Rev. Stephanie McClellan, the current United Church Chaplain at James Paton Memorial Regional Health Centre and Lakeside Homes, relates this story about part of her identity formation as Student Chaplain. Having just completed the first required level of Clinical Pastoral Education, she was hired as a weekend chaplain while still a student at Vancouver School of Theology.

Ron* was fourteen years old and battling cancer when I first met him. As the on-call chaplain at Children and Women's hospital in Vancouver, BC, I had been paged to his bedside on a Saturday evening at 6:00 PM. He was too weak to take crucial kidney dialysis. He hadn't spoken or moved all day and the medical team was sure he wouldn't make it through the night. When his mother leaned over his bedside and explained that I was the chaplain and that I was there to see him, he sat bolt upright and exclaimed, "Oh Man! I'm worse than I thought!" After which he immediately dropped back onto his bed and lay semi-conscious again.

One month later, I was carrying the pager, when a call came in Saturday at 6:00 PM. I was surprised to respond for Ron's family again. It was quite clear that Ron's condition had deteriorated beyond recovery this time. When I arrived, a large gathering of family was milling about in Ron's room. There was very little room to move or even breathe, so I asked Ron's mom what she most needed at this time. As Ron struggled for each breath, Carol needed time alone to say good bye to her son. As I herded the other family members out of the room and stepped out myself, attempting to close the door behind me, Carol called out, "Stephanie, where are you going?"

Startled I replied, "I'm giving you private time with your son." "I didn't mean you! You have to stay within sight!" she said with some shock. So I re-entered the room and closed the door moving to the foot of the bed where after a mother's very heartbroken, tearful goodbye, I proclaimed a benediction and Ron died. After I informed the family and worked through initial steps in funeral planning, Carol took me aside. "I don't know if you understand what went on in
there, but when I was going through the worst moment of my life, I needed to know that God was present and you, as Chaplain, conveyed that to me."
The new, young chaplain was truly grateful for this mother, who in the midst of her own personal tragedy, was able to help define the role and responsibility of the chaplain in a medical facility.

Spending much time on the other side of the hospital bed as well, Rev. Stephanie also recognized a similar role for the chaplains that she had met, but she wasn't nearly as eloquent as Carol. Rev. Stephanie remembers that "the presence of a Hospital Chaplain at my bedside during times of illness, isolation and uncertainty, has often served to remind me that in the greatest trials of my life God has not abandoned me."

In today’s Gospel lesson, Christ speaks to the disciples, and to us, during our struggles and tears saying, "Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy... I tell you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

As Chaplains carry the hope of peace and courage promised by the Christ they represent, they serve in many institutions. Hospital chaplains likely come readily to mind, but we also have chaplains that serve in University settings and at Her Majesty's Penitentiary. In these institutions, Chaplains help clients draw on their spiritual resources as part of the transition, treatment, recovery or correctional plan.

Students who have left home to attend university, often find the transition difficult as they seek out new friendships and support networks. Being away from family and friends, first year can be a lonely time marked by homesickness and tears. It can also be a time of tearing down carefully constructed religious beliefs. When traditional faith is challenged by new scientific and psychological theories, students experience a loss of the “familiar, borrowed” faith of their families and communities and they begin a rebuilding process of “owning” their beliefs. Beliefs and faith that will help them to overcome the troubles and trials of this world as they take heart, believing in Christ who has overcome the world. The University Chaplaincy Program at MUN and any other university setting, offers fellowship within a supportive and safe environment to
connect with others who have similar foundations of faith making the campus a friendlier and less intimidating place. A place where faith can grow and flourish amidst the newness of life and the excitement of learning.

Perhaps you saw Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn in the 1995 movie "Dead Man Walking". It serves as a vivid picture of the supportive nature of Chaplains in a correctional institution. Though we, in Canada do not have criminals facing the death penalty, in her role as a chaplain to Sean's character, Susan reflects to the prisoner a God of second chances. Without removing the responsibility for the crime that landed him in the situation, Susan continues to uphold an image of God as merciful, full of grace and forgiving. This God of hope who has overcome the fears and troubles of this world offers peace and love to all of us; you and me and even those whom we would judge to be hopeless and helpless. Watching the news, you see some of the challenges that inmates face within our current justice system. The Chaplain, walks with those who are incarcerated, as they attempt to sort out their lives and begin again.

In all settings, the Chaplain becomes a part of the team, offering care to clients, staff and families in all the circumstances of life. Chaplains carry the image of God, the peace of Christ, with them into the most trying and difficult situations. Not because of their many years of specialized education. Not because of their lofty words and applicable prayers. Not because of their superior listening skills and appropriate answers to tough questions. Not because of their superhuman abilities to comfort the lost and heal broken spirits. Instead, knowing themselves to be hurting and imperfect ambassadors of Christ, Chaplains seek to represent, sometimes by presence alone, the God who listens, comforts, saves and heals. To those who need care and to those who offer it, Christ encourages all saying, “in me, you will have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world!” We, with Christ, will conquer our fears and face the future with peace. May it be so!

* Names have been changed
Call to Worship

(Ali Newell)

L: Gather us, O God
P: and we will know your life that makes us one.
L: Gather us, O God
P: and we will celebrate our variety and uniqueness
L: Gather us, O God
P: and we will share the pain of our brokenness
L: Gather us, O God
P: and we will share the gifts of your Spirit
L: Trinity of love bind us as one
P: That our brokenness be healed by you;
    That our fears be held by you;
    That our gifts be used by you;
    That our lives be offered to you;
So that the world believes. Amen

Opening Prayer (Unison)

Eternal God, we come to you with hungry hearts, waiting to be filled: with a sense of
your presence; with the touch of your Spirit; with new energy for service. Come to us, we
pray. Be with us. Touch us. Empower us as your people, that we might worship you, and
act in the world for Jesus’ sake. Amen

Hymn

Prayer of Confession

God of grace, we come to you as a people of faith recognizing that in the business and
busyness of our lives we often fail to live out that faith. We see the need around us - the ill, the
housebound, the lonely, the lost - and we turn our faces away. We fail to listen; to the clanging
cacophony of institutionalized poverty and illness; to the still small voice that speaks of the
poverty and illness within our own souls. Forgive us, merciful God, for failing to know ‘love’
as a word of action - for failing to act in love and faith toward others, and towards ourselves.
Help us, Loving one, to be better at being the truest version of ourselves and a truer reflection of
you.

Assurance of God’s Forgiveness

Friends, the Good News is this: our God created each of us as a reflection of the Holy.
Even in our least perfect moments the Divine lives in us. We are loved, no matter what.

Prayer of Illumination

O God, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the scriptures
are read and your Word is proclaimed, we may hear what you are saying to us today. Amen
Scripture Readings
   Joshua 1: 6 - 9
   Psalm 91
   Colossians 1: 9 - 12
   John 16: 22 - 33

Sermon

Hymn

Prayers of the People
Healing God, Great Physician,
Bless all who share in your pastoral ministry and those who support them,
All who minister to the sick and lonely,
To the tired and depressed,
To those in pain,
To those who suffer the anguish of loss and bereavement.
Give all pastoral workers your spirit of compassion
So they may fearlessly enter places of pain,
To be with others in suffering with a presence that comforts, heals.
Help pastoral workers
In accepting their own brokenness to share in the brokenness of others;
In acknowledging their own needs for healing to become for others,
Wounded healers;
In experiencing the depths of your love,
To be witnesses of that love for those
Who do not yet know it or find it hard to accept.
Help all pastoral workers
To know daily their dependency on you,
And to experience the rich blessing of a Christian community of healers,
A community of faith and love,
Who support one another in ministry, and who are a sign and hope of
your presence among them.
-- © Sr. Simone Roach, CSM, Catholic Health Association of Canada,
Lift Up Your Hearts, pp. 44-45

Lord’s Prayer

Minute for Mission
Written by: Beverly Fifield of Wesleyville, NL

I didn’t know that the United Church M&S Fund enabled the work of angels until about 2 years ago. On December 16, 2007, my husband and I were living and working in Black Lake, Saskatchewan, an Indian reserve on the NWT border. My husband became seriously ill and was
taken to a small hospital in Stony Rapids, where he remained for the night and most of the next day, clinging to his life. By the time he was sent out on a Medi-Vac flight, I had been heavily medicated and was put on another flight to Saskatoon. I have no recollection of getting on that flight or of any details from the 3½ hour flight.

My first foggy memories past this is seeing an angel standing on the tarmac in Saskatoon. I assume the flight was redirected away from the main terminal because of my unresponsive condition, this allowed this lady I had never seen before to come toward me with open arms as I was led off the plane.

At this point I had no idea which hospital my husband had been taken to. All I was suddenly aware of was that I was almost completely dependent on this lady standing before me. A feeling of peace come over me and I realized that my husband’s life was quickly drawing to an end but that I was going to be okay despite the fact that I was in a strange city with no family or friends around me. I wasn’t alone...God and my husband had sent me an angel in the form of a University Chaplain form University Hospital....an angel to watch over me.

The chaplain brought me to the hospital, literally fed me a sandwich and carefully rubbed lip balm onto my badly chapped lips caused by the -50 C temperatures I had just come from. We spent some time with my husband who was on life support and then she brought me to a hostel of the night. Early the following morning I was back to the hospital and she was there waiting for me...the time had come for me to sign papers to take my husband off life support...there was nothing more that could be done. She said prayers with my husband and I and did her best to keep me calm and reassured me that God was with both as I said my final goodbyes.

Following my husband’s passing she brought me to a hotel, called to check on me during the night and promised to be there in the morning to bring me to the airport to start my journey back to Newfoundland. She kept in contact with my family back home even after I returned back home.

I was not aware that the United Church M&S Fund supported the Chaplaincy Program, I guess I just assumed it was funded some other way. I can assure you that I will never forget the fact now and will definitely never forget the angel that helped me through what has been, up to this point, the most difficult time of my life. I will always be grateful and I now have a different outlook on the M&S fund...hospital chaplaincy is only one small part of the M&S Fund...but to me it is a part that is and always will be very dear to my heart. So, you see, the United Church M&S fund does enable the work of angels.

Offering
Caring God, may we offer not only our material gifts, but our whole selves to you, and to all those who need our support in the quest for strength and wholeness. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Hymn

Benediction and Blessing

May your pain give birth to hope.
May you find that dark clouds can bring the rain of life and growth. May you know yourself loved and
cherished by the glorious God who walks beside you.
And may the blessing of God, be with you always.-- Duncan L. Tuck, 600 Blessings and Prayers from Around the World compiled by Geoffrey Duncan, p. 304

Possible Hymn Selection

Voices United
#665 “Pass Me not of Gentle Saviour”
#672 “Take time to be Holy”
#288 ‘Great is Thy Faithfulness”
#660 “How Firm a Foundation”
#626 “I heard the Voice of Jesus Say”
#657 “He Leadeth Me
#595 “We are Pilgrims”
#684 “Make me a Channel of your Peace”
#664 “What a Friend we have in Jesus”

Many of the hymns in the possible selections for Voices United may also be found in other Hymn Books.

More Voices

Breath of God, Breath of Peace
A song must Rise
God of the Bible