

## 11. Methodist Forces Board

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1. The level of activity this year has been quieter than in recent times although there are still British forces deployed in small numbers to several areas of risk which from time to time require chaplaincy support. These are often linked to the threat of ISIS which remains a key feature of security concern. Chaplaincy in all three services continues to be below ideal capacity and the drawdown from Germany continues which needs chaplaincy support on an ongoing basis.
2. Our complement of chaplains is remarkably stable (with a total of 30 full-time chaplains: 8 Royal Navy, 14 Army, 8 Royal Air Force and 2 part-time Army Reserve chaplains). Since the last Conference, no chaplains have left the service but this summer Roy Burley will leave the Army for a circuit appointment in Lancashire and, during the course of the coming year, Ernie Grimshaw will leave the Royal Navy. Three presbyters have been recommended to individual services for selection and, if successful, one will go forward for training with the Army, one for Army Reserve and, in the summer of 2018, one for training with the Royal Air Force. The Board expects to interview a number of deacons later in the year.
3. A full programme of safeguarding training has been put in place. This will be updateable as new guidelines apply.
4. The Secretary and the Chair were again privileged to accompany the President of the Conference on the annual visit to the Forces, which this year was to the Royal Air Force. The President was welcomed to RAF Marham and RAF Honington and had a number of briefings and searching conversations at both locations. These were featured in the President's mid-year reflection in the *Methodist Recorder*. We were glad to welcome the President to the Methodist tri-service Forces Chaplains' Conference at Ampport House in February. This was an inspiring and thought-provoking visit which was greatly appreciated. We were also joined for this conference by George Bosworth from the Bield Retreat Centre in Perth to present three sessions on 'Male Spirituality' using the Richard Rohr Rites of Passage model. As every year, the Revd Dr Andrew Wood (the Chair of District with responsibility for chaplains as they leave the Forces) was present throughout this conference. Dr Wood and Doug Swanney joined Jude Levermore, who led a session on current issues facing the Methodist Church.
5. The Forces Board continues to be thankful to the Aldershot Methodist Military Trust for its excellent financial support. It is this provision that has allowed the Board to continue to fund a range of projects including a children and youth work project within the Aldershot garrison town, remarkably supported by North Camp Methodist Church. The Board also sustains a part-time pastoral worker to support the chaplaincy at the tri-service Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) in Northwood and a developing piece of work at RAF Benson. Since 1 September, the Board has seen the flourishing of a full-time families worker for the two congregations (Roman Catholic and Protestant) at St Alban's MOD Church linked to the chaplaincy at the Defence Academy Shrivenham and the pastoral worker for JITG Chicksands working with Phase 2 trainees. The Board has just approved a project for a families worker at RNAS Culdrose in Cornwall.

6. The appointment of a Projects Officer in March 2016 has provided capacity that has allowed us to gain the full potential for new projects by managing this area of work as well as exploring new avenues of service. The Board continues to work with Circuits local to the projects it supports with the ambition of providing a pastoral worker for a group of Circuits with a specific mission to military families. The Board is currently in the development phase for projects at Tidworth and Catterick in collaboration with local Circuits and Districts.
7. The Board also offers a range of small grants to chaplains for activities within the Forces communities.
8. In particular our work at Aldershot has very successfully piloted 'Who Let The Dads Out?' in a military context and is developing a military version of 'Soul Man' to be piloted later in the year. If successful, the Board will partner with the Bible Reading Fellowship in publishing and disseminating this material.
9. As promised a year ago, the Board brought a proposal to the April Methodist Council for the creation of the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant with the Methodist Church, encouraging the Church to express its commitment to our military personnel and their families. This proposal was accepted and in the coming months there will be opportunities for briefing Districts and Circuits so that they may take full advantage of the local opportunities that the Covenant presents.
10. The 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.
11. The Board is grateful for the ongoing diligence and commitment of its Secretary to the ministries of the chaplains and the Board.
12. Members of the Methodist Forces Board for 2017/2018 will be: the Revds David Barrett, Michael Hall, Robert L Jones (convener), Paul Mellor, Jean Quick, Timothy Wilkinson, Mr Peter Green, Col Philip Harrison, Lt Cdr (retd) Shirley Hewitt, Ms Jude Levermore, Mrs Liesel Parkinson, Mr Mark Powell, Mr Doug Swanney (Chair), Lt Cdr (retd) Matthew Thomas.

**\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

**11/1. The Conference received the Report.**