

Methodist Forces Chaplaincy: Information Pack for Applicants

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. Chaplains offer ministry in a range of contexts. They offer spiritual and pastoral support 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.

Armed Forces Chaplaincy is open to presbyters who hold a British Passport and fulfil a variety of criteria listed in the 'candidate requirements' section of this document. In the Methodist Church, candidature and on-going care and supervision falls to the Methodist Forces Board.

Forces Chaplaincy Fact File:

- There are over 146,000 serving personnel on the British Armed Services (Royal Navy, Army Royal Air Force) together with 57,000 MoD Civilians and over 36,000 Reserves. Cadet Forces number 130,000.
- The great majority of those serving have an age profile between 18 -35 years.
- All three forces are supported by chaplaincy services: Royal Navy Chaplaincy Service, Royal Army Chaplaincy Department and Royal Air Force Chaplaincy Profession.
- There are over 250 commissioned Christian chaplains from the mainstream denominations including around 30 Methodist Chaplains across the three services.
- Chaplaincy is offered in a multi-faith context alongside civilian chaplains representing Islam; Judaism; Sikhism; Buddhism.
- Some chaplaincy is offered by local civilian ministers (OCM) and for Reserve forces and Cadet Forces.

Further information about Forces Chaplaincy can be found at the Methodist Forces Chaplaincy webpages:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/chaplaincy/exploring-chaplaincy/forces-chaplaincy/>

If you have any further questions about Methodist Forces Chaplaincy, or would like to proceed with your application, please do not hesitate to contact **The Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board**, at sfb@methodistchurch.org.uk.

Forces Chaplaincy: Role Profile

Mission Statement:

To provide spiritual, moral and pastoral support to the Armed Forces in order to nurture and develop servicemen and women and their families.

Tasks:

- Provide spiritual, moral and pastoral care to all servicemen and women, and their families, irrespective of denomination or belief
- Be a serviceman/ woman's friend standing slightly apart from the Chain of Command and using a degree of independence to represent the serviceman/ woman
- To be the Commanding Officer's advisor/critical friend
- To maintain a church
- Contribute to a unit's welfare activity
- Lead on moral and character training

Characteristics of a Forces Chaplain:

- Theologically trained
- Pastorally experienced
- Strong faith
- Leadership potential
- Commitment
- Respect for the military profession
- Emotional maturity
- Physically fit/healthy
- Broad-mindedness, tolerance and respect, especially in connection with ecumenism, multi-faith and gender equality issues

Some of the key characteristics of Forces Chaplaincy:

- Minister to all – irrespective of religion or belief
- Church is 'mobile' and not centred on a building
- Empathy with, and respect for, those serving in the military profession
- Exposure to danger
- Youthful 'unchurched' community
- Hierarchical authority and procedures
- Commitment to training, exercise and personal development
- Disruption to family life
- Pressures and temptations on chaplain's faith
- Team member with ecumenical and multi-faith chaplaincy colleagues
- Political nature of the Armed Forces

Forces Chaplaincy: Candidate Requirements

Are you a Methodist presbyter who holds a British passport and is in Full Connexion with the British Methodist Conference?

In addition to the above, to be eligible for Forces Chaplaincy as a Methodist presbyter, you should also:

- Meet the age requirements for your chosen service, that is be:
 - no older than 50 years of age for Army chaplaincy;
 - between 26 - 53 years of age for RAF chaplaincy;
 - and between 26 - 48 years of age for Naval chaplaincy
- be in good health (physical and mental)
- have at least 3 years post-ordination pastoral experience
- at an appropriate time, have discussed this possibility with your Superintendent / Chair of District
- be sure that you and your family understand fully the implications of military life.

Candidates for military chaplaincy are carefully selected and follow a rigorous testing process. Before final acceptance by any of the three services, a medical examination, a security check and an enhanced safeguarding check (DBS) are always made by the service.

The process to become a Forces Chaplain takes, on average, about a year, and would proceed along the following lines:

- Alongside the information contained in this document, you should study and then complete the 'Forces Chaplaincy - Enquiry Form'. Once this form is completed it should be returned to the Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board;
- If you have not already done so, you should notify your Chair of District of your intent to apply for Forces Chaplaincy;
- References will be sought from the two referees nominated in your application form, as well as your Chair of District;
- You will then be invited to an interview with a panel of Methodist Forces Board members. On the basis of this and your paper application, the panel will decide whether to endorse your application;
- If you are successful, a letter of endorsement will be sent to your preferred Service. You can then apply for Chaplaincy with your preferred Service. In the event that there are no vacancies your name will be held until one becomes available at which time you will be contacted again;
- Each of the three services has its own selection process which usually involves some form of acquaint visits to military establishments;
- If you are accepted for Forces Chaplaincy you will be guided through the administrative transition. The Secretary of the Forces Board will continue to be your link with the Methodist Conference.

Are you a Methodist Minister or minister whose denomination is in communion with the World Methodist Council, who is not in a station under the British Methodist Conference and may not be a British passport holder?

Anyone in this group applying for Forces Chaplaincy through the British Methodist Church is required in effect to become a de facto Methodist Minister under the authority and discipline of the British Methodist Conference. The procedure by which this is realized is referred to as becoming 'RECOGNISED AND REGARDED'. **It is the responsibility of The Conference Office, at Methodist Church House, to deal with all such applications, but the Secretary of the Forces Board can guide you in this matter.** The Forces Board can only deal with people who are already so regarded. **It is the responsibility of the candidate to satisfy any immigration or work permit requirements.** See Notes 1 & 2

In addition to the above, to be eligible for Forces Chaplaincy as a Recognised and Regarded Minister, you should also:

- Meet the age requirements for your chosen service, that is be:
 - no older than 50 years of age for Army chaplaincy;
 - between 26 - 53 years of age for RAF chaplaincy;
 - and between 26 - 48 years of age for Naval chaplaincy
- be in good health (physical and mental)
- have at least 3 years pastoral experience - see Note 3.
- make sure your application comes via your own Conference Office/Church Authorities
- be sure that you and your family understand fully the implications of military life.

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Note 1.

The Ministry of Defence will only accept chaplains from authorised sending churches. The Roman Catholic Church; The Church of England; The Methodist Church; via the United Board (covering Baptist, AoG, Elim, Churches in Communities, URC, etc). This is because they require a body whose standard of theological training is assured and whose clergy are supported and under the discipline of a recognised ecclesiastical authority.

Note 2.

However as this process is only authorised once a year by the Methodist Conference a degree of flexibility may be required with some actions taking place in tandem.

Note 3.

For overseas applicants it is preferred if at least two of these years have been in a British Circuit. Chaplains are required to be the pastors of ALL members of HM Forces irrespective of cultural or ethnic origin, religion or belief. For this the knowledge and use of colloquial English and experience of British culture is essential. Should this requirement have been satisfied within another context i.e. as a student at a British institution, for example, then this condition may be waived, but the 3 years' pastoral experience is mandatory.

Note 4.

Travel expenses are only available for travel within the United Kingdom. The Methodist Forces Board is NOT responsible for overseas travel or immigration requirements.