

## 16. Methodist Forces Board

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- 1 As in previous years, British forces have continued to be deployed to several areas of risk, as well as for training purposes, and at times this includes the deployment of forces chaplains. The value of the role of the Chaplain and the ministry they embody continues to be vital in all the places they are asked to be a presence. All three services continue to recruit ordained ministers to serve as chaplains to the Armed Forces.
- 2 We have a total of 26 full-time chaplains: six Royal Navy, ten Army, eight Royal Air Force and one full-time Army Reserve. Since the last Conference the Revds Phil Corrigan, Albert Jackson, and Richard Rowe have returned to Circuit from Forces Chaplaincy. The Revd Gary Watt received his commission as an Army Chaplain in April 2021. We continue to receive a steady number of enquiries about Forces Chaplaincy from ministers, as part of their ongoing discernment of calling. All Methodist forces chaplains continue to receive Methodist reflective supervision either from fellow forces chaplains trained as supervisors, or external Methodist supervisors. The Board continues to commend all our Chaplains to the Conference for prayer as they serve the Church through this vocation.
- 3 The Revd Michael Parker has been appointed Chaplain General of the British Army. The Revd David Barrett has meanwhile been appointed Deputy Chaplain General of the British Army. This marks the first time that Methodist ministers have occupied the two most senior chaplaincy positions in the British Army, and is a reflection of the high regard in which Michael and David are held, and of the value of their ministry. The Conference will be invited to hear from both of these ministers when it meets in the Representative Session. They, as well as other of our Chaplains will be present at the Conference for a lunch hosted by the Board for members of the Conference.
- 4 The Secretary was privileged to accompany the President of the Conference on the annual visit to the Forces, which this year was to the Royal Navy. The President was welcomed to HMNB Portsmouth, where the majority of the Royal Navy's surface fleet is based, meeting with personnel at all levels, and having a number of briefings and searching conversations across the base. We were glad to welcome the President to the Methodist Tri-service Forces Chaplains' Conference at Beckett House in February. This was a convivial and thought-provoking visit which was greatly valued. We were joined for this conference by the Revd Chris Swift, who presented a session reflecting on his experience of the COVID-19 pandemic as director of MHA chaplaincy, and by the Revd Dr Peter Phillips, who led two sessions on digital theology. Trey Hall led a session on the Church's new Evangelism and Growth strategies, Doug Swanney led a session on current news within the Methodist Church, and the President led two sessions reflecting on the Presidential themes.
- 5 With the support of the Ministries Team and the East Solent and Downs Circuit (Southampton District), the new dedicated route whereby service personnel may discern a call to preach and undertake the Worship: Leading and Preaching training has been launched. Several enquiries have been received from potential students, with one service person now undertaking the course via the Forces route.
- 6 The Board has increased engagement with Methodist ministers serving as cadet force chaplains, scheduling what are to be regular meetings between Board representatives and cadet force chaplains.
- 7 The Board was pleased to be able to offer the booklet, Methodist ministers serving as Cadet

Force Chaplains to the Armed Forces, to share stories of Methodist ministers who represent the Methodist Church in this dynamic, challenging, and rewarding context.

- 8 With contributions from Methodist forces chaplains, the Board's project officer produced a resource to help Methodist churches lead Remembrance Sunday services. This resource will be updated for Remembrance 2022. The projects officer also produced a guide for churches designed to help colleagues provide an initial response to anyone suffering from PTSD.
- 9 Both the items mentioned above, and a range of other material, are available on the updated Forces Chaplaincy pages of the Methodist Church website which seek to offer a gateway for supporting and informing on the ministry of our Chaplains.
- 10 The Board also offers a range of small grants to chaplains for activities within their communities; these continue to affirm the work of the Chaplains amongst all those serving in the Forces and their families.
- 11 The work of the MFB continues to focus around:
  - The activities listed under SO 1007 and a full programme of pastoral supervision, pastoral visits, and an annual Tri-Service Conference;
  - Delivery of major projects and small grants in support of armed forces chaplains;
  - Engagement with local Methodist churches to resource and support increased delivery on the Armed Forces Covenant;
  - Initiatives to support Methodist colleagues offering their services as officiating or Cadet Force chaplains;
  - Increased awareness and engagement with and support for families of Methodist serving personnel - predominantly through local Methodist churches.
- 12 The Forces Board continues to be extremely thankful to the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust (AMMT) for its excellent financial support, with a generous AMMT grant for the 2022/23 Connexional year forthcoming. Following resolution 11/2 of the 2021 Conference, directing the Methodist Forces Board and Aldershot Methodist Military Trust to bring a proposal for a unified body for Methodist engagement with the Armed Forces to the 2022 Conference, further conversations were undertaken but no proposal for a unified body has been agreed. In the meantime the Board have taken much time over the last year and in conversation with the Methodist Council to further reflect on the core task of the Board on behalf of the Conference in relation to Forces Chaplaincy. This work will continue to be embedded in the year ahead.
- 13 The Board is extremely grateful to Mrs Liesel Parkinson and Mr Mark Powell for their commitment to the Forces Board and wishes them every blessing for the future.
- 14 The Forces Board continues to express to the Conference its thanks for the prayerful support given to all our chaplains and encourages anyone who would like to know more about Forces Chaplaincy to speak to members of the Board.
- 15 The Board is grateful for the ongoing diligence and commitment of its Secretary to the ministries of the chaplains and the Board.
- 16 Members of the Methodist Forces Board for 2022/2023 will be appointed by the Methodist Council later this year.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

#### **16/1. The Conference received the Report.**