

Editorial

It is with a mixture of sadness and joy that I approach the editorial of the third edition of the Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy. My sadness is that this is the last issue that I will be editing due to other work commitments. My time as editor has been a most enjoyable experience. I have had the pleasure of working with some very interesting and inspiring people who have produced some important work that will undoubtedly influence the thinking and practice of chaplaincy and healthcare in the years to come. It has been a pleasure working with contributors and members of SACH, all of whom have made my time as editor much easier than it might have been.

However, whilst there is sadness, there is also joy in that I leave behind a journal that has a foundation on which it can develop its already obvious potential. The SJHCC is an important journal within the field of chaplaincy, healthcare and the wider field of practical theology. Practical theology is in a sense unique amongst the theological disciplines in that it begins and ends with experience. Consequently, theory and practice are inseparable partners. The SJHCC has, and I am sure will continue to strive to maintain a critical and constructive balance between the theoretical and practical aspects of pastoral care. In consistently seeking to hold onto this theory/practice tension, the journal has the potential to make a major contribution to the multidisciplinary study of pastoral/practical theology. It is my hope and my prayer that the journal continues to fulfil its tremendous potential.

This issue contains a series of fascinating essays that explore various aspects of spirituality and spiritual care. Whilst most readers of this journal will assume the reality of the spiritual domain, when it comes to actually defining it, the literature and common experi-

ence tells us that it seems to mean all things to all people. However, it is in fact of great importance that chaplains reflect on the meaning of spirituality and spiritual care. If they don't, then there is a real danger that their role as spiritual carers is eroded and that definitions are imposed upon chaplaincy from elsewhere; definitions which may be very much at odds with their own self-perceptions. In a healthcare milieu within which evidence based practice is becoming more and more powerful in terms of the justification of resources, chaplains must be clear as to what it is they are doing and why. The papers in this issue, in a variety of different ways begin to point towards the nature of spiritual care and open up interesting and exciting possibilities for the future of chaplaincy and healthcare in general.

The task of being human is never an easy one. The task of living humanly even in the midst of pain, suffering and confusion is even harder. As we reflect with the authors on issues of spirituality, birth, death and new beginnings it very soon becomes clear just how complicated a task healthcare work actually is. Each day we are faced with ethical, theological and spiritual difficulties that challenge us to develop in new ways in response to the experiences of human. Such a response requires much more than technological expertise. It demands skills that open up the mysteries of human beings and human existence to possibilities that transcend human knowledge and point us to the 'beyond in our midst.' Contemporary healthcare practice desperately needs the humanizing presence of spiritual carers. It is to developing precisely what that might mean, that this issue of the journal dedicates itself to.