard of ASPEA and Clinical Pastoral Education until 2002. What I did hear at that time, from the section of the Church I identified with, was somewhat negative. As part of my preparation for Anglican ordination in 2005 I did a semester unit of CPE in the second half of 2004 with Lynne Robinson and Jenny McQuirk under the auspices of the then CCES. Despite ‘apocalyptic’ warnings from some about CPE, not only did I survive but all of the six participants in my group are still thriving in school chaplaincy ministry!!

(Two work as Anglican Chaplains in independent schools, one works from her Anglican Church into a State Government school and three of us currently work for ACCESS ministries)

I continued in a supervisory relationship with Jenny McQuirk throughout 2005 and 2006 until I took up this current role in February, 2007. This period reinforced to me the critical imperative of having a supervisory relationship while in Christian ministry. To quote Dr Arch Hart, former Professor of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary,

**“If you don't have a supervisor in ministry, you shouldn't be in ministry.”**

I am regularly reminded of the good things I got out of CPE. Improved listening skills, a deeper self awareness, learning to reflect more purposely and theologically on a pastoral encounter and a certain robustness that is better able to handle the ‘stick’ you some times cop from your supervisor or ministry colleagues. As some one who taught practical ministry subjects at Ridley College (now Ridley Melbourne) over the past six years, the CPE teaching methodology of action-reflection on real ministry encounters, the discipline of peer review and supervision is to be highly commended.

Some questions still prevail about my CPE experience. Did I need to do 400 hours of work to learn the valuable things from the course? I did it on top of my other work commitments and by the end of the course I was exhausted. I have watched Anglican ordinands for years walk into ten week intensive summer CPE units from demanding study loads and straight back into another demanding year of study or a full time curacy with hardly a break. I am sure there could have been a better way to do things and one wonders whether this contributed to some of the negativity or attempts to avoid doing it all together by several of my Anglican colleagues.

I will pick up on some of these matters later as Lynne's paper makes several comments about how CPE might be more 'user friendly' to the particular contextual issues that face a school chaplain.

After outlining the history of how the CCES CPE centre was founded and something of the 'visionary, permission giving' spirit of the time, Lynne lays out a compelling case in her paper for a CPE centre that has a focus and expertise on schools chaplaincy. She outlines all the issues that are significant and important to our Chaplains.

They include the need for a more flexible delivery system that takes into account something of the rigidity of a school timetable and perhaps a recalcitrant school Principal! A CPE system that can deliver to rural Chaplains is certainly required and effective utilization of modern technology. For instance, there would be few theological colleges now that are not delivering something of their program via e-mail even if educationally, they are uneasy about it. (Reality has a way of imposing itself!) I say Amen to these suggestions from Lynne about the particular needs of the constituency I represent.

In her conclusion she then asks, "What might ASPEA's role in such a centre be?"

I have pondered the same question from ACCESS ministries perspective, though I might add we have been some what 'distracted' at present with the phenomenal growth in schools chaplaincy created by the National Schools Chaplaincy Programme. We started with 68 chaplains across 79 schools at the beginning of 2007. We currently have Chaplains across 150 schools and we expect to have another 107 schools covered by a Chaplain by the end of 2008. Lynne is correct to observe that there is both demand and a massive market. ACCECC ministries is 'not the only show in town' either as over 400 schools have been approved to receive the federal funding over the next three years! We account for only 65% of those schools. There is a sizable percentage of Christian, Independent and Roman Catholic schools in the mix. (20%)

Should ACCESS ministries run their own centre as we previously did?

If we do, and I must add, it is not off the agenda the centre supervisor(s) will need to be at arms length to the leadership / management structure. I am not persuaded that Field Support Managers in our current structure should be running CPE units among our chaplains. A Field Support Manager has both a pastoral and supervisory role over a

chaplain. A chaplain during a CPE unit needs the safety of being able to 'let it all hang out,' and that may involve criticism of their FSM or the organization they work for!!

Apart from our own internal orientation and training programs, all the academic training that a chaplain requires has been done at arms length to us through theological colleges and other training institutions. Even the combined colleges Chaplaincy unit 'run' by ACCESS ministries personnel is in effect a sub contractual arrangement where we are paid a fee for service to teach but the colleges gain the student fees and accredit the courses. I teach but do not mark the work. Outside moderation assesses the quality of a students work, not me as the Director of Chaplaincy Services for ACCESS Ministries.

Who is responsible for the training and equipping of ASPEA Centre Supervisors?

It is a long and rigorous road to such a qualification but who carries the can? In the end it was Lynne's 'missionary' zeal and some encouragement from Graeme Gibbons that created the former CCES CPE centre. She made the sacrifices of time, effort and loss of income to achieve her goal for such a centre. She demonstrated that you could create a new model without sacrificing the principles of CPE.

We remain committed to the following at present:

- Our Chaplains doing their CPE unit(s) in other accredited CPE centres'. A chaplain doing a CPE unit with chaplains working in other contexts has occurred historically and may potentially be an enriching experience. Two of our Chaplains are currently doing their CPE unit at Warrnambool Hospital presumably with hospital based Chaplains.
- Our Chaplains receiving clinical supervision with ASPEA accredited personnel and other suitably qualified practitioners is encouraged and supported.
- Our Chaplains are still required to do CPE within the first two-three years of their ministry. Where will they go and can you ask a part time Primary School Chaplain to do a 400 hour unit?

Let me finish with a quote and an observation from a well known youth ministry writer and lecturer, Professor, Mark Senter for it resonates with Lynne basic premise and her ringing of a warning bell. Mark Senter's PhD thesis was written up in popular form in a book titled, "The coming revolution in youth ministry" (1992) Senter researched all the prominent youth ministry movements in the United States such as Youth for Christ, Young Life and Christian Endeavour. He noted a 50 year life cycle in these movements from the time of their founding through to their decline and sometimes death.

The reinvention and revitalization of a movement is possible he suggests but it is often painful and difficult. Fresh vision, a new generation of leaders, a radical overhaul and review of the operation are all required if a movement is to have a vital future. Some one once said, 'The future belongs to the defined, the determined and the disciplined!' I think they were right.