

Clinical Pastoral Education



Sydney
Adventist
Hospital

A Message of Reflection

Early in my ministry, an elderly lady was telling me a story that I could not understand. She was deep in dementia and kept switching between her native tongue and English. Staff told me that she often became angry during visits, and I wondered why. Maybe my lack of comprehension frustrated her. I decided to switch my focus from her words to the emotions on her face and in her voice. I mirrored them as best I could. She focused intently on my face, and I watched as her agitation diminished and she began to smile, then greeted her husband cheerfully as he entered the room.

As I drove home, I began to wonder what had happened. There had been connection without conversation. As I reflected over experiences of connection in my life it dawned on me that this was what ministry is, it is all about relationships. At university we were taught to preach and teach, but not to listen deeply and connect with other human beings.

Many years later I was introduced to Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). I had never aspired to be a chaplain, but I was drawn to the process of reflection on interactions and exploring how connection enabled ministry. From my early training I surmised that hospital visiting consisted of not much more than sharing a Scripture to cheer the person up and praying for the person and leaving – leaving many wondering, lonely, longing to share their story and reflect on their journey.

CPE took the focus away from the “package” that I had expected to deliver and allowed the person to move into a hospitable space of openness to their story, their emotions and their wondering how this event fitted into their life story.

Now that hospitable space is partly created by the way I enter a room and interact, and it is also a product of my internal world. The other part is created by the person I am visiting, and the way we two as human beings shape the space between us. This leads to a deeper dive into the various and amazing ways in which human beings connect with each other and how God can use these when supposedly remaining anonymous. In the process I occasionally wondered how life and ministry might have been different if my new CPE graduate self had known some of this. The journey of supervision has allowed me to share this process.

CPE allows the participants the gift of time and a supportive group to reflect on their ministry. To revisit ministry interaction and ponder the parts of it that are puzzling, then to share it with the group as a major part of the learning process. To see the interactive event through many pairs of eyes brings new perspectives. Thinking about what the person you visited needs, keeps the focus on listening carefully and not making assumptions and judgements. It's also important to look at the theological issues that arise out of these interactions. Every visit is a cross-cultural event, as there are many layers of differences in outlook and belief. It is really important for a chaplain to explore how those differences impact their ministry. Beyond different belief systems and different personality traits, is a human being whose heart is longing to be heard.

Supporting the CPE process is an exploration of literature and theory centred around pastoral care. This enables students to explore their own field more deeply and give them more language around the art of spiritual care.

The CPE journey parallels in some ways the process of visiting people in crisis. We don't come as 'fixers' of people to cheer the patients up, we come, as Alan Wolfelt describes it, as companions.

“Companioning is about going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.”

Eleven Tenets of Companioning the Bereaved, Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., 2019.

If we are prepared to enter the wilderness with another person, it is a sign to them that this is not a God forsaken place – God is prepared to send a representative into that space and be there in the mess.

In CPE, we as a group venture into the wilderness of exploration of self and others in relationship, to accompany each other as we grow in the mess. It is a space that lends itself to openness and growth, rather than competition and judgement. It is a challenging process, and most participants will say that it has stretched them, but they will also say that it has nurtured and deepened their ministry and personal journey. The process is not just for aspiring chaplains, but also for people who are involved in the many and varied aspects of ministry.

Cheryll Bird
San CPE Director



Cheryll Bird is a Clinical Pastoral Educator and the San CPE Centre Director.

Her background is in parish ministry in Australia and New Zealand. Cheryll began CPE around 2000, at Rozelle Hospital – a large state psychiatric hospital. After completing 4 units of CPE, as well as a Master of Ministry, Cheryll began training as a CPE Supervisor, initially at St Vincent's Hospital. It was during this time that Cheryll qualified as a Clinical Pastoral Supervisor and completed an MA in Pastoral Supervision, then as a Clinical Pastoral Educator in 2017.

Cheryll also teaches undergraduate CPE at Avondale University, NSW.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

History

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) began with Anton Boisen working with theology students at Worcester State Hospital, Massachusetts, USA from 1924. After their ward work, they met in clinical seminars to reflect on their ministry. The movement grew to what is now an internationally recognised programme for educating chaplains, clergy, medical staff, and allied health workers.

What is CPE?

CPE is an adult learning model based on the student's own learning goals and capacity to seek out resources they need for the achievement of these goals.

CPE is based on an Action Reflection Model – where students reflect on singular events in their ministry and explore the social, cultural, environmental, spiritual needs and theological issues.

Students assess their pastoral strengths and weaknesses and develop learning goals through:

- Developing professional competence
- Growing in self-awareness
- Developing theological understanding, and
- Developing awareness of their pastoral identity.



“My name is Lucy Choong. I am a registered nurse and a hospital Chaplain. I have worked as a registered nurse in hospital critical care areas and health management for almost four decades.

I am a practicing Christian, and it was during serving at my local church that my Pastor suggested I enrol as a Spiritual Care Volunteer at the SAN Hospital. Whilst serving as a volunteer I was invited to apply to undertake a course in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). I completed the course and have since been employed as a hospital Chaplain on a casual basis.

Nursing enabled me to meet, support and connect with patients and their families from all walks of life, mainly on a clinical level. However, CPE taught me the value of pastoral conversations and relational connections in the support of patients and their families. I learned the boundaries of the pastoral role and how to appreciate and enhance my pastoral identity. I learned under the care of CPE Supervision (individual and group settings) how to utilise active listening skills, spiritual assessment and verbatim writing following pastoral conversations in a hospital environment. Subsequently, with the supportive and professional skills of the CPE Supervisors, I learned to review these pastoral conversations using an action-reflection method, prayer and theological reflection to unpack and learn from these interactions.

I found how helpful it was to utilise a variety of methods of theological reflection, which in turn helped me to grow in my understanding of how to assist patients who wished to reflect on their life experiences in a safe space, where they could confidentially explore their spirituality and sources of hope and move forward.”

Lucy Choong

CPE at Sydney Adventist Hospital

Each year, Sydney Adventist Hospital, fondly known as the San, offers two Clinical Pastoral Education courses. Currently, each course is structured to include 150 clinical hours, 80 group hours, 10 individual supervision hours and 160 hours of reflection and writing. A total of 400 hours of learning.

SAN CPE is a centre of the New South Wales College of Clinical Pastoral Education. The college accredits supervisors, offers training programs and issues certificates. The college is a member institute of the Sydney College of Divinity and as such, is able to provide course work that can be used towards a Masters degree in Chaplaincy, or stand alone as an internally recognised award. Three units of CPE make up half of the degree, as each unit is an 18 credit point subject.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is a different way of learning. It grew out of a movement in education where case studies began to be seen as a valuable learning tool. CPE offers both theoretical and practical learning, that explores the relational dynamic, social, cultural, environmental and spiritual background to the conversation.

Clinical Pastoral Education is an adult learning model that is based on the student's own learning goals and capacity to seek out the resources they need for the achievement of these goals. Students assess their pastoral strengths and weaknesses and develop learning goals and strategies to achieve those goals.

Learning is done in a small supportive group, where ministry experiences are presented, and together the group explores the dynamic and possibilities that were present in the conversation. From this, the student is able to formulate different strategies and possibilities in ministry to assist the person in other related situations. Individual supervision is also a part of the course and allows for a more personalised exploration of ministry events.

Topics covered in the course include empathetic listening skills, grief and loss, spiritual assessment, theological reflection, ethical and cultural issues and other topics that arise within the group in the course of study.

What is Supervision?

Supervision provides students with an opportunity to reflect upon, explore and learn from their experience of providing pastoral care. The student, the supervisor and the peer group must be committed to co-creating a safe and facilitative space where students' work can be discussed and evaluated. For Supervision to be most effective their needs to be authenticity, respect and positive mutual investment in, or openness to learning.

Course 1 – Extended Foundational Unit

The course is run in the SAN CPE Centre at the Sydney Adventist Hospital. The course runs from March through to November, with the group meeting for 2 days a month. Ministry practicum can be undertaken in normal ministry, or as part of a hospital or aged care team.

Course 2 – Online Extended Foundational Unit

This course is specially designed for applicants already involved in Chaplaincy or Ministry, who live in remote areas that do not offer CPE courses. The group meets once a week on Zoom or Skype and individual hours are also conducted on Zoom or Skype by mutual arrangement. Practicum hours are undertaken within your current ministry employment. This group roughly follows the Academic Calendar, which allows for a mid-year break.



“As a minister I started out unaware of the things I did that got in the way of being effective in the work God had called me to. The CPE program taught me how to engage myself in order to be able to reach into deeper conversations with others in a way that is helpful to them. I have learned to be open to seeking where I need to be accountable for my own learning. I am now able to listen for the deeper themes that open the conversations into new learning. Every aspect of my life has changed for the better through reflecting in an experiential learning process.

My journey into supervisory training arose out of the growth I have experienced through CPE. Many years of spiritual care in a health care setting has led me to want to do more with what I have learned through reflective processing. I value helping others in ministry see that their life has many hidden aspects that can be explored for the willing participant. God shows himself through our actions, if these are left unexplored, we can misrepresent Him and His ways. I want to help others to live to the potential that God sees in them.”

Pastor Kenn Duke

CPE at the San Centre

Clinical Pastoral Education at the SAN CPE Centre is a joint venture between Adventist Health Care Ltd (AHCL), trading as Sydney Adventist Hospital and the New South Wales College of Clinical Pastoral Education (NSWCCPE).

The CPE units offered at the SAN CPE Centre are accredited through the NSWCCPE, ensuring that the qualification in pastoral care is internationally recognised.

The NSW College of Clinical Pastoral Education was established in 1963 and sets the standards for Clinical Pastoral Education programmes, CPE Centres and Supervisors in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

The College awards CPE Certificates to students who successfully complete all components of the programme.



“CPE has enriched my ministry through self-reflection and peer group sessions which have strengthened my pastoral care methods by giving me clinical language around my delivery of pastoral care within my school chaplaincy and church pastoral practice.

As someone who is a better pastoral care practitioner because of my CPE journey, I desire to see all who I oversee in school chaplaincy move through the experience of deep understanding and knowledge of what best practice looks like.

I highly recommend this Clinical Pastoral Education Course for all who want to go on a deeper and profound experience of understanding and reflection on their own pastoral care practices as it relates to the different areas of ministry that God has called them to.”

Pastor Richie Reid
Spiritual Care for Adventist Schools
Greater Sydney



“CPE nourished my heart and mind through transformative learning, academic rigour, theological reflection, peer support, and collaborative engagement. The journey was filled with unexpected self-exploration, self-discovery, and self-awareness both personally and professionally; thus, giving me confidence in who I am, and the work God has called me to do. What a privilege it is to work in God's sacred spaces.

Thank you, CPE for developing tools in my toolbox that enables me to feel better equipped and enlightened as I continue the work as a spiritual care practitioner.”

Dr Drene Somasundram

San Clinical Pastoral Education Application Form

Personal Details

Please complete all sections and scan this page, then email with supporting documents to the address below.

Title: Mr / Mrs / Ms (please circle) or Other (please specify) _____

Surname: _____

Given Names: _____

Preferred Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Home Phone: _____ Mobile Phone: _____

Email: _____

Faith Community You Represent: _____

Please state any medical condition (eg. severe asthma, type 1 diabetes, epilepsy, anaphylaxis (or other known allergy), medication use, disability, or learning need)

I am at risk of an anaphylactic reaction. I carry an adrenaline auto-injector, eg. EpiPen and/or relevant ASCIA Action Plan (please tick if applicable)

Emergency Contact Name: _____

Relationship to You: _____ Phone: _____

I fully understand that acceptance into the Clinical Pastoral Education program means that I will adhere to and observe the policies, procedures and protocols of Adventist Healthcare Limited.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please email your completed application form to spiritualcare@sah.org.au or sancpe@cpensw.com for consideration. We look forward to meeting you in the interview process

Education Background, Work History & Documents

Please attach the following with your application:

1. Your Curriculum Vitae detailing your education background and work history. This should include previous CPE experience (with End of Unit Reflection and supervisor's evaluation).
2. An account of your life including important events, people who are significant to you and the impact these events have had on your emotional and spiritual development. (This should be at least 2 pages).
3. Describe your learning style.
4. Provide an account of an incident in which you were called to help someone, including the nature of the request, your assessment of the other's need, what you did and your evaluation of your role
5. What are your goals and how will CPE be used to meet your goals in pastoral and Spiritual care?
6. Please provide two written references, one from a faith group leader and one from someone who has known you for more than two years, indicating your suitability for pastoral care and your capacity for self-reflection.
7. Please provide a copy of your Working with Children Check certificate.
8. Please provide a copy of your vaccination history.
9. If there are any other comments or questions you may have, please submit them along with your application form.



Application Checklist

- 1. Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- 2. Autobiographical Reflection
- 3. Your Learning Style
- 4. An Incident Reflection
- 5. Your Goals in Relation to CPE
- 6. Two Letters of Reference
- 7. Working with Children Check (WWCC)
- 8. Vaccination History
- 9. Any other comments



Sydney Adventist Hospital



For further information contact:

The San CPE Centre

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