

1 September 2022

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā rangatira mā o ngā Hāhi katoa o Aotearoa/New Zealand, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

The churches of New Zealand have a long and significant participation in the ministry of chaplaincy within the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). The contribution of your faith community to this ministry is much appreciated, both by those of us directly involved in this work, and by the wider NZDF community as a whole. At a recent formal dinner of the chaplains, part of their annual conference, a senior officer from the Burnham Military Camp who presided over the evening spoke spontaneously about the positive and much valued contribution chaplains can and do make within the wider environment of the NZDF. It was heart-warming to hear his heartfelt words.

Churches are linked to chaplaincy through their people serving as chaplains of course, but also through the Chaplains Defence Advisory Council (ChDAC). This council consists of representatives from participating faith communities.

In a new initiative ChDAC has committed itself to providing participating church communities with an annual report. Our intention is to inform you about the work of your and other chaplains, and to give you an overview of chaplaincy in the military, its opportunities and its challenges. We will seek to let you know about trends and developments we see on the horizon. It won't surprise you, knowing the world we live in, to learn that we anticipate significant changes coming, changes bringing challenge and potentially valuable opportunities.

ChDAC and all the chaplains greatly appreciate the prayers and support of the Christian community and our constituent churches in the contribution chaplaincy makes to the personnel of the NZDF; the aviators, the sailors and soldiers, their families and to other associated people.

We are glad to provide you with this initial report, and we look forward to making it an annual event.

May the blessings of God be with you and us in our participation in the life of the kingdom here on earth.

Ngā mihi nui



Reverend Paul Askin  
Chair  
Chaplains Defence Advisory Council

Report Regarding Chaplaincy in the New Zealand Defence Force

To : Faith Bodies supporting Military Chaplaincy

From : Chaplains' Defence Advisory Council (ChDAC)

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā rangatira mā o ngā Hāhi katoa o Aotearoa/New Zealand,  
tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

### **Introduction:**

Chaplains drawn from a wide range of Christian denominations have been an integral part of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) for many years, serving Army, Navy and Air Force personnel and their families as Christ's ambassadors. This spiritual ministry continues to be valued by the military.

These Chaplains are supported by denominational representatives, known as Senior Representative Chaplains (SRC), each appointed by their respective faith body. Together these representatives constitute an advisory council known as ChDAC. ChDAC has three main functions:

1. To offer advice to the Principal Defence Force Chaplain, currently Pete Olds, and to the NZDF. ChDAC contributes to policy development, and has a significant role in the selection and appointment of Chaplains;
2. to contribute oversight of Chaplains, with each SRC seeking to support the Chaplains they represent in their specialist role within the military; and,
3. to act as a vital link between faith bodies and the military, especially relating to the Chaplaincy services.

The military appreciates the contribution of the various denominations through the valuable service of the ministers they release and support to serve in this way. Your prayerful support of your Chaplains is an integral contribution to the continuing development of a God honouring ministry embedded in the secular environment which is the NZDF.

### **Purpose of this Report:**

The intention of this new initiative is:

1. To inform contributing faith bodies about the work of their Chaplains, and or Chaplaincy in general, in a more formal manner than may have been done previously. It is our hope that as a result, communication will flow more readily and easily both to and from our various faith bodies;
2. through increasing communication flow, to contribute to the recruitment and appointment of suitably qualified, high calibre, men and women to serve as Chaplains within the NZDF. We are looking for a diversity in our team of Chaplains commensurate, as far as possible, with the diversity found in both the NZDF and the areas within which they operate; and,
3. to invite faith bodies which have members serving as Chaplains, but which don't, at this time, have an appointed SRC, to consider requesting the appointment of their own representative to ChDAC. Currently chaplains from faith bodies without a direct ChDAC member, are covered by one of the existing six SRCs. This invitation is developed further on in this report.

## **An Overview of Chaplaincy in the NZDF**

NZDF Chaplaincy currently comprises 27 Regular Force, Uniformed Chaplain positions, spanning the three services of Army, Navy, and Air. They are located across the 11 major Defence Estates in New Zealand and deploy alongside our soldiers, sailors and aviators to operational theatres across the globe. Supporting these Regular Force Chaplains are a number of Reserve Force Chaplains, personnel with full time ministry roles outside of the military who are engaged by the Defence Force as Chaplains for up to 20 days per year, and a number of civilian Officiating Chaplains who provide us with local support when needed.

As of the writing of this report the average length of service of our Regular Force Chaplains is 9.3 years with a range of service length running from 2.5 to 21.5 years with one further still completing their Officer Training with Navy. We are currently carrying one Regular Force vacancy within each of the three Services with a further two projected within the next six months.

Recruiting of new Chaplains over the last 12 months has been relatively steady with good numbers attending selection boards. Of these approximately 50% have passed through the selection process and been accepted as either Regular or Reserve Force Chaplains. There is a real need, however, to broaden the diversity within Chaplaincy. In particular the Chaplaincy gender mix does not reflect the broader NZDF population (there are currently only two female Regular Force Chaplains and one female Reserve Force Chaplain) and both Maori and Pasifika are under-represented.

The New Zealand Defence Force comprises some 9500 full time servicemen and women, 3000 Reserves, and a further 3000 civilians. Religious affiliation broadly reflects the make-up of the wider NZ Population. While the majority of NZDF personnel, therefore, identify as having no active religious or faith affiliation there is, none the less, a general acceptance of spirituality as a core component of what it means to be human. This is clearly recognised organisationally in the adoption of Sir Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā framework within Defence Health policy.

## **Chaplaincy and the Church**

In days now hopefully long gone, Chaplaincy was sometimes seen as a suitable ministry for a person who was not cutting it in the church situation. We believe that the opposite is closer to the truth. In almost all contexts Chaplains serve as part of a small and not very powerful minority within a much larger and, often, diverse environment. In the world in which we live, we believe that this puts Chaplains right into the front lines of ministry today. Learning how to be fruitful ambassadors in the setting where they find themselves is critical to the role of Chaplains, as it is of course for all disciples.

Chaplains within the NZDF have the opportunity to be at the forefront of ministry. They need the strong support of their faith communities and we believe that their faith communities also need the skills, insights and experience we trust they can bring.

## **Current Issues for Chaplaincy in the NZDF**

The military has been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as has the whole of our country. Lockdowns, isolation, mandates, and OP PROTECT, the NZDF contribution to New Zealand's MIQ system, have all added extra stresses and demands in the military environment. This in turn has significantly impacted the work of Chaplains.

The military is an increasingly diverse and varied community of people, reflecting trends in our wider community. Our team of Chaplains needs to be seen to reflect this diversity, for example, in terms of gender and ethnicity.

The NZDF has adopted Sir Mason Durie's Te Whare Tapa Whā as a foundational framework for understanding the overall health of the force. Hauora or well-being is understood as a house with four sides or four dimensions which are: taha tinana (physical well-being), taha hinengaro (mental and emotional well-being), taha whanau (social well-being) and taha wairua (spiritual well-being).

We need Chaplains who can make a spiritually vibrant and attractive contribution in the NZDF context. Chaplains are a lot more than simply another version of a counsellor. They must be marked out by a spiritual competency and presence, even if a little mystery goes with it. Also, Chaplains, as uniformed members of the military, are deployed as a matter of course with other personnel into conflict zones and in response to humanitarian and disaster responses. It's here where Chaplains often do their most significant work in supporting both the deployed force and command elements.

Spirituality in the NZDF is understood much more widely than just Christian faith. All sorts of spiritualities are practiced. While Chaplaincy has historically been seen as an exclusively Christian ministry, an important and developing current question is the relationship with, and place of, other faiths, for example Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and secular humanists. Chaplaincy in the NZDF is seeking to make a proactive, positive and constructive contribution to these conversations and decision making. However this is not an easy space to be in, much wisdom and grace is required and prayer is much valued.

Our Chaplains are currently drawn from a wide variety of denominations and church groupings. This means we encompass a wide range of theologies and practices relating to qualifications, training, ordination / registration / credentialing and so on. It is our intention to maintain a level playing field for all prospective Chaplains, whatever their faith body affiliation. We want to be open to all women and men who possess the spiritual wisdom and maturity we believe the ministry of Chaplaincy in the NZDF requires.

## **ChDAC Representation**

As already mentioned, currently ChDAC has six members from six denominations. Because we have Chaplains from more than six denominations, some SRC's have responsibility for more than their own denomination. For example, Pastor Ralph Sutherland covers Chaplains from all the Pentecostal streams, and Paul Askin, the Baptist SRC, also covers Chaplains from the Churches of Christ (3) and the Open Brethren (2).

Denominations represented in this way may well be happy to continue with this arrangement, we are not pushing for change.

However, ChDAC as constituted, has the capacity for a larger membership so there is scope for more faith bodies supplying Chaplains to be represented directly and to participate with us in our work. Adding a new representative, a new SRC, is a relatively straightforward process when a denomination has a national structure and leadership. It is not so straightforward when there is no national body or leadership as, for example, when a candidate belongs to an independent church. However these issues are not insurmountable and, as has already been stated, we are committed to treating all candidates and Chaplains as equitably as we can.

A final question in this section which might come up in the future is the status of a SRC who finds him or herself in the position of having no serving Chaplains from their denomination. Do they continue in ChDAC? It's an interesting question for another day.

We invite enquires from those denominations new to ChDAC who have serving Chaplains but no current SRC. In the first instance you can contact either:

The Principal Defence Chaplain, Pete Olds, via email at s. 9(2)(a)

The Chair of ChDAC, Paul Askin, via email at s. 9(2)(a)

### **Conclusion and Thanks**

Thank you for reading this report through, your interest and support is much appreciated, and ultimately has a positive impact on the servicemen and servicewomen we serve.

It is our intention to make this report an annual event.

At any time your feedback, question, comment, is warmly invited.

Reverend Paul Askin  
SRC Baptist

Pastor Ralph Sutherland  
SRC Pentecostal

The Right Reverend Te Kitohi Pikaahu  
SRC Anglican

Reverend Colin Gordon  
SRC Presbyterian

Major Glenton Waugh  
SRC Salvation Army

Reverend Julian Wagg  
SRC Roman Catholic

Chaplain Pete Olds  
Principal Defence Chaplain, NZDF