

## UNIVERSITY AND YOUNG ADULT CHAPLAIN Report to Diocesan Convention 2023

2023 has been a fruitful year for the University and Young Adult Chaplaincy in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh. Students, young adults, and young parents desire substantial human connection and interaction as much, if not *more*, than anything else. The young are *lonely* and *afraid*, and suffering *deeply* and *anonymously* as a result. As a Chaplain to this population, my priority is to fight this “relational poverty” that so many are experiencing.

When it comes to human interaction, the vast majority of young people in America seek the *personal*, the *authentic*, and the *organic*, the kind of relating that is shared amongst Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This demographic desires *friendship*, that particular kind of intimacy that can develop between people who are engaged in life together. This quality of relationship that Jesus died to unleash on the earth primarily happens *one-by-one*, and often with all kinds of fits and starts. It does not demand a “come to us” and “become part of what we’re doing” mentality, but a “go to them” and “become part of what God is already doing in their lives” mindset. This means not so much starting but *finding* groups; not designing events but *discovering* them; and *receiving* hospitality before offering it. Neither the group, the event, nor the action is the goal; it’s all about the *person*, each utterly unique ends in themselves, created to *know* and *be known*.

At its core, chaplaincy to the young in our present context consists in relating (as Jesus would if He were us) to *named persons in the midst of their lives*, lives to which Jesus has called them, in which He is already doing more than any of us could ever think or imagine. As a chaplain, I walk alongside the person to whom God calls me, no matter *who* they may be, paying attention to them, delighting in them, and gently inviting them to savor the “transcendent preciousness” infused throughout the ups and downs of this Gift we call “life.”

Practically speaking, a significant part of the Chaplaincy has been to “meet people where they are,” to work in and around their schedules and locations. Coffee shops, restaurants, campuses, job sites, homes, you name it: where people are, that’s where I try to be. This is how trust is built, the key component in every healthy relationship, especially where fear is prevalent. As a minister of the Gospel, I have to *earn* the right to invite people into the Life Jesus has made available to all by showing them that they *matter*, and that I genuinely care for them, simply because *they are alive*, wherever they are, whomever they may be, regardless of how they do or do not respond to me.

As of August 2023, I met with students, staff, faculty and/or young adults one-on-one 153 times, for a minimum of an hour each time. During that same time period we were able to host 55 dinners in our home for students and/or young adults, as well as an end of the semester gathering for students. We have also been able to host a number of people overnight that we’ve ministered to over the years who are no longer local but came to town to spend time with us. I’ve been able to attend several events on campus at the invitation and request of

students as well. Additionally, there are currently more than 15 young people around the Pittsburgh area (and beyond!) reading Dallas Willard's *Life without Lack* with me, a prolonged meditation on Psalm 23, and meeting with me monthly for discussion. Even more significant, however, is the access to my life that I've provided to those with whom I regularly invest my time, energy and attention. I make sure to communicate with a number of people daily, checking up on them, inquiring as to what they are thinking about, how they are feeling, and what's going on in their lives. Finally, multiple people who I have developed and maintain relationships with now support me financially in the effort to make sure this work continues and expands.

This is all to say that the Chaplaincy is *thriving*. I'm grateful for the opportunity to participate in this work, I'm encouraged about the opportunities that the Lord continues to open up, and I'm hopeful about this upcoming year.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Rev. Dan Isadore  
University and Young Adult Chaplain