

## COMMITTEE ON CHAPLAINS TO HM FORCES MAY 2022

### Proposed Deliverance

#### The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Thank those who serve in Her Majesty's Forces as Chaplains for their service to Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force personnel, their families and the wider military community.
3. Recognise the particular service of those Chaplains who have served in support of the contribution of the Armed Services to efforts relating to Covid-19 and on operations in Afghanistan in summer 2021.
4. Recognise the contribution of Forces Chaplains to the Church's engagement with many young adults, some of whom might not otherwise come into contact with the ministry of the Church.
5. Commend to the prayers of the Church all Chaplains and all those whom they serve.
6. Encourage eligible ministers of the Church to consider service as a Chaplain to HM Forces, Regular or Reservist.
7. 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 Work

**1.1.1** When the Committee asked one or two of the Church's chaplains to express their passion for the work of ministry they uniquely do, the snippets of experience that emerged were inspiring.

**1.1.2** One Army chaplain immediately thought of a young corporal, atheist and in despair, encountered just at the point of attempting to 'complete suicide' (as the padre put it), who has been disciplined and encouraged, and reached the point of seeking Baptism and looking forward to life with new possibilities.

**1.1.3** Craig, the senior Church of Scotland RAF Chaplain, talks of the presence of a Chaplain in any Command meeting as 'an outside, occasionally jarring, voice of humanity amidst process and technology'. a 'living reminder to those in command that each person is made in the image of God and is to be cherished and loved'.

**1.1.4** Naval chaplains are always known as 'friend and adviser to all on board and an advocate for those of all faiths and none', which makes them universally approachable and able to provide a pastoral and prophetic voice anywhere it is needed.

**1.1.5** Every member of the Committee gives thanks for the routine, unsung, humbling work of Forces chaplains as they offer Christian ministry to thousands of people – especially younger adults – who might not otherwise encounter the Church at such close quarters and with such a profound effect. And every member of the Committee gives thanks for the Church's support of the work. Not many denominations have the sophistication and nuance to realise the difference between debates about strategic issues and Christian mission to Service personnel and their families, between the big political questions that excite the Assembly and the pastoral needs that motivate those commissioned to this work, between criticism of some of the things governments do and day-by-day sustaining of the spirits of those charged with doing them. The Committee prays that the Church never loses that sophistication of thought, that ability to keep those different things in tension.

##### 1.2 Chaplains and the Events of 2021

**1.2.1** The Committee is sure that the whole Church is grateful to personnel, including chaplains, who responded quickly and expertly to the desperate situation in Kabul in the summer of 2021. Whether in theatre recovering people and equipment, or in military establishments in the UK dealing with the difficult questions posed by veterans of operations in Afghanistan, their families, and the bereaved, chaplains rose to the kind of dramatic challenge that stretches every skill in ministry, all the while dealing with their own feelings, memories and questions.

**1.2.2** Less headline-grabbing challenges for military chaplains have included work in South Sudan, the constant rhythm of NATO and UN deployments, and long absences from home on sea or land. The stress is shared with families, which have to learn to manage two very different routines of family life: one with that key partner/parent away, and the other with them present at home.

#### 2. CHAPLAINS AND THE CHURCH

##### 2.1 Tri-Service Conference 2021

The Tri-Service CPD conference for Church of Scotland and Presbyterian Church in Ireland chaplains was held at Leuchars Station in September 2021, where the visiting speaker was Rev Prof Drew Gibson from the PCI.

##### 2.2 Safeguarding Training

The Committee has expressed its gratitude to the Safeguarding Service for their assistance in ensuring chaplains remain current in safeguarding training, to the standards required by the Services and by the Church.

### **2.3 Pastoral Contact**

The Committee continues to offer regular pastoral contact with chaplains and their spouses, organised by the Vice Convener. During the recent time of constraint this has been achieved on-line, which has given the bonus of enabling the Committee to engage with chaplains and spouses in many places far beyond Scotland. The Convener responds to more acute pastoral situations, which can involve any chaplain's ill-health, professional stress (eg due to legal processes), and discernment of future service.

### **2.4 Moderator's Visit**

In February, just a few days before events in Ukraine escalated, the Moderator and Convener visited the Royal Navy in the Portsmouth and Poole areas. Time was spent with all three of the Church of Scotland's chaplains as well as with two others from the Church of Scotland and Free Churches branch. It was fascinating to spend time aboard HMS PRINCE OF WALES, which Susan Brown had toured as a ship in build three years earlier; this time, as then, prayers were offered in the ship's chapel, now no longer an empty space but a living, well-used, well-equipped spiritual resource (co-ordinated by Mark Davidson the ship's Church of Scotland chaplain) in the heart of a unique community. Shortly after Lord Wallace's visit, the carrier sailed at short notice as part of the UK's response to international events, a reminder of the constant readiness of service personnel, and their chaplains, to be where they are most needed on our behalf.

### **2.5 Armed Forces Champions**

When the current exercise in uniting Presbyteries has been completed, it will be a great deal easier for the smaller number of larger Presbyteries each to nominate an Armed Forces Champion, and easier too to continue to keep that resource up-to-date. The Committee will return to that exercise when the new structure makes that easier to do.

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## **3. RECRUITMENT**

**3.1** The Appendices to this Report detail movements in each chaplaincy service. The Committee was happy to assist in the two-fold transfer of Rev David Young, both from reservist to regular service and from the Royal Navy to the Royal Air Force.

**3.2** At the time of writing, the Committee was exploring the recruitment options that might be presented to probationers affected by the recent restrictions on the filling of parish vacancies.

**3.3** There is a constant slight tension, in a Church with a ministry shortage, between the recruitment needs of parish ministry and those of Service Chaplaincy. In this Report, the missional contribution of chaplains in many aspects of their military ministry has been highlighted. Most chaplains eventually return to the civilian ministry of the Church, bringing expertise in work with youths and young adults, knowledge of the Church throughout Britain and across the world, and pastoral experience that equips them for anything parish ministry can throw at them. The Committee believes the Church gains far more than it loses, over the long term of a minister's career, by encouraging the discernment of God's call to serve as a chaplain in the Royal Navy, the Army or the Royal Air Force, full-time or part-time.

**3.4** 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. It is a calling worth considering, and enquiries can be made through the Committee.

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## **4. GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

### **4.1 Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

The Committee resolved a historical anomaly by confirming that it is possible for the Presbyterian Denominational Representative Chaplain in the Royal Army Chaplains Department to be a PCI chaplain. Since that appointment has existed, it has always been held by a Church of Scotland chaplain.

### **4.2 Tri-Service Advisory Group**

The Convener serves on this Advisory Group (known as the TRIAG), along with the Anglican and RC Bishops, three other Conveners from Protestant Churches or groupings, and – increasingly in the coming years – representatives from other faiths. The Group plans to extend its schedule of meetings, to enable its work to include briefings by the Heads of Chaplaincy Services to the TRIAG members and also a better flow of advice, direction and guidance from the Churches/faith representatives to the Heads of Service.

### **4.3 Constitutional Role of the Committee on Chaplains to Her Majesty's Forces**

**4.3.1** From time to time, as the membership of the General Assembly gradually changes, it is important to recollect the purpose of the Committee, especially in face of some puzzlement that there is no equivalent Committee dedicated to any other form of chaplaincy conducted by Church ministers and others. There are two distinctive functions of this Committee, both alluded to in this Report.

**4.3.2** First, the Services require those Sending Churches that are also Endorsing Authorities (which is the case for this Church) to endorse applications from potential chaplains, giving the Church a screening task that has no parallel for any other form of chaplaincy outwith the employment of the Church. The relationship continues as one of denominational accountability throughout the chaplain's time of service.

**4.3.3** Second, the role of the Convener of the Committee, partly through membership of the TRIAG but more generally throughout the military establishment, provides this denomination’s parallel to the presence of the Bishops of the larger Sending Churches. This is a role that is largely invisible within the life of the Church, though the Committee’s remit (found on the Church’s web-site) hints at the unusual character of the Committee’s convenership compared to that of other Forums and Committees. The Committee exists as a self-contained body, receiving no part of its budget from the annual budget of the Church and yet accountable only to the General Assembly, to be able to fulfil these special tasks. It is grateful to the Assembly Trustees and the Nomination Committee for their understanding of these structural issues and their assistance in helping to plan for future needs especially regarding size and membership.

*In the name of the Committee*

MARJORY A MACLEAN, *Convener*  
 JOHN C DUNCAN MBE, *Vice-Convener*  
 DARAN GOLBY, *Secretary*

**Addendum**

**Rev John Duncan MBE**

Following his retirement from parish ministry, John has stepped down too from his Vice-Convener’ship of the Committee after nearly two years in the role. An unfailingly positive presence, John inherited an increasing focus on the routine pastoral engagement with our chaplains that is mentioned elsewhere in the Report. His cheerful face co-ordinating a Zoom coffee for chaplains or spouses, his warm energy in Committee meetings and visits, and his encouragement and counsel to the Convener, all these have marked a distinguished period of service to the Church and the military community.

MARJORY A MACLEAN, *Convener*  
 DARAN GOLBY, *Secretary*

**Rev Dr Marjory MacLean**

The Reverend Dr Marjory MacLean finishes her four-year term as Convener at this General Assembly and the Committee wishes to express its gratitude to her. Marjory became Convener of the Committee in 2018 bringing her own experiences as a Royal Naval Reserve Chaplain, a role which she served in until 2017. She was mobilised for service within the Royal Naval Chaplaincy Service from June 2010 to February 2011 and this included time on deployment in Afghanistan. She was inducted to South Ronaldsay & Burray, in the Presbytery of Orkney, on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020. Her wide knowledge of the Church and her commitment to pastoral care of chaplains in all three services have been defining characteristics of her Convener’ship; the Committee is grateful for her time and commitment.

DARAN GOLBY, *Secretary*

**Appendix 1**

**ROYAL NAVY**

**Rev Stephen Ashley-Emerly RN** has settled into life as a regular chaplain and has already circumnavigated the globe. Following a distinguished period of service aboard HMS KENT, he now begins an appointment in a leadership role in a shore-based training establishment.

**Rev Mark Dalton RN** currently serves with 43 Commando, and provides additional support at HMS NEPTUNE (Faslane) at a time of stretch for the other chaplaincy resources there.

**Rev Mark Davidson RN** is the chaplain of HMS PRINCE OF WALES.

**Appendix 2**

**ARMY**

The team of Army chaplains has volunteered for short notice tours (less than 21 days’ notice) in support of operations in Cyprus and the Sultanate of Oman, as well as 6 month extended overseas exercises in Estonia and Kenya in the last year.

Ministry continues to go from strength to strength with promotion to CF1 (Assistant Chaplain General) and CF2 (Deputy Assistant Chaplain General) appointments.

**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	Advanced Command & Staff Course	The Defence Academy

Rev Duncan Macpherson	MAB	London
Rev Nicola Frail	HQ Defence Medical Services	Whittington
Rev Alan Cobain	Infantry Training Centre	Catterick
Rev David Thom	Army Foundation College	Harrogate
Rev Hector MacKenzie	5 Regt RA	Catterick Garrison
Rev Mike Goodison	1 YORKS	Catterick Garrison
Rev Paul Van Sittert	2 YORKS	Cyprus
Rev Richard Begg	1 PWRR	London
Rev Geoff Berry	3 SCOTS	Fort George
Rev Stewart MacKay	2 LANCS	Preston
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 Mike 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 Alen McCulloch	1 Bn The Highlanders, ACF
Rev Shuna Dicks	2 Bn The Highlanders, ACF
Rev Keith Blackwood	2 Bn The Highlanders, ACF
Rev Fiona Wilson	West Lowland, ACF
Rev Ecilo Selemani	Glasgow & Lanarkshire, ACF
Rev Cameron McKenzie	Lothian & Borders, ACF

**Appendix 3**

**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

**Rev Craig Lancaster** continues to minister as Senior Chaplain at RAF Lossiemouth. The base has had a frenetic year of squadron deployments, home commitments and support to the Government’s COVID response. Craig is due to deploy to the Falkland Islands in the summer to care for personnel based there.

**Rev David Young** became a full time RAF Chaplain in February having served previously as a Royal Navy Reservist and minister of Helensburgh, Rhu and Shandon Parish Churches. His first posting takes him also to RAF Lossiemouth.