



UNIV

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OXFORD

From the Chaplain and Welfare Fellow

17 August 2020

Dear Graduate Fresher,

Congratulations on getting a place at Univ, and best wishes for all your preparations for coming here. We look forward to you joining us and to you becoming a member of the College.

I realise that the prospect of moving to a new place, and perhaps a new country, in the midst of the uncertainty that we all face about the course and consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, is inevitably a source of anxiety and concern for many people, including many of you who are about to begin your graduate studies at Oxford. I also appreciate that you may have questions and concerns about the experience that you will have during your first weeks and beyond when you come to Univ.

First and foremost, I want to use this letter to assure you that the College understands that the prospect of your move to Oxford may be challenging or difficult for many reasons. Please be assured that we empathise with the uncertainty that you face, and that student representatives who speak on your behalf are involved in the plans that we are making to mitigate any risks to your wellbeing, in order to offer you the best university experience that we reasonably can. We continue to plan for next term in the light of current public health advice, and we recognize that we may need to adjust our services in a flexible way, in response to changing circumstances. You will find more information about our plans on the University's website, and also on our own college website, and you will have access to further information on our intranet when you arrive. But for now, please be assured that we know that you may already have had a very difficult year, and that we stand ready to do our best to help you to flourish and to thrive when you join us at Univ.

My second reason for writing now is to introduce myself and my role. As Chaplain and Welfare Fellow, I am one of the people with responsibility for promoting student welfare and well being, so you will meet me and other members of the welfare team after you arrive. You are also welcome to get in touch before then if you have any concerns that you might wish to discuss before term starts – my email address is andrew.gregory@univ.ox.ac.uk .

My work may be divided into two broad areas, each of them outside the formal academic and disciplinary structures of the College. First and foremost, quite apart from any 'religious' aspects of my responsibilities, is my welfare and pastoral role. This means that I am one of a number of college officers who is here to try to help all members of the College to flourish, and to whom you are welcome to turn for support should you find yourself at a particular point of need, whether because of problems with your studies, or for any other reason. My aim is to be available and accessible to everyone in Univ (whether that is online, or face to face), and to offer welcome, support and unconditional acceptance to all members of the College and its staff.

My study is staircase 6 room 6, in Front Quad. I hope to continue to operate an open-door policy, so that you can call in if you are passing; you would not need to make an appointment, although of course you would be welcome to do so. You are welcome to call in for some cake and tea or coffee, or to talk to me in confidence about any matter that you might wish to discuss. You do not need to be having a crisis to come to see me any more than you need to have any form of religious belief. If something is serious enough to bother you it may be serious enough to raise it with someone else, and I am one of the people whom the College employs to listen to any concerns that you may have. I am paid to be available, so you need not worry that you would be imposing on my time. The College is a very diverse community, and most of my work takes place in a context of pastoral support in which no assumptions are made as to whether individuals hold to any religious beliefs or to none.

The second part of my role as Chaplain is that I have responsibility for public worship in the College's Chapel. Univ is an ancient Christian foundation, but as a modern and inclusive community we welcome students and staff of all faiths and of none. Just as the Chapel is a prominent building in the College, so too it plays an important role in our community life. It offers an attractive and tranquil space that all members of the college community and their guests are welcome to use. Some people use it for rehearsing and performing concerts and plays. Others use it as a place for lectures and meetings, or in which to take time out in a busy day. But it was built as a place of Christian worship, and that remains its purpose today.

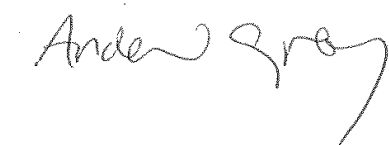
Our services are those of the Church of England, and our ethos is welcoming and inclusive. Anyone who wishes to attend or to participate is welcome to do so to the extent that they feel comfortable. Some who worship here are committed Christians who are glad to make connections between their faith and their studies. But others who come to Chapel would say that they are not religious, that they are agnostic or enquiring, or that they identify with a faith other than Christianity. Some people come simply because they wish to sing, or to listen to the choir. Anyone who wishes to attend is welcome, whatever their reason for coming might be, and students are always welcome to bring guests. More details about services in Chapel, as well as discussion groups, are on the college website, and you're very welcome to raise any questions that you might have about religious faith or other questions about meaning and belief.

Should you wish to help lead worship in the Chapel and/or join a discussion group, please do let me know. I should also be glad to help to put you in touch with representatives of other churches or faith communities, if you would like me to do so.

I am also involved in a variety of activities that take place in the College, from the Ball Committee to the Boat Club, and I hope that you too will get involved in some of the many extra-curricular activities that the College offers, and will offer in new ways this year. I look forward to meeting you when you join us in the autumn and I hope that you will enjoy the rest of the summer.

With warm best wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Gregory". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Revd Dr Andrew Gregory