

HISTORY

In the 1960s and 1970s, theological students from Newfoundland and Labrador completed Supervised Pastoral Education (SPE) courses at centers on the mainland of Canada and the United States. Gradually the benefits of such clinical training became evident and an increasing number of students were encouraged to include such training in their preparation for ministry.

In the early 1980s, The Reverend Kirby Walsh, who had completed SPE courses, was appointed chaplain at Western Memorial Hospital in Corner Brook. In time, with the support of Dr. Harry Watts, Medical Director, they convened a meeting of hospital chaplains throughout Newfoundland and thereby formed a sub-group of the Newfoundland Hospital Association called the **Chaplains' Section**. A Constitution was adopted and regular meetings for the purposes of administration and professional development followed. Because of the small number of officially appointed chaplains, the membership remained small.

In 1983, The Reverend Dr. Arthur Churchill supervised the first 400-hour SPE Program to be offered in Newfoundland and Labrador, at the Western Memorial Hospital. A year later, 1984 The Reverend Bill Bartlett supervised the first SPE Program to be offered in St. John's, at the Waterford Hospital. Both of these teaching centres have contributed greatly to the development of pastoral/spiritual care education in our province.

As the numbers of persons with SPE training grew, and as more persons (clergy and laity) became involved in the delivery of pastoral care services to hospitals and nursing homes, the need to expand the **Chaplains' Section** was recognized. The new group became known as the **Pastoral Care Section**, and in 1994 it was re-named the **Pastoral Care Allied Health Group**, one group among other allied health professional groups.

In 1996, the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association (NLHBA), through a cost-sharing arrangement with Government and Regional Health Boards, hired a Provincial Coordinator of pastoral/spiritual care in health care. The first coordinator was The Reverend Bill Bartlett. This position was located in the NLHBA offices in St. John's and had an Advisory Committee, consisting of the Regional Pastoral Care Directors, Chairperson of the Pastoral Care Allied Health Group, and the Executive Director of the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Boards Association.

In 2003 The Reverend Dr. Curt Clark assumed the position of Provincial Coordinator until April 2006 when health care was again restructured in the province. The four new regional health and community services Boards decided to support the coordination of spiritual and religious care in their own jurisdiction, thus re-claiming their funding originally designated for the Coordinator position. The NLBHA promised to continue to fund and coordinate the SPE education unit(s) throughout the province and support our group in other ways.

Today the PCAHG membership extends to all areas of the province. In addition to hospital and long term care facility chaplains; membership now includes pastoral care managers,

regional directors/managers of pastoral care, visiting clergy and lay pastoral visitors from many religious denominations. Chaplains and other pastoral workers in agencies other than health care are welcome as members.

The Pastoral Care Allied Health Group holds regular regional and provincial meetings for administrative and professional purposes. Some educational opportunities are provided via the teleconferences. The local pastoral care committees frequently coordinate workshops and educational sessions in their respective areas. The group has built many bridges, including a working relationship with churches, with members of the health care structure of this province, with Queen's College, St. John's, with the Institute of Pastoral Training (IPT) for Atlantic Canada, and with the Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education (CAPPE).

While a small number of those who provide pastoral/spiritual care in health care facilities are "paid" employees in the public system, the greater number of chaplains, clergy and pastoral visitors are "unpaid" from public funds. The ministry of the churches in health care facilities over the years is outstanding. A debt of gratitude and appreciation is owed to the many church communities who have historically brought, and continue to bring, the healing and compassionate ministry of their faith to the poor, the sick, the infirm and the needy.

The pastoral/spiritual care movement is very active and rapidly growing in Newfoundland and Labrador. Similar to other such areas that are making an impact on the lives of our people, we too, must respond to the acute changes and challenges that now confront our people and our culture. Pastoral/spiritual care is expected to be part of this 'shift in reality' and to be in the front line of caring. The fundamental care that will be needed is that which Henri Nowen says is embodied in the old Anglo-Saxon word for care 'Kara,' that is 'to be with persons who are in need...' Caring is our challenge.