Westmont College
Campus Pastor’s Office External Review
Spring 2010
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I. Introduction

On Monday February 8th and Tuesday, February 9th, 2010, our team of four conducted an on-site review of the Campus Pastor’s Office, having received in advance a well-prepared notebook with information on and survey feedback about this Office at Westmont College.

The Charge

In a letter dated January 16, 2010, Campus Pastor Ben Patterson and Jane Higa (VP for Student Life/Dean of Students) set forth the purposes of the review that provided helpful parameters for our report.

- To review the mission and goals of the Campus Pastor’s Office and evaluate the progress on said mission through the programs of the department.
- To assess the progress being made in creating an environment that is conducive for students to grow and flourish in their own faith journey, their understanding of how Christians have worshipped throughout history, and their understanding of the church in the world today.
- To identify exemplary aspects of our program and services and to highlight those areas that need to be strengthened.
- To provide insight into the continued development of a Chapel program all within the context of the Christian liberal arts mission of the college through the evaluation of the grounding statements.
- To help us think through the challenge of better communicating the importance of appropriate Chapel behavior.”

Our General Assessment

There are and will always be competing perspectives and points of view at any campus regarding the programming and purposes of chapels and spiritual life. There will also be much room for improvement, given the expansive faith mission of many Christian colleges and the diversity of needs in those communities. With regard to these diverse perspectives and needs at Westmont, we make several recommendations later in the report that we think are important for the Office and the College to consider. However, we were pleased to find that the Campus Pastor’s Office and its programs are sound, highly valued by the community, emerging from a thoughtful and coherent vision, and providing in its Chapels and through its campus pastor a solid, spiritual center for a Christian liberal arts college whose mission is “to assist men and women toward a balance of rigorous intellectual competence, healthy personal development, and strong Christian commitments.”
**Report Structure**

Based upon the charges above, we present the following structure for the report:

- **The Themes** section of the review is the longest, and presents those issues that we noticed to be recurrent or conspicuous in the interviews and written feedback. These themes may be framed in terms of questions or tensions, and will sometimes include specific comments or quotations that seem to capture the matter well. We will return to some of these themes later in the report in the **Commendations** and **Recommendations** sections. However, this **Themes** section aims more narrowly at providing additional information and observations that may help the Office and the College discern how the **Grounding Statements** and other hopes for spiritual or faith development are playing out in the lives and perceptions of the campus community.

- **The Commendations** section of the report points to those areas where we think the Campus Pastor’s Office has been particularly effective, according to what we have discerned from the interviews and written feedback. We hope that these commendations loom large, motivating the CPO and the College to affirm, protect and build upon these strengths.

- **The Recommendations** section of the report identifies where the Office or the College may not be meeting adequately their goals and expectations, or where they can enhance them. Here, we provide specific suggestions for improvement. Some of these recommendations will fall clearly within the purview of the CPO. However, some may need to be addressed by other departments or divisions of the College in partnership with the CPO.

- The final **Challenges** section describes some of the conditions, limits and obstacles the CPO and the College will have to keep in mind as they consider the report’s recommendations.

- **An Appendix** provides the “Campus Pastor’s Office Grounding Statements” referred to several times in the report.

**Note:** *This review may be unique among college departmental reviews in so far as it focuses on the department head—-the campus pastor--who is closely associated by the community with the work of the CPO. The reasons for this are obvious:*

1) The staff of the CPO is small, with one designated pastor.

2) Chapel is the main program of the Office, and the campus pastor is perceived as chiefly responsible for it.

3) The campus pastor speaks frequently at chapels and facilitates nearly all of them.

This makes the review somewhat different from, say, a review of “campus ministries” or of a “department of spiritual life” at other schools, both of which might include reviews not only of chapel and campus pastors, but outreach, discipleship, other related programs, and their staffs.
The Interviews and Surveys

Over the two days, our team interviewed the following groups and individuals (with the approximate number of participants in parentheses):

- Student Focus Group (3)
- Catholic Students Focus Group (3)
- The Campus Pastor’s Office staff individually (4)
- The Campus Pastor and his staff together (5)
- The Dean’s Council (5)
- Alumni and Parent Relations (2)
- The Coordinator of Student Ministries and Missions
- Director of First Year Experience
- Faculty Focus Group (6)
- WCSA (10)
- Capax Dei discipleship (1)
- Worship team focus group (8)
- Local Pastors (2)
- Student Development Associate Deans individually (2)
- Resident Directors (6)
- Acting Provost
- Associate Director of Admissions
- VP for Advancement
- College President
- Director of Campus Life
- Director of Intercultural Programs

Survey feedback came from:

- Faculty (about 55 responses)
- Staff (about 63 responses)
- Students (347 responses)
Topics and Themes

Chapel Speakers and Topics

Of course, given that Chapel is the largest and most visible program from the Campus Pastor’s Office, chapel speakers and topics came up frequently in written and interview feedback. While suggestions and desires regarding chapels are often “all over the map,” as one CPO staffer put it, we discerned these themes listed below. Because these sections deal with speakers and instruction, they probably connect best with Grounding Statements #3, #5, #6, #11 and #12 (see the Appendix), which have to do with educating for justice, neighbor love, global perspectives, challenging ethical and moral issues, and foundational understandings of the faith.

• Students interviewed and those providing feedback desired (in the words of one student) a more “relational connection” with speakers. This seemed to mean, in some cases, speakers and topics that connected more explicitly with their experience and that spoke to their struggles.

• Students spoke favorably of speakers who were “storytellers” (as opposed to “lecturers”), especially those who had stories to tell of faith in the midst of trial.

• Students like to hear speakers that address current social and cultural issues (Father Boyle’s message was cited by one student).

• Some WCSA members said that several speakers were “too light”—not collegiate enough. They wanted to hear more faculty speakers. They added that messages focusing on marriage were too frequent, as were speakers who played on guilt, and that that there could be a more frequent focus on evangelism.

• Some of the written feedback from students registered some difficulty in connecting with Ben’s messages, complaining chiefly that they sometimes “got lost” in following him or that he didn’t speak to their experiences (what some called “out of touch”).

• At the same time, a few interviewed students, as well as faculty and staff generally, appreciated Ben’s teaching for its thoughtfulness and intelligence. Although people acknowledged that Ben told stories, he was associated by some with the ‘lecturers.’ One person suggested it was because Ben was less “topical.” Another student may have echoed this preference for topical messages by saying that she did connect with the seven deadly sins series precisely because it was more topical than his City of God series. We did find hints of developmental differences, with some younger students finding Ben less relevant, and some older students really appreciating (even “loving”) him and his messages.

• One senior administrator who appreciated the ‘body’ of Ben’s messages and his focus on more classical theology, said that the campus pastor is at a distinct disadvantage as the in-house speaker, who will be compared with those who come in for just a single chapel.

• From the point of view of two local pastors, Westmont provides a much wider range of speakers than the local church can provide (Tada and Piper were mentioned, in particular), and they appreciated this.
Music in Worship

Here, too, topics and themes emerged in the interviews and written feedback that are relevant to Grounding Statement #9, “Increase familiarity with, and appreciation of, the contribution of the range of Christian church traditions, worship styles, and outreach to the church’s journey of faith.”

- Worship, by which students seem to mean worship-in-music, was perhaps the most oft-cited single thing students appreciated about chapels, according to the survey feedback.
- One of the striking student survey outcomes, however, was that 42% of the students confessed that they could not worship when they did not like the music. This suggests an opportunity to instruct students in how we worship when we do not connect with a tradition, genre, or even when we “don’t feel like it.”
- From the Office staff, we learned that 70-90% of the songs played come from student suggestions, usually communicated on the back of the chapel card. (One of the students we interviewed appreciated this system, but was disappointed that her recommendation for Matt Maher songs was not followed.)

Other Chapel Themes

- Some concern was raised among CPO staff members that the student-led Vespers service needed oversight because, according to one, “private revelation without pastoral care can lead to some crazy things.”
- Several Westmont employees, faculty and alumni said that chapel had gotten better and better over the years, one saying that it was more “vibrant and alive.”
- An officer in alumni relations we spoke to noted that those coming back for Homecoming days routinely make sure that they get to campus early enough for chapels, suggesting that they look back on that experience fondly.
- Some students felt that chapels were too repetitive in their set-up, structure, and musical styles.
- Some staff and faculty did wonder at what more the Campus Pastor’s Office could do in encouraging students to attend and be involved in local churches.

Connections with the Curricular

This theme arose primarily from faculty, who wanted to see Chapels and the Campus Pastor’s Office connect more with the academic side of the College. Comments here might be relevant to Grounding Statements #1, “Gain and appreciation for the integrations of faith and learning”; #6 Become more global in your thinking and perspective; #7 Understand that all of life is worship and not an event”; and #12 Encourage thoughtful and probing questions about the religious, ethical and moral challenges we face in the world.

- There is the impression among some faculty interviewed and surveyed that chapel speakers are weighted toward Christian ministry professionals rather than other kinds of professionals. The sense was that a liberal arts university ought to be more robust in modeling that all vocations can be ministries, and that chapel should model this as well.
• Related to this, some faculty and members of the WCSA wanted to see more continuity between chapels and classes. They thought there ought to be more references in chapel to learning, activities and events on the academic side of the house.
• One executive administrator balanced some of these thoughts by acknowledging that chapels that pleased academics more might not always please students as much.
• Both faculty and chapel staff wanted there to be a greater understanding of “why we do chapels” at the college, suggesting that this is still not clear to many on the campus.
• Most faculty we spoke to confessed they did not know this year’s theme, although some were aware of the topics Ben had preached on in the past (one or two among those we talked to did know that this year focused on “The City of God”)
• The faculty who were interviewed agreed that the campus pastor could interact more with faculty in meetings, possibly to help explain the purposes of chapel, but also with conversation running the other way, allowing faculty to speak about the implications of their academic work and instruction for chapel, as well as the integration of faith and learning.
• Generally, while faculty did not feel the need to be pastored by Ben (because they have pastoral care at their church), they agreed that building stronger relationships between the faculty and the campus pastor would be fruitful.
• Some faculty interviewed thought that faculty themselves needed to rethink their reasons for not attending chapels and to consider how attending them might help achieve a better sense of community.
• Questions about whether chapels, their frequency and the requirement discouraged local church attendance also came up in the faculty interviews.
• Survey feedback suggested an appreciation among faculty for Ben’s teaching that brought serious theology to chapels.

**Spiritual Development Programming**

More developed programming in the area of spiritual development was a recurrent theme that connects to Grounding Statements #8 Develop a personal spiritual journey through an understanding of the Bible and the practice of spiritual disciplines; #3 Hear the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith: creator, redeemer, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, salvation and live a Holy life; and #4 Learn the implications of loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength (Mark 12:30).

• Chapel staff, Residence Life staff, Student Development staff and students themselves expressed the desire for more programming in the area of spiritual development (‘a more comprehensive spiritual development program,’ in the words of one CPO staff member, echoed almost verbatim by a Student Development staff member).
• *Capax Dei* was one good example of such programming cited by students and RDs, and caused them to wonder if this could be expanded. (The only *Capax Dei* student interviewed said that it is through that group that she has grown the most, spiritually.)
• Some students we spoke to wanted more instruction about and articulation of how spiritual formation actually takes place.
• Ben himself worried that, “we’re missing an opportunity to mentor students in the classical disciplines of the faith.”
• RDs agreed that students, who receive quite a bit of peer-to-peer input, wanted more mentoring from those who were “older and wiser.”
• There were also voices who thought that student ministry leaders needed better mentoring and training from the CPO, part of which might be training students in peer spiritual friendship and accompaniment.
• Recognizing that students are “eager to have an encounter with God,” there was some concern among CPO staff that a lack of spiritual formation programming might be sending students by default to “more excessive” modes of worship as they seek to experience the Spirit’s work in their lives.
• The RDs expressed a desire for more training for RAs in the area of spiritual development, given that some of them are leading small groups.
• In survey feedback, students often expressed confusion at being “forced” to attend chapels or worship, which might reveal a need for more understanding about the nature and importance of this spiritual discipline.
• Catholic students registered a desire for more sacramental worship, unmediated by speakers and music (see the feedback below from Catholic students).
• Many recognized that the small staff of the CPO makes expansions into more spiritual development programming very difficult.

Pastoral Care

The Grounding Statements do not set out pastoral care as a goal, but this emerged as one of the campus pastor’s strengths.

• Student Development staff, RDs, and students themselves confirmed that students felt very cared for after conversations and meetings with Ben.
• Students interviewed and surveyed seem to like Ben and find him very approachable. We heard “a great guy” more than once, and we learned that students have affectionately nicknamed him “BP.” Some of us were surprised at how many students had had personal contact with Ben. One local pastor said his college students were like a “Ben Patterson fan club.”
• Questions came up about whether females feel as comfortable coming to Ben as men do. RDs observed that there were some female students they knew who had gone to Ben, and felt cared for and comforted. In particular, they remembered one or more female students struggling with spiritual attack to whom Ben had brought comfort and perspective.
• Still, several saw the need for an additional female pastoral presence, especially given the demographics at Westmont.
• One campus staff member summed up what we had sensed from many: that Ben was a “trusted presence” on campus, and his assistance in the crises of 2008-09 confirmed that he brings the right words and comfort at critical times.
• According to CPO staff, relationships among them are strong and collegial, and have been nurtured by Ben’s pastoral presence.
• Another campus staff member said that Ben was “INCREDIibly gifted in prayer,” and she wondered if students who did not have one-on-one contact with Ben could somehow learn from his gifts.
Diversity

- Many confirmed that the Campus Pastor’s Office had much openness and had made noticeable efforts toward greater diversity in the chapel calendar.
- Among some, however, it was unclear what the concrete goals were for diversity in chapel programming. One respondent suggested that the upper administration might work more closely with the CPO to create specific goals and outcomes for diversity in the chapel calendar and provide some accountability for achieving those.
- A few times in our interviews, respondents recommended that diversity in chapel topics and speakers could be enhanced by consulting with or adding students or staff members to the planning process. In any case, more input and transparency would help with what some saw as a problem: the “mystery” of what the Office does with feedback or speaker requests, and how they are processed. There is a concern that, in spite of the Office’s best intentions, the homogeneity of the planning team predisposes them toward certain speakers and against others—working against their desire for more diversity in the chapel schedule.
- One faculty member, who was sensitive to Catholic students and others from diverse religious traditions, felt that Ben strikes the right note when he reminds students that they belong to the “Church of Jesus Christ” ultimately.
- With regard to ethnic diversity, some are still uncertain whether the CPO understands that attending to the particular experience of minority students on campus might help the Office and College assist these students in their spiritual development. In particular, there were concerns that chapels are “too white,” and that the CPO might not understand how important it is for minority students to see more diverse representation up in front.
- Our meeting with Catholic students gave us a few insights into their experience at Westmont.
  - These Catholic students generally appreciated what the Protestant evangelical tradition offered them, particularly its emphasis on the Word, which they admitted sometimes was not so conspicuous in their tradition.
  - Overall, they had a “positive experience” of chapel. What they all missed in chapels, however, was a more sacramental, less mediated, intimate experience of worship. While the speakers and music make a contribution, this sometimes feels “like a distraction”—just one remove from a more direct encounter with God.
  - While they certainly had preferences about speakers, they were surprised at how many students “lived and died” by the effectiveness of the individual speaker in the service.
  - Also, they were surprised at how many Westmont students misrepresented Catholicism, and they did notice ignorance and anti-Catholic bias in some of the classes when discussions veered in that direction.
- They did think that a group connecting Catholics to one another would be a good support for them, and that more Catholic churches could be advertised on church faire day. (One student said that the limits on bringing cars to campus and the lack of organized rides to local churches disincentivized their church attendance.)
- None of the three we interviewed take communion at Westmont chapels.
Behavior

Behavior in chapel was also a frequent topic of discussion, a theme that connects with Grounding Statement 11, “Gain an appreciation for the importance of respecting the Chapel environment to foster an atmosphere of worship, reflection, prayer, and celebration.”

- Those in the Pastor’s Office felt that chapel behavior (studying, texting, talking) was the most significant problem facing chapel programs, hindering the cultivation of an “atmosphere of worship, reflection, prayer, and celebration.”
- Others we interviewed acknowledged these behaviors, but felt they were somewhat less of a problem. To the degree that such behavior was distracting others, they felt it should be acted upon. But to the degree that this behavior did not distract others, they felt that more direct actions against it might create more problems than they solved.
- Staff members in the CPO felt that there needed to be some wider institutional support for enforcing appropriate behavior and respect in chapel.
- WCSA members felt that the “rudeness” needed to be confronted and that students needed to consider their behaviors. They added that this was a cultural problem, not one created by chapels.

Commendations

Several specific examples and comments about the CPO’s strengths have been offered in the “Themes” section above; however, we try to summarize these below.

- Intentional and Consistent Chapel Programming
  - Although there are and will always be competing perspectives and points of view from the community regarding chapel programming and purposes, we found the CPO’s programming to be sound and rooted in a thoughtful and coherent approach (represented in its Mission and its Grounding Outcomes). Staff and alumni on campus who have been observing the chapel program over time recognize in it both intentionality and care. One staff member told us that students who have experienced chapels in other places for a semester return to Westmont valuing their chapels more by comparison.

- High-quality Pastoral Leadership
  - We found that Ben’s pastoral presence and functions are highly valued by this community. He is experienced as mature, caring, appropriately transparent, and has been a trusted source of wisdom and comfort for many individual students on this campus.
  - His presence during last year’s fires was crucial for the community, which confirms his role as a shepherd in times of crisis. As one staff member put it, “he always knows the right thing to say.”
  - Many appreciated Ben’s leadership and modeling of the practices of prayer. These clearly have touched the lives of many and continue to teach them
about prayer. Ben seems to perform the priestly function for people of bringing them to God.

- The theological content of Ben's chapel messages is trusted and sound, and many appreciate his content and themes more as they move through their years at Westmont.

- **Quality of Music and Worship**

  We found that the community truly appreciates and enjoys the quality of worship in music, and has seen these grow under the leadership of Joel Patterson and Michael Shasberger. Joel's work in developing students as worship leaders has been particularly important for students involved, and the musicianship in worship is considered to be strong. The process by which Joel fields and responds to student requests for songs impressed us (and others) as inclusive, thoughtful and effective.

- **Capax Dei**

  These groups seem to be meeting a critical need students have for understanding and pursuing their spiritual development. The quality of guidance and mentoring in these groups is probably the key to their success, and at any rate, create the kind of relationships students imagined and hoped they would have with spiritual mentors in college.

- **Campus Pastor's Office Staff**

  We found that the atmosphere of trust and friendship among these staff members created an important foundation for the work of the Office. There is “really a team effort,” as one staffer put it, which allows them to assess and problem-solve in ways that are non-defensive and open to the movement of the Holy Spirit. This could be a model for nurturing similar groups and committees across campus.

- **Connections with Local Pastors**

  Ben's regular morning meetings with a group of local pastors has had a powerful effect on their lives and garnered much appreciation for him and for Westmont. The pastors we interviewed admired him for several reasons, including his ability through prayer and scriptural teaching to unite people from many different traditions, helping them transcend their territorial concerns and imagine together how they can extend the Kingdom.

- **The quality of Ben's teaching series.**

  The theological soundness and intellectual depth of his own annual sermon topics and themes (like the “City of God” currently) are very appropriate to Westmont and its commitment to a Christian liberal arts education.

- **The Steady Improvement of the Chapel Programs**

  It is acknowledged by those who have watched this program over time that the quality of chapel programming has continued to grow and improve, and is much
improved over what it was several years ago. This suggests that Ben and his team have continued to actively assess and address the needs of the program, and how it can best serve the College.

**Recommendations**

*Note: These recommendations may come with examples that are not themselves recommendations but are meant to assist in imagining possibilities. Elaborating on these possibilities make this section necessarily longer.*

- **Hire an additional pastoral staff member,** with a view to diversity, in one or more of the following areas:
  - Spiritual formation
  - Pastoral care
  - Student Ministries

If the budget does not allow for this presently, perhaps local college pastors could be invited into special “part-time,” “visiting,” or “guest pastor” roles that might allow them to do some pastoral counseling or mentoring with “walk-in” students for a few hours a week. The College might also consider creating a graduate student intern program, drawing students in theology or psychology who may be studying locally (although we understand that the Santa Barbara area may not be graduate-student rich). While this would require more oversight from the CPO, the benefits for the campus may justify it. Alternately, these interns could be supervised by other departments on campus. For instance, Residence Life might hire a graduate intern to assist and develop RAs or other students, training them as “floor chaplains” to help carry out the work of spiritual development. This would not only be a way of extending networks of spiritual and emotional care, but would be a work of student development as these undergraduates are educated and trained in some aspect of spiritual development and neighbor love. As another example, the Office of Diversity might supervise an intern or pastor as an advisor to Catholic students, guiding and supporting them as they process the opportunities and challenges that come their way while living in a Protestant community.

- **Articulate a vision and strategic plan for student spiritual development** on campus that would build on existing strengths. Such a vision might recognize the potential for training RDs, RAs and student ministry leaders toward helping students broadly understand how our spiritual formation/development occurs and what role we play in that process of change (e.g. discernment, the spiritual disciplines, spiritual friendship, etc.). Here, too, some creative partnerships might be formed. For instance, a “coalition of the willing” might be discovered among faculty members who desire to grow in their spiritual mentoring of students. This could be furthered through faculty reading groups, one-day trainings in spiritual formation in the classroom/curriculum, and by dialogues with the campus pastor. To take another example, those involved in enrollment management might be interested in funding and assisting with the creation and nurture of *Capax Dei-*like groups that connect students more deeply to one another and to a mentor. This could serve to integrate into the community students or whole classes (sophomore slump?) who might be considered ‘at risk’ with regard to retention. In any case, CCCU schools who have spiritual or character development goals embedded in their
mission and values statements are increasingly seeing that a more campus-wide approach to intentional spiritual development must be developed. These schools believe that they can no longer expect an often-small department located in the co-curriculum to bear the lion’s share of implementing what is for many schools a central institutional value. While there seems to be a sensitivity in Westmont’s campus culture to overly programmatic approaches to spiritual formation or relationships, these “programs” could be carried out more organically, working within already formed friendships (student ministry teams, worship teams, dorm floors, faculty-student interaction, and friendships generally) to assist them in developing these relationships to one another in a God-ward direction.

For the campus pastor to **consider how his chapel messages might be crafted in ways that help students meaningfully connect with and receive this instruction more deeply.** This is not a recommendation for Ben to change the substance of his content. Again, the feedback we received affirmed Ben’s messages as thoughtful, intelligent, and theologically sound, and we discerned from a few testimonies that an appreciation for his content seemed to grow as students mature. This, then, is not a recommendation to change the topics that he brings. However, like other instructional faculty at a college, Ben will need to consider how what he brings can be most effectively learned and understood by his students. This may involve:

1) Following an educational paradigm that aims at learning outcomes, not just teaching outcomes. It asks not just ‘what am I teaching,’ but ‘what are they learning.’ (This idea may already be embedded in Grounding Outcome #3, “Hear the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith.” Such a ‘hearing,’ in the Hebrew sense, is an understanding so deep that it produces a turning, a metanoia.) This may involve Ben (and other regular Westmont chapel speakers) in assessing how these messages are being heard, and specifically what obstacles arise for students in hearing them. (These assessments could be as informal as lunches with students in preparation for or in debrief of a chapel message, or as formal as student reading or study groups with the pastor where he can observe how they learn and connect with the material.)

2) Discerning the heart of students by anticipating the range of things students may be thinking or feeling automatically when certain topics arise (family, the scriptures, evangelism, sin, “theology,” etc.), and how the message can “meet them there.” For the preacher, discerning and imagining the hearts of his hearers can be crucial in touching the “unconscious theology” (what we believe and feel when we’re not thinking about it) that often drives the self and filters what we hear.

3) Understanding for one’s self and articulating for the students the forces--cultural, historical, familial, and existential (sins and wounds)--that have and are forming their spirits. (Often, this will be an ‘aha’ moment for students as these bring an explanatory power to why they do what they do.) This is especially important for the chapel speaker focused on the spiritual (re)formation of students.

These changes may require only adjustments to an outline of a message or sermon. Helping the students connect their minds and hearts to the material could occur effectively in short introductions that raise a dilemma familiar to students, in
illustrations that students will recognize, or in implications of the message that students can imagine in their worlds.  
(Note: This may require Ben to come up with more stories and illustrations, not least because, according to student feedback, certain stories tend to be repeated in his illustrations. A “story-tracking system” may be necessary.)

- **Create a partnership or committee that includes representatives from the CPO, Student Life departments, and other campus staff and administrators to develop a unified approach to chapel behavioral issues.** This group would identify ways to enhance the environment of worship and learning in chapels and would support the Campus Pastor’s Office as it calls students to present themselves wholeheartedly to God in these settings. This would require other parts of the College to wrestle with their role in supporting these all-university gatherings. This committee would also identify what behaviors need to be explicitly and programmatically addressed, and which behaviors the College may have to live with even while they discourage them.

- **Articulate** a spiritual formational approach to assisting students with diverse backgrounds and experiences to grow amid the challenges and trials they face. Such trials often include more loneliness amid and less connection with the dominant community and its practices. At the same time, we encourage the Office to articulate for the dominant community how learning to love a neighbor, who may initially appear as “other,” develops and enriches the larger community’s own theological understanding and spiritual formation. Such an articulation may include working with Student Life and the Office of Diversity to establish concrete goals toward creating more diversity in chapel programming, and in reviewing that progress on a regular basis.

- **Increase the Chapel Worship Coordinator position to full time.** The needs for oversight in other areas of worship (like Vespers), the room for more pastoral care of students, and the demands of producing the popular, annual worship CD make this move to full-time one that could be fruitful. Given the power and popularity of worship-in-music evident among Westmont students (according to the surveys), this position could bring instruction to more students about the role of music in the call to worship the Lord. In considering this recommendation, a comparative evaluation of the coordinator’s compensation and job description against similar positions at other CCCU schools might be valuable.

- **Place the campus pastor and his staff into more frequent dialogue with the faculty.** As with any conversation, the good things that may come from this are unpredictable, but we think this dialogue might be especially fruitful in three ways:
  1) For the mutual exploration and celebration of how both the academic curriculum and chapel programs are carrying out the university mission of “healthy personal development, and strong Christian commitments.”
  2) For exploring further the ways that student faith development in a liberal arts setting might take place in the programs and curricula of both chapels and classrooms.
  3) For promoting a better understanding of the role of chapel in a liberal arts community.
The campus pastor might consider specifically (1) what faculty or campus gatherings might be most important for him to attend regularly, or (2) what forums might be created for these conversations. Faculty retreat and faculty forum are two existing opportunities, among others, where Ben might be able to engage with faculty more.

These conversations may not have to involve all faculty, but perhaps a "coalition of the willing" who have a special interest in a) faith and learning integration on campus, b) discerning the spiritual and intellectual needs of students, and c) praying for the students, staff and faculty.

❖ To identify ways that representative students can be involved in or connected to chapel planning. The fruits of this may be:
  o Gaining insight into student hearts, minds, and cultures, that in turn may inform the selection of chapel topics and speakers.
  o Through these representatives, exposing students generally to the thoughtful approach the Campus Pastor’s Office takes to chapel planning and programming.
  o Allowing a few students to experience how a ‘committee’ can be, in practice, a group of people who trust and love one another as they seek the good of others.

Ideas for this may range from one or two students who join the CPO in their planning meetings to a group of mature and diverse students who can offer helpful feedback to the CPO staff.

❖ Consider revising some of the CPO’s Grounding Outcomes that may not be supported by the Office’s actual programs. This may include
  o #4: Be presented with opportunities to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31). This suggests that the CPO is inviting students to participate in specific opportunities, rather than presenting them with examples of this through speakers from various neighbor-love ministries.
  o #11: Educate and empower members of the college community in “faith that does justice.” It was not clear to us how this is currently taking place, unless it is indirectly through the challenges provided by chapel speakers.
  o The CPO might consider crafting an outcome focusing on pastoral care, since this already seems to be an appreciated aspect of its work.

Present Challenges

1) The Campus Pastor’s Job and Time. Some of the recommendations above (for greater faculty/CPO dialogue and the creation of more campus wide spiritual development programming, for instance) would increase the demands on Ben’s time and expand the scope and tasks of his job. While we were given no detailed job description for the campus pastor, we understand that his core tasks (in his words and those of the Dean of Students) are to “preach, pray and [pastor] people.” He was hired with an understanding that the demands of frequent chapel preaching and his writing and publishing (which the College continues to value) would require significant time for preparation during the week—an expectation that was also a part of the previous chaplain’s position. From our interviews, we have discerned that Ben continues to carry out well the core tasks of his position (although we have
made a few recommendations for improvement). Therefore, if the CPO and the College follow some of the recommendations above, it will have to do so in ways that recognize these original tasks and values, and the pressures new tasks will place on the campus pastor’s workload.

2) **High Expectations.** The Campus Pastor’s Office and the chapel program, in particular, are ministering to students formed by church cultures whose programming has had to compete with entertainment-driven and customer satisfaction trends. Culture critics from Neil Postman (*Amusing Ourselves to Death, 1985*) to Archibald Hart (*Thrilled to Death, 2007*) are persuasive when they argue that, since the advent of television and now the explosion of all media, institutions are under more and more pressure to entertain and even thrill. Many of these churches have responded by creating more choices, more intensity and more spectacle in their services. This creates high expectations for chapel programming among students, and accounts for some of the dissatisfaction students (across the CCCU) register when asked to evaluate chapel programming.¹ The challenge of the CPO and the College that supports it will be to continue to help students grasp and engage with Westmont’s particular purposes for chapel. This may require students to examine how their own felt needs and expectations may get in the way of presenting themselves in chapel as ‘living sacrifices,” which is their service of worship (Rom. 12:1). It should be stressed that this education will need to be an ongoing, community-wide effort to support a program that ministers to the entire college community.

3) **Chapel and the Liberal Arts.** Chapel programs in a Christian liberal arts setting often struggle with competing views of what chapels are for. These tensions might be summarized in the question posed before: should chapels be the largest classroom on campus or the largest worship service on campus—and if neither, where should they be on the continuum in between? Of course, a robust theological understanding of worship would see classroom learning and chapel services both as opportunities for worship. Indeed, one of the CPO’s outcomes for the community is to “Understand that all of life is worship and not an event.” However, we know that the practices of classroom worship will look different from those of cathedral worship. Continuing to understand and affirm how chapel practices might sometimes be similar to and sometimes different from academic practices is important for a college who sees them both as important for its mission—“a balance of rigorous intellectual competence, healthy personal development, and strong Christian commitments.” This is not a call for a campus wide committee to re-vision chapel practices but rather for regular and 'refreshed' conversations about it, especially among the CPO, college faculty, and college staff who are representing it to students.

4) **Financial Limits**

Of course, these are the worst of times for college program budgets. This means that efforts to improve, expand or support the CPO and its programs will sometimes

¹ Churches of Westmont’s size (about 1900) in most cases will have a larger staff to “produce” a pleasing service, which they can repeat three or four times a weekend. Compare this to a college chapel department with a small staff that must put on three (or more) distinct services a week.
need to be creative. This may involve campus partnerships whereby the CPO can work with other existing programs, helping or training them to carry out the work of spiritual development in their spheres (examples in the recommendations above include the areas of Residence Life and the academic curriculum). It may also mean partnering with those departments who have more resources and whose goals might be achieved in part through work with the CPO (like those charged with improving retention). Such partnerships, however, will take more time and effort, requiring the CPO and the College to count the cost to “human resources.”

A Final Note

We want to thank the Campus Pastor’s Office and the VP of Student Life for the openness and transparency that they have brought to this process. In particular, we want to commend them for:

- The surveys and comments gathered from so many faculty, staff and students on campus. These are quite important in assessments where time and interactions on campus are always too brief.
- The well-organized notebooks, and the flow of information and communication that made our (Jamie’s and Todd’s) integration and orientation to the campus so much easier.
- Arranging interviews with so many in the campus community, allowing us to hear a wide range of voices from students to executive administrators, and from resident directors to senior staff and faculty.
- The generosity and help we experienced from the CPO and Student Development staffs while we were there and also later during the writing of this report.

Because this was the first review for the Campus Pastor’s Office, we also wanted to add a few recommendations for future reviews:

- Because students sometimes do not think about how to comment in ways that are constructive and respectful, we recommend that the raw feedback be captured and summarized in ways that draw out what is helpful and filter what is not—or what is even damaging to those trying to receive it. (Ideally, speaking the truth in love would be part of the training or exhortation students receive as they prepare to respond to these assessments.)
- We recommend also that the on-campus schedule for future visiting teams might include more time for them to organize and prepare for the writing of the report at the conclusion of the interview schedule.
APPENDIX

Grounding Statements of the Campus Pastor’s Office

1. Gain an appreciation for the integration of faith and learning.

2. Experience worship as a holistic endeavor engaging the heart, the mind, and the body.

3. Hear the foundational beliefs of the Christian faith: creator, redeemer, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, salvation and live a Holy life.

4. Learn the implications of loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength (Mark 12:30).

5. Be presented with opportunities to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31).

6. Become more global in your thinking and perspective.

7. Understand that all of life is worship and not an event.

8. Develop a personal spiritual journey through an understanding of the Bible and the practice of spiritual disciplines.

9. Increase familiarity with, and appreciation of, the contribution of the range of Christian church traditions, worship styles, and outreach to the church’s journey of faith.

10. Gain an appreciation for the importance of respecting the Chapel environment to foster an atmosphere of worship, reflection, prayer, and celebration.

11. Educate and empower members of the college community in “faith that does justice.”

12. Encourage thoughtful and probing questions about the religious, ethical and moral challenges we face in the world.

13. Give space for doubt as part of one’s spiritual journey.

14. How have students grown in relation to their faith during their time at Westmont College?