

Good But Not Religious (GBNR)

NOVEMBER 2018 - A monthly update on Keith Martin's work as a nonreligious chaplain and educator at U. Waterloo, U. Guelph and online

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Keith Martin and spirituality

Devan Munn
Reporter

Many students might be shocked to find out that there is a non-religious chaplain at the University. Keith Martin has been that person for the last four years. Since imprint did their initial profile on Martin lots has changed in his chaplaincy. I sat down with him to find out more about his unique role as the 'chaplain to the none's,' what he offers students, and his views on the spiritual but not religious movement.

The primary goal of his chaplaincy remains the same: "Help students keep good values; because that is what spirituality is about." He especially wants to be a bridge to students who may be leaving or entering a faith-based or atheistic paradigm. He wants to be a "connecting point for people leaving either religion or atheism who are trying to find something

with spirituality or goodness." Martin thinks that around half the campus population might fall into the 'none' category and hopes his chaplaincy work can be a safe place to explore what it means to be spiritual but not religious.

Martin has grown increasingly concerned with the religious and political tribalism he has seen both in Canada and the United States. "There are forces at work pulling us back into tribalism; I want to be a voice saying resist that, be somebody that has a worldview that works for you and enter into respectful dialogue if you differ."

That is why he says his chaplaincy is not anti-theist. He says atheism is about what you don't believe in not what you do. However, there might be respectful critiques of theism in his groups. More central to Martin is ensuring students can find a values-based paradigm in which they can flourish.

Martin has had to adapt his chaplaincy and outreach efforts to

help students grow in their value systems. Most students are drawn to goodness "whether spiritual or not," he said. He is increasingly emphasizing what it means to have good values, without necessarily emphasizing 'spirituality,' which he believes can have negative connotations, especially among younger people.

He also says his chaplaincy is firmly rooted in the idea of community, which he believes is more important than ever to offset student loneliness, mental health, and the dark side of social media.

His chaplaincy consists of several groups, as well as his office hours. At 'Taste of Oasis,' a small group gathers to view a film, hear a speaker, and discuss amongst themselves. 'Taste of Oasis' has been so popular that they have carried the conversations over into "Conversations That Matter." He also has weekly office hours on Tuesday from 1-5 where people can come for one-on-one talks.

His work on campus has also

spilled over into his writing and other endeavors. He has written a follow up to his book 'seismic shift,' a fictionalized account by the same name that is based on a character attempting to reconcile a loving God with the horrors of the Rwandan genocide.

He has also started a website to spread the 'good but not religious,' idea, and also does non-religious invocations.

He continues to find his work very rewarding. "I am here for all the students who don't find faith works." But he continues to maintain, "Every student has spiritual needs," for "purpose, meaning, and identity." "I continue to feel when a student shares where they are, just seeing what the next steps for them is really rewarding."

For more information about Martin, his chaplaincy, new book, and events you can visit: <http://goodbutnotreligious.ca/chaplain.php> or his UW profile at <https://uwaterloo.ca/chaplain/people->

profiles/keith-martin. He can be reached directly at 519-372-4642 or keith.martin@uwaterloo.ca.



Chaplain Keith Martin

Highlights of Keith's campus work in October were A Taste of Oasis at U. of Guelph with a TED-like talk on "How Do We Know What We Know?" by career coach Thomas Rauchenstein; and two A Taste of Oasis events at U. of Waterloo on the importance of nonreligious community for building values, with TED-like talks via YouTube by Bart Campolo and Gretta Vosper.

A Taste of Oasis

Oasis is a network of communities of compassion and reason for nonreligious people

For the core values of Oasis, visit www.peoplearemoreimportant.org

Music Refreshments
Inspiring TED-like talk
Conversations that matter
Friendship

THIRD THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH
5:30 - 7 PM
KEG LOUNGE, BRASS TAPS, University Centre
SEPT. 20, OCT. 18, NOV. 15, 2018, FEB. 14, MAR. 21, 2019

SBNR
Guelph

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SBNRGUELPH

Oct. 18, 2018
TED-like Talk: Thomas Rauchenstein (career coach)
"How Do We Know What We Know?"

Keith met with at least 13 students, staff and alumni during drop-in hours, and several more at a display table day at UG. For more information and photos of his campus work, see www.facebook.com/SBNRWaterloo and www.facebook.com/SBNRGuelph.

Keith has launched a fundraising page at patreon.com/goodbutnotreligious, a membership platform for artists and creators. If you see value in what he is doing and creating, please consider becoming a patron and supporting him—even at \$1/month. Your support, no matter how small, will encourage others to become patrons!