

Do you sense a call to Armed Forces chaplaincy?



This short booklet provides an insight into the challenges and joys of Methodist ministers serving as Chaplains within the Armed Forces. They are fulfilling God's calling with great skill and integrity as they minister amongst the many thousands of people who make up the Armed Forces community.

If you are an ordained Methodist minister and would like to explore this form of ministry either full time or as a Reservist, please contact the Revd Dr Chrissie Howe, Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board, by email: sfb@methodistchurch.org.uk

If you would like more information on ministry within a specific branch of the Armed Forces, please use the contact details below:

Naval Chaplaincy Service

Naval Chaplain Recruiter

07811 991822

www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/roles-and-specialisations/services/surface-fleet/chaplain

Royal Army Chaplains' Department

The Staff Chaplain

07770 967977

ArmyCG-Chaplain-Recruiter@mod.gov.uk

<https://apply.army.mod.uk/roles/royal-army-chaplains-department/chaplain>

RAF Chaplaincy Branch

Chaplains' Branch Recruitment Officer

Philip.wilson126@mod.gov.uk

www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/roles/roles-finder/personnel-support/chaplain


The **Methodist Church**

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Methodist ministers serving as Chaplains to the Armed Forces



Further information and some short videos on the work of Methodist Chaplains and the Methodist Forces Board can be found at www.methodist.org.uk/forces-chaplains

Reserve chaplaincy

This form of chaplaincy may allow you to combine your current commitments whilst ministering in some vibrant and challenging contexts, as you will read about in this booklet.

Could serving as a reservist fulfil your calling to Armed Forces chaplaincy? Might this form of ministry broaden your experience and enrich the ministry you currently offer? If you are interested in knowing more, please do get in touch using the contact details on the back page.



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Foreword

For over 160 years, the people of God called Methodists have supported the spiritual and pastoral needs of members of the Armed Forces and their dependants. For over 100 years this has also involved a commitment to send Methodist ministers who are commissioned as Chaplains to live and work alongside service personnel at home and abroad, in times of peace and conflict. Forces Chaplains serve in the Royal Navy, British Army and the Royal Air Force in military communities on land, on ships and on submarines.

This publication demonstrates the experiences of our Chaplains in a range of ministry contexts: from their own discernment and training, to the spiritual and pastoral support they offer to new recruits and to personnel around the United Kingdom and overseas.

Life and ministry as an Armed Forces Chaplain is varied and challenging; it involves using and developing ministerial skills as pastor, worship leader and educator alongside offering moral guidance as a military professional. The experiences and opportunities are both demanding and rewarding. If you would like to explore this form of ordained ministry, there is further information available towards the end of this booklet.

With gratitude and prayers for those who minister in the name of the Methodist Church,

The Revd Dr Chrissie Howe
Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board,
on behalf of the Methodist Church





A call to Armed Forces chaplaincy

The Revd Hannah Bucke, Army Chaplain



Army chaplaincy had never been on my to do list, nor even really on my radar. So when asked by a friend in the Army Reserves to stand in at short notice for their 'padre' (military Chaplain) on Remembrance Sunday, I had been minded to say no. I had always managed to avoid taking Remembrance services, so what could I offer the very people to whom it meant the most? And anyway, I felt rather uncomfortable around anything to do with the military. However, against my better judgement, I said yes.

Having accepted the invitation, I found I was greatly moved by the experience: the importance the soldiers and officers placed on the service itself and on the ministry offered by Chaplains, the respect for the role of the Chaplain, and the speed with which I was simply

accepted as padre. I was also surprised by how welcome I was made and how comfortable I felt in the context, greatly valuing the time to talk socially to soldiers and officers following the service. I found the whole experience a great privilege.

After the service someone suggested I should consider becoming an Army Chaplain. I laughed at the time, but in the weeks that followed I found myself wanting to explore this further and beginning to feel an itch that needed to be scratched. Eventually I plucked up the courage to call the Royal Army Chaplains' Department to find out more.

I was invited to spend three days at an Army barracks with a group of Chaplains and it was this experience that consolidated my sense of a calling to Army chaplaincy. I made the decision to apply and went through the selection process to become a Chaplain to the Reserves. The process itself was not without its challenges; however, on being assigned to my first Regiment, I quickly fell in love with the role. So much so, I have recently transitioned into full-time service.

It is a diverse and dynamic ministry in which I feel truly valued and for which there is a genuine need. Every day brings new situations, from having a go at cross-country driving in a Land Rover to giving an address at a formal parade, to praying with a soldier. I can honestly say I have no regrets about saying yes.



It is a diverse and dynamic ministry in which I feel truly valued





Training as an Armed Forces Chaplain

The Revd John Mbayo, RAF Chaplain



I have been an RAF Chaplain at RAF Coningsby for one year, having completed my SERE (Specialist Entry and Re-Entrance) Course and Initial Officer training at RAF Cranwell in December 2018. Our training was exactly the same as that of any other Officer Cadet: drill, leadership, practical training and exercises in the field, as well as the Basic Air Warfare Course. This is so that we fully understand the rigours of RAF life, and so every serving member of the RAF knows that their Chaplains have gone through what they have experienced. This is what the heart of incarnational ministry is about: walking alongside those whom you serve, as well as giving Chaplains legitimacy in the eyes of serving personnel. I was commissioned with four other new Chaplains – three of us Christian, one Sikh and one Muslim, reflecting the diversity of modern Britain and the RAF community.

During this year, like every other Chaplain in their first year, I have undergone Initial Officer Training and Development. This has included a ‘Training the Trainers’ course to enable me to teach Cadets the Beliefs and Values course, as well as Continuous Personal Development. This has involved mental health training and developing my listening skills, which is key to my everyday ministry, as many Airmen and women come to talk and share their concerns. Often in response to these conversations, and with the person’s permission, I will talk to and advise their line managers of the issues involved so they can take appropriate decisions to help their personnel.

Training (whether professional development courses or personal fitness) is an ongoing part of RAF life for Chaplains and all other service men and women. It keeps us in a state of mental and physical readiness and enables us to deploy anywhere at any time.



This is what the heart of incarnational ministry is about: walking alongside those whom you serve





A day in the life of a Chaplain

The Revd Bill Gates, Royal Navy Chaplain

As a Methodist minister serving at the Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, my primary focus is on providing pastoral care to the recruits, marines, civilian staff and families.

The day begins with morning prayer, led by one of the three Chaplains serving here. We work as part of an ecumenical chaplaincy; whoever leads morning prayer follows the tradition of their sending church.

On completion, the chaplaincy team has a quick diary check. The Chaplaincy Centre is busy, as chaplaincy is right at the heart of the place, both geographically and emotionally. Aside from the three Chaplains, we have three pastoral workers and an admin assistant,

so coordinating the diary is important.

In the morning, I attend the Commanding Officer's Heads of Department meeting, and as I represent chaplaincy our views and opinions are well respected and frequently sought. Royal Navy Chaplains carry no rank (which is unique in the military), and are thereby able to interact with a lot of freedom.

Over lunch I go to the gym. I've always enjoyed 'phys' and the Royal Marines have decent

facilities. However, I often find that sessions in the gym end up with a number of deep conversations, as lads find it easier to converse in less formal surroundings.

In the early afternoon I deliver a lecture to the Sergeants Major Course. These gentlemen have served on average 18 years and are very experienced. The lecture is an opportunity to reinforce the fact that as Chaplains we are accessible and always endeavour to have time for people.

More often than not, I have a recruit who wishes to speak to me as they are struggling in training. We are a friendly face in the midst of a hard training environment.

At the end of the day, one of my colleagues waves goodbye through the window of the door, as he is off to spend a night on exercise with a recruit troop. My other colleague is slowly packing his office, for he is due to leave us soon and head off to his next appointment, which will see him join the Naval Base in Bahrain.

For me, chaplaincy to the Royal Marines is great; marines are always keen to have Chaplains around, and very often they can shock you with their honesty and depth of knowledge about spirituality.



Marines are always keen to have Chaplains around





Capital ship chaplaincy

The Revd Richard Rowe, Royal Navy Chaplain

HMS Prince of Wales is the UK's newest aircraft carrier, and I am its first Chaplain. This has made it a particularly varied appointment. I joined when the ship when it was still a building site, and have remained with it as it proceeded to sea following its commissioning to become a ship of the Royal Navy.

The ship's deck is bigger than three football pitches in area and nearly a quarter of a mile long; it has miles of corridors, hundreds of miles of cables, and thousands of compartments; it has engines that generate enough electricity to sustain a small town. However, all of it useless without the hundreds of men and women who make up the Ship's Company, whom I have the privilege to serve.

As with any ship's Chaplain (or any minister), visiting the circuit to see where people live and work is a vital part of the role. My circuit just happens to be a single society that floats, and is made up of people of the age range and skillset that is absent from most shore-side circuits. A daily visitation regime helps me see people where they are – in offices, workshops, on the bridge (where

the ship is controlled from) or in the air-traffic control area. It also means I easily achieve my 10,000 steps each day!

All this activity is underpinned with prayer. Not just personal prayer, but prayers from colleagues in naval chaplaincy and from the wider Methodist family. One of the benefits of a large ship is that there is a ship's chapel, a space set apart for prayer, quiet reflection, gentle conversation and Sunday services. Thus morning and evening prayer book-end the day, and the Sunday services become a place for people who are far from families and friends to have a time to reflect upon the week that has passed: to pray, worship and prepare for the week to come.

As Chaplains we sit with every rate and rank commissioned in the system, but also alongside, or semi-detached from, the structure. There are many stories that could be told about the people I am serving with, but they are not my stories to tell. With the privilege of serving comes the responsibility of holding all such confidences as sacred, to be told to no-one.



My circuit just happens to be a single society that floats





Unit chaplaincy on exercise

The Revd Stewart Young, Army Chaplain

There is little doubt that the bulk of my ministry as a unit Chaplain revolves around the pastoral care of soldiers as they seek to cope with the ebb and flow of life both within the Army and in wider society. So there are many individual encounters that tend to involve a fair amount of fatherly life coaching. Occasionally this can have a faith-related dimension for the soldier, but regardless of where they stand on the belief spectrum, they are always aware that my faith imbues all aspects of my ministry and are very accepting, even welcoming, of that.

When a unit goes on exercise, particularly for a prolonged period, or when we deploy to one of our overseas training areas (as my own unit recently did to Kenya for a couple of months), the demands

escalate significantly. Life goes on back home, but the soldiers are separated from their families and loved ones, both physically and due to very limited telephone or internet access.

Everyday issues such as family illness can place a greater burden on both the families back home and the soldier in the field. Sensitive pastoral care becomes vital in helping soldiers come to terms with the conflicting tensions of their chosen career and their natural desire to provide care for their loved ones. This is when a unit padre can be most in demand.

Of course, to be there for them means that you have to be prepared to journey to some pretty inhospitable places and live in fairly austere conditions, just as the soldiers do. That's part of the attraction of Army chaplaincy, and it's also something that helps you earn the right to minister to these exceptional young men and women, wherever their work takes them. There can be few more rewarding, and indeed more demanding, ministerial roles.

“ Sensitive pastoral care becomes vital in helping soldiers

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Being an RAF Station Chaplain

The Revd Dawn Colley, RAF Chaplain



Words I never envisaged would be in my normal lexicon as a Methodist minister have become commonplace for me in my various appointments as an RAF Chaplain. Some are obvious: fast jet; core values; exercises and operations; preparing to deploy. Others that were initially baffling became common parlance after a few months: CDT (Compulsory Drugs Testing); SME (Subject Matter Expert); OJAR (Officers Joint Annual Report); the list could go on. However, to serve the RAF community I need to be fully conversant or risk being seen as a visitor in a strange world.

Whilst I still undertake all the usual elements of Methodist ministry, such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, worship services and pastoral appointments, the amount of time spent doing these is

considerably less than in circuit. This is because on an RAF Station my principal objective is to be present with individuals in their work environment, which enables me to understand the stresses and strains of their roles and the

toll that takes on them and their families. To achieve this, RAF Chaplains are present in work, in downtime at the gym, in a variety of clubs and in their families' lives. All of this is wrapped around with prayer.

We work closely with everyone on Station, from the Commanding Officer to newly enlisted Airmen, as well as civil servants, contractors and often our sister services the Royal Navy and Army. Pastoral care is offered to them all. As a RAF Chaplain I have been part of ecumenical chaplaincy teams but presently serve as a lone Station Chaplain. Either way, Chaplains are part of a much larger team. Working alongside other members of the welfare team such as doctors, social workers, personnel management and community support staff, together we support individuals and raise concerns within specific working environments.

Every day brings variety: unexpected people dropping into the Chaplaincy Centre; chance conversations requesting support or encouragement; enquiries about faith and opportunities to be part of ceremonial or training events. All of which enable me to share the language of God's hope with the military community.



We work closely with everyone on Station... together we support individuals and raise concerns





From initial calling to Senior Chaplain

The Revd Paul Mellor, RAF Chaplain

Back in May 2000 I felt a call from God to work as a Chaplain in the RAF, which was supported by the Methodist Church. Over the past 20 years I have served on operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the Middle East, and have had an overseas posting to the Falklands. My present posting is to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Belgium; here I coordinate military chaplaincy throughout mainland Europe and Turkey.

Exciting as my current role is, the lion's share of my service has been ministering in UK-based teams on RAF stations. In my last four postings, I have led teams in the role of Senior Chaplain. Main Operating Bases and training establishments have teams of three or more assigned Chaplains

who can be of any religious denomination. I have seen real ecumenism at work, and it has been a joy to lead Anglican, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Assemblies of God, Presbyterian, Salvation Army and Methodist Chaplains as they share God's message of love and hope for all. The Chaplains'

experience ranges from those relatively new to ministry to those with extensive experience in a variety of settings.

My role as Senior Chaplain is to mentor new entrant Chaplains as they transition into military life, whilst coordinating chaplaincy for all those for whom the Station is responsible. This varies massively from Station to Station. I recall one team meeting at RAF Marham where one Chaplain was excited when tasked to visit an outlying radar unit 30 minutes away. His face fell a little when I informed our colleague that she was going to exercise 'global itinerancy' by visiting UK military personnel and their families at Edwards Air Force Base, California.

As Senior Chaplain I sit on the station's Executive Board offering pastoral, spiritual and ethical counsel. I consider my most important duty to be ensuring that the chaplaincy team exercise their Christian ministry in a manner that they find fulfilling, fun, and above all, faithful.



I have seen real ecumenism at work, and it has been a joy



Army chaplaincy in a Divisional Headquarters

The Revd David Barrett, Army Chaplain



Serving as a Chaplain in an Army Divisional Headquarters offers many opportunities to get alongside soldiers, officers and civil servants who are a part of a fast-paced and highly professional organisation. Day by day they are involved in planning, organising and carrying out key tasks that make a difference to the defence of our country and mean that the British Army is a force for good around the world. The Division has approaching 30,000 regular and reservist soldiers under its command, and so the scale and scope of activity is wide.

My role is to ensure that effective chaplaincy is delivered to all, with a main focus on the Headquarters and support to its General Officer Commanding. Alongside that is the pastoral care and leadership to over 50

Chaplains who are in front-line units and Brigade headquarters.

There is rarely a dull moment and often a great deal of challenge and activity. There is also joy and a real sense of calling in representing not only the

Methodist Church in this setting but, more importantly, the God we know who is always with us.

Opportunities to speak about things of great significance are never far away; nor are moments of banter and humour that are typical of military life. After over 20 years serving as an Army Chaplain there is a sense in which all that has gone before has prepared me for what I am doing at the moment. The formation and training that life in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department brings is quite exceptional. I have enjoyed a huge variety of postings with different kinds of units and formations both at home and overseas. It has been great to work with a whole range of soldiers, from young recruits to deployed armoured infantry soldiers. I am very grateful to the Methodist Church for sending me to serve in this way.



There is rarely a dull moment and often a great deal of challenge and activity





An incarnational ministry

The Revd Mark Mander, Royal Navy Chaplain



On Christmas Eve, I was with 170 submariners, miles away from home, under the waves in an undisclosed location in one of the world's oceans. With no contact with the outside world for a number of months, I had the awesome responsibility of sharing the Christmas gospel with the Ship's Company. I was able to remind them that Christmas meant God's presence was with them.

The carol service on the submarine was much quieter than those taking place back in the UK, as the ship's company had to maintain excellent 'noise hygiene'. This meant singing Christmas carols in a whispered tone to ensure no one could hear and locate the submarine.

As with all military chaplaincy, effective ministry to the Submarine

Service is incarnational. This means it is essential for Chaplains to go to sea and qualify as a submariner, so they can minister to submariners and their families from a position of knowledge and understanding. From my time at sea, I quickly learned some of the greatest 'heroes' of the Submarine Service were in fact the parents, sons, daughters, brothers

and sisters, nephews and nieces of serving submariners, who unwillingly give up contact with their loved ones for many months on end.

I am grateful for my calling to work with submariners and be part of a small yet highly significant ministry of establishing the Kingdom of God below the waves. This calling has seen me deploy to the North Pole to conduct a memorial service onboard a submarine whose crew remembered fallen shipmates from a previous patrol.

There have been plenty of other opportunities for me to offer pastoral care in other locations around the world where the Royal Navy's submarines operate, so the old strap line 'join the navy and see the world' even applies to Chaplains in the Submarine Service!

I rejoice in my calling as a Methodist minister, and I am fulfilled in serving as a Chaplain within the Royal Navy. My parish really does include the whole world, for wherever the ships, submarines, sailors and marines are, I am able to go with and serve them.

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My parish really does include the whole world

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Overseas posting

The Revd Philip Corrigan, RAF Chaplain

I arrived in Cyprus in the middle of a very hot summer, just in time to take part in the summer outreach, 'Go Fish'. This was a four-day event for 130 children aged 5-11. The activities included games, crafts, Bible stories, snacks and singing worship songs with actions. It took 14 volunteers to deliver the programme, the majority of whom came from our Station church. The children had so much fun and the volunteers, while exhausted, enjoyed it just as much.

Each child was given a Go Fish t-shirt and a CD with the Go Fish worship songs, and they took their crafts home at the end of each day. We had so many positive comments from across Station; parents even got to know all the worship songs by heart! At the end of the week children and parents were invited to attend our Go

Fish Sunday service, which was well attended. It was a delight to see how much each child and their family got out of the whole experience.

Building on from this, I have been able to launch a weekly coffee morning and a weekday morning children's group. For the adults we now offer morning and

lunchtime Mindfulness sessions. All these activities have drawn people into the Chaplaincy Centre and provide many opportunities for ministry.

While Cyprus is a lovely place to live and work, it is not all sunshine. Families are far from their wider family support networks; it is difficult for spouses to gain employment and in the winter months activities are limited. This has a negative effect on many of our families and can lead to a variety of welfare and pastoral needs. As a Chaplain, it has been one of my busiest postings, but it has also provided me with numerous opportunities to share the love of God.



As a Chaplain, it has been one of my busiest postings





Being a Chaplain on an Operational Tour

The Revd Robert Birnie, Army Chaplain

Between June and December 2019, I was deployed as the Chaplain to 1st Battalion Duke of Lancaster Battle Group: an Operational Tour. Training began in January in Kenya and continued through to deployment. By the time the Battle Group returned, the soldiers and I had been away from home for ten months.

As the only British Army Chaplain on the tour, my 'parish', or in military language 'Area of Operations', covered eight camps, from Baghdad in Iraq to the Kurdistan mountains and then to Kuwait.

A standard week on tour consisted of ministering to over 400 British service personnel: male and female soldiers mostly in their early twenties. Many of these brave young soldiers, my military parish, have never

attended a church service other than for baptisms, funerals or weddings; they may never have spoken to a clergyman or woman.

Many of our military flock come from areas of social deprivation, have low academic achievement or have had adverse childhood experiences. Yet despite or in spite of these challenges they are some of the most amazing people you will ever have the privilege to meet. They are highly professional, steadfast and loyal. They are fun

to be around and find humour in the darkest of moments. They understand sacrifice and selfless commitment better than most.

Nothing prepares you for working in temperatures of high 40°C. Some days I thought I might melt in the heat! My daily activities included meetings with the military doctor, welfare meetings, pastoral care and general administration. Most weeks would involve flying between camps and making four-hour road moves to outstations to visit brave young soldiers in isolated areas who looked forward to a chat with a padre, either to break up the monotony of the day or to explore deep and meaningful questions.

During my time on tour I had the pleasure to oversee the development of a much-needed welfare suite on the largest camp. The effort was well rewarded when it finally opened, and soldiers were able to access the resources, a place for them to reflect or to seek guidance and support.

Chaplaincy on tour is the most amazing form of incarnational ministry, living alongside and sharing the dangers, the highs and lows of the soldiers' lives. Bringing Christ into their lives is one of the most humbling and rewarding experiences of my life.



One of the most humbling and rewarding experiences of my life





Rising to the challenge of Armed Forces chaplaincy

The Revd Janice Honey-Morgan, Royal Navy Chaplain

I was born and raised in South Africa and joined the Royal Navy as a Chaplain in 2008. Prior to this, in 2000, I began ministerial ordination training with the Methodist Church at the Cambridge Theological Federation. Upon completion of my studies, I went on to take pastoral charge of four churches in High Wycombe before starting naval chaplaincy training at Britannia Royal Naval College. When I joined the Royal Navy, I was the first ordained Methodist woman to join Her Majesty's Forces.

Over my time in the Royal Navy, ministry has been exciting and varied. I believe that serving as a military Chaplain is how I represent the Methodist Church to so many people who would never otherwise have known anything about Methodism.

After passing out of Britannia Royal Naval College, I joined HMS Collingwood, a Phase 2 training establishment, before joining Portsmouth Flotilla. Here I served in a number of warships, including HMS Daring, HMS St Albans and HMS Iron Duke, deploying to places such as the Caribbean, New York, Barcelona and travelling through the Suez Canal to the Middle East for patrols in the Gulf. In 2010 I returned to HMS Collingwood for two years before moving on to complete the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Maritime) at the Defence Academy, Shrivenham. My next assignment was at RNAS Yeovilton with the Fleet Air Arm.

In 2015 I joined Commando Logistics Regiment as the first female Chaplain ever to serve with a Royal Marine unit in 351 years. I now serve on warship HMS Albion and next week we are sailing to Norway. The adventure continues!



I represent the Methodist Church to so many people

