

COMMITTEE ON CHAPLAINS TO HM FORCES MAY 2023

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Thank those who serve in His Majesty's Forces as Chaplains for their service to Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force personnel, their families, and the wider military community, and commend them, and their own families, to the prayers of the Church.
3. Recognise the contribution of our Chaplains in supporting our personnel who are deployed following the invasion of Ukraine.
4. Recognise the contribution of Chaplains in supporting our personnel following the death of their Commander-in-Chief, Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, whose loss was felt intensely across the military community.
5. Encourage eligible ministers of the Church to consider service as a Chaplain to HM Forces, Regular or Reservist.
6. Encourage those eligible to consider service as Chaplains in any of the Cadet organisations and thank all serving Cadet Chaplains.

Report

1. THE WORK OF CHAPLAINS

1.1 Routine and Operational Work

1.1.1 After Iraq and Afghanistan, there may be an assumption that the Armed Forces are doing less than they have in the past. Nothing is further from the truth. Our military personnel, and their Chaplains, have been deployed at home and around the globe since the last Assembly. Spiritual and pastoral care continues to lie at the heart of who Chaplains are, whether that be on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific, an army barracks in Poland, or in Mount Pleasant in the Falkland Islands, to name but three.

1.1.2 The Committee is sure that the whole Church is grateful to HM Forces personnel, including Chaplains, who responded to NATO's call for support, in light of operations following the invasion of Ukraine. As with the whole Church, we pray for peace and justice in that land.

1.1.3 The death of Her late Majesty was profoundly felt across the whole military community. She was their Commander-in-Chief, she knew the community very well, and some would even say she was at her happiest when visiting the military family. The Committee is grateful to all Chaplains who supported our military personnel, and their families, through this period of national mourning.

2. CHAPLAINS AND THE CHURCH

2.1 Tri-Service Conference 2023

The Tri-Service Conference (Continuous Professional Development) for Church of Scotland and Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Chaplains was held at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, in Wiltshire, in early March of this year, where the visiting speaker was The Rev Dr Katie G Kime, Executive Director and co-founder of Faith Leaders on Frontlines, an organisation promoting the inclusion of frontline spiritual care workers in news media, as well as professional support for faith leaders serving amidst crisis. The Conference theme was 'Multi-faith Spiritual Care & Leadership in the 2020's: Challenges, Opportunities, and Lessons Learned.' The Conference was attended by the Convener and the PCI Convener.

2.2 Pastoral Contact

This is a primary component of the Committee's remit. The Committee continues to offer regular pastoral contact with Chaplains and their families, organised by the Vice Convener. The Convener responds to more acute pastoral situations, which can involve a Chaplain's ill-health, professional issues, or to discuss discernment of future ministry and service.

2.3 Moderator's Visit to HM Forces

In February, the Moderator and Convener visited the British Army. The visit included a visit to NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Headquarters (ARRC), commanded by Lieutenant General Nick Borton DSO MBE, who addressed the General Assembly in 2022. The Moderator received a briefing, and tour, on the work of the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre and MOD Medal Office, learning of their work with casualties and compassionate cases 365 days a year. The Moderator visited the Headquarters of the British Army in Andover, and learned of the work of the Defence Christian Network, and met with the Deputy Chaplain General. The Moderator was hosted at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre at Beckett House, a part of the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, where he also participated in two ethics workshops with Officers on their Intermediate Command and Staff Course (ICSC Land). The Committee is very grateful to The Rev (Lt Col) Duncan Macpherson CF, for organising such a rewarding and insightful programme.

2.4 Armed Forces and Veterans Champions

The Committee is waiting for the current process of reducing the number of Presbyteries to be completed, and will then ask each to nominate an Armed Forces and Veterans Champion, and will keep that resource up-to-date, and ensure, as required, that the appropriate training and support is given.

3. RECRUITMENT

3.1 The Committee, at the time of writing, and as a part of its constitutional purpose, has endorsed two candidates for ministry in HM Forces, one for Regular and one for Reserve service, since the last Assembly. These candidates will now go forward for the formal selection process of the respective Service.

3.2 Most chaplains eventually return to the civilian ministry of the Church, with particular expertise in working with young adults, knowledge of the wider Church, and pastoral experience that equips them for future ministry, either in a parish or another sector. The Committee believes the Church gains far more than it loses over the long term of a minister's 'career', and encourages all eligible ministers to discern if God is calling them to serve as a Chaplain in the Royal Navy (including the Royal Marines), the Army or the Royal Air Force, full-time or part-time.

3.3 Meanwhile, Chaplaincy in the Cadet Forces provides those benefits – mission to the young and development of ministerial skill-sets – in the course of parish (or other civilian) ministry. We commend this valuable ministry to the Church too.

4. GOVERNANCE

4.1 Tri-Service Advisory Group

The Convener serves on this Advisory Group (known as the TRIAG), along with the Anglican and Catholic Bishops to the Forces, three other Conveners from Protestant Churches or Groupings, and representatives from other World Faiths' communities. The TRIAG exists as a two-way street between the three Heads of Chaplaincy and the Sending Churches/Endorsing Authorities, to discuss Chaplaincy policy within Defence and to engage and inform each other. The Committee is grateful to the three Heads of Chaplaincy for facilitating this important annual event.

In the name of the Committee

SCOTT J BROWN CBE, *Convener*
ANDREW TAIT, *Vice-Convener*
DARAN GOLBY, *Secretary*

Appendix 1

Royal Navy

The war in Ukraine that began in February, the largest conflict in Europe since the Second World War obviously dominated the year. For the RN the war has not had huge obviously visible implications, rather it has added a greater sense of urgency to the standing patrol tasks and NATO commitments that were already in play. Type 23 frigates HMS NORTHUMBERLAND, RICHMOND, PORTLAND and KENT continue to excel and have been deployed on long Towed Array Patrol Ship (TAPS) duties in northern waters. HMS NORTHUMBERLAND covered 40,000 miles and was away from her home in Devonport for 241 days in 2022, primarily employed on anti-submarine warfare (ASW) taskings. Chaplains have been onboard for all these taskings.

The RN led the NATO Maritime High Readiness Force in 2022 and warships and submarines spent around 10,000 hours directly supporting the alliance. This included Exercise COLD RESPONSE, the largest exercise held in Norway since the end of the Cold war and ASW Exercise DYNAMIC MONGOOSE off Iceland. Ships were also attached to the Standing NATO Maritime and Mine Countermeasures groups.

The RN's Vanguard-class submarines continue to conduct nuclear deterrent patrols, but maintenance becomes more difficult as the boats get older. This has implications for submariners who are having to endure even longer periods at sea. In 2022 one of the boats conducted the RN's longest deterrent patrol to date, spending more than 5 months underwater. One of our chaplains was onboard for the duration.

The Revd Dr Mark Davidson RN is now Principal of the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre (Beckett House), a role in which he leads in the delivery of the education that all Chaplains receive as part of their continuing ministry with the Armed Forces. Mark took over this role following his successful tenure as Chaplain supporting the Ships Company of HMS PRINCE OF WALES. Mark has also been engaged Internationally this year, representing the Chaplain of the Fleet in Romania at the International Military Chiefs of Chaplains Conference (IMCCC).

The Revd Stephen Ashley-Emery RN returned from an arduous deployment to the Far East in 2022 successfully supporting HMS KENT in its role as part of the Carrier Strike Group on OP FORTIS. He is now the Chaplaincy Team Leader at HMS SULTAN, where he coordinates and delivers the provision of pastoral care to trainees and staff alongside providing spiritual development to all who seek it.

The Revd Mark Dalton RN has recently moved to support the work of Naval Base Clyde following a successful tour with the Royal Marines in Scotland. He is now charged with supporting submariners and their families and providing both pastoral and spiritual guidance.

Appendix 2

Army

As the Army continues to fulfil the task of delivering initial training to Ukrainian recruits over 6 weeks of basic instruction here in the United Kingdom, Chaplaincy walks alongside British instructors and Ukrainian recruits alike. Rev Hector Mackenzie shared his experience in this work:

“I had the huge privilege of leading an informal communion service for a number of Ukrainian personnel and also praying with many of them after the service. It was both a sobering and heart-warming experience.”

Chaplaincy was called to participate and support the delivery of Her Majesty the Queen’s funeral. One of the most poignant memories came from Rev Dr Ken Jeffrey, one of our Reserve Chaplains. He wrote -

“It was one of the proudest days of my life. I received the honour and privilege of standing guard on Hammersmith Bridge. I am the Padre of 7SCOTS, 51st Highland, 7th Battalion of The Royal Regiment of Scotland. Earlier in September, we were taking part in our Annual Deployment Exercise in Dingwall in the Highlands. During our camp, we received the call to mobilise in order to participate in the Royal funeral. We left Dingwall on 13 September for our 573 mile journey to London. On the M74, we received new orders, to proceed to the Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Strensall, York where we should await further instructions about our role in the funeral. Finally, and after some concern that we might be ‘stood down’, we made our way to MOD Feltham in Middlesex within Greater London on 18 September. We joined a camp of around 1400 Army personnel and were billeted in a large warehouse where 700 of us were crammed together and slept on new cot beds that were arranged in long columns and rows. The beds squeaked all night as people rolled over again and again, trying to get some sleep. Fortunately, I was wearing ear buds! The highlight of my experience at Feltham was receiving the opportunity to lead a short memorial service for the late Queen on the Sunday evening at 8 pm before a congregation of 1400 people. They gathered around the back of a large white pantec van while I stood on the van’s rear platform that was raised about six feet into the air, so that everyone could see and hear me. It was an unforgettable moment. The next morning, the day of the late Queen’s funeral, we were up at 4 am. We travelled into London and met members of the Metropolitan Police. Together, with them, we lined the route of the funeral cortege across Hammersmith Bridge. We were in position at around 9.30am, and stood in our places for five hours until after the funeral procession had passed. During this time, I spoke at length with members of the public who had gathered at the bridge.”

Church of Scotland Chaplains continue to develop policy and theology of practice in the developing area of care for those suffering from Moral Injury. The Royal Army Chaplains’ Department lead is Rev Nicola Frail. As Chaplaincy seeks to understand and respond to this injury as our Service Personnel come to terms with some of the sometimes deeply conflicting operational requirements. Alongside this, Chaplaincy continues to be at the heart of delivery of ethical education for all Service Personnel at every level of service from initial training.

List of Church of Scotland Regular Chaplains (Actively recruiting)

Chaplain	Unit	Location
Rev Dr Jim Francis MBE	Regional Command	Aldershot
Rev David Anderson	HQ North West England	Preston
Rev Chris Kellock	Permanent Joint Headquarters	Northwood
Rev Duncan Macpherson	HQ 1 Recce Strike BCT	Tidworth
Rev Nicola Frail	HQ Defence Medical Services	Whittington
Rev Alan Cobain	HQ South West	Tidworth
Rev David Thom	HQ SHAPE	Mons
Rev Hector MacKenzie	ITC 2 Battalion	Catterick Garrison
Rev Paul Van Sittert	1 LANCS	Cyprus
Rev Richard Begg	3 RSME Regt	Minley
Rev Geoff Berry	3 SCOTS	Fort George
Rev Stewart MacKay	3 PARA	Colchester
Rev Neil McLay	Army Air Corps Training Centre	Middle Wallop

List of Church of Scotland Reserve Chaplains (2 vacancies in Scotland)

Chaplain	Unit	Location
Rev Michael Mair	32 Sig Regt	Glasgow
Rev Dr Ken Jeffrey	7 SCOTS	Perth
Rev Christopher Rowe	5 MI Bn	Edinburgh

List of Church of Scotland ACF Chaplains (9 Vacancies out of 20)

Chaplain	Unit
Rev Keith Blackwood	2 Bn THE HIGHLANDERS, ACF
Rev Shuna Dicks	2 Bn THE HIGHLANDERS, ACF
Rev Cameron MacKenzie	LOTHIAN & BORDERS, ACF
Rev Alen McCulloch	1 Bn THE HIGHLANDERS, ACF
Rev Ecilo Selemani	GLASGOW & LANARKSHIRE, ACF
Rev Sean Swindells	ANGUS & DUNDEE, ACF
Rev Fiona Wilson	WEST LOWLAND, ACF

Appendix 3

Royal Air Force

In his 2022 Christmas address to the RAF the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, said, “2022 has been an extraordinary year of achievement for the RAF. Protecting our skies and overseas territories, monitoring threats to our national interests in space, patrolling our seas, bolstering NATO and doing everything we can to support Ukraine’s heroic defence against Russian aggression. We took great honour in celebrating Her Late Majesty the Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee, then joined mourning her sad passing. The RAF has also faced challenges this year: criticism and legitimate questions about how we increase our diversity and high profile cases of unacceptable behaviours. Throughout this time the RAF has endeavoured to learn, adapt and continue to improve as an organisation which is better prepared for whatever the future might bring.”

It is within this context that the Church of Scotland has placed two chaplains to offer ministry as RAF Chaplains.

- Rev Craig Lancaster** RAF LOSSIEMOUTH
- Rev David Young** RAF LOSSIEMOUTH