



UNITING CHURCH DEFENCE FORCE CHAPLAINCY

1. INTRODUCTION

This committee seeks to enable the work that Uniting Church Chaplains do in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and to maintain the bridge with the wider Church. Chaplains go about significant pastoral work - sometimes responding to things that get attention in the media. Most of the time they go about their ministry without fanfare. For some the personal cost is weighty, nevertheless there is a need to identify ordained ministers who have a call to this context for ministry. Some senior Uniting Church chaplains contribute in very significant ways because of the depth of experience that they bring. The Uniting Church can be proud of the chaplains and the significant ministry that they offer.

1.1 Key challenges are:

- 1 Ongoing need to identify and raise up suitable people for ADF Chaplaincy.
- 2 Build understanding of Presbytery and Synod leaders with regard to how Reserve chaplains can be valued for the extra training and experience gained in a secular organisation and not be disadvantaged by placements processes and transitions.
- 3 Strengthen links with Presbyteries and Synods and explore ways that the compliance requirements could be managed nationally for full time chaplains.

As this report is being written there are 35 Uniting Church chaplains serving in the ADF. That is made up of 17 chaplains in a full time capacity (3 are women) and 18 who are part-time (4 are women.) Chaplains on contracts with more than 150 days per year are counted into the full time category.

Army - 6 Full time, 8 part-time and one completing In-service training.

Navy - 3 Full time, 2 part-time

Air Force - 7 Full time, 8 part-time

1.2 Awards

Reverend Simote Finau - Commendation

Simote Finau, Navy, was honoured to be awarded Gold Commendation for his effective service as Task Group Chaplain during Operation TONGA ASSIST 22-1 on 9 December 2022 from COL Alb on behalf of the ADF and Simote responded saying, "Praise be to God. Let glory and honour be God's alone." The recognition of Simote's ministry affirms the value of chaplaincy and the benefit for serving members, their families and the communities that are serve.

Reverend John Dansie – 414 Award for Army Chaplaincy

John Dansie received the 414 Award which is an award presented annually in recognition of outstanding Chaplaincy ministry in the Army – so named to refer to the 414 chaplains who served in WW1. Reverend John Dansie, Army, spent the summer of 22/23 in the Solomon Islands. He is satisfied that he was able to provide Chaplaincy support to the task group. John has completed his masters in which he assessed the implementation of the policy in the Army Chaplains Department requiring each serving Chaplain to engage a Professional Pastoral Supervisor. John has also now qualified as a Professional Pastoral Supervisor.

Reverend Doctor Lindsay Carey – Conspicuous Service Medal

Rev'd Dr Lindsay Carey was awarded the Conspicuous Service Medal (CSM) in the 2024 Australia Day awards. His research on the issue of Moral Injury and his work with Reverend Dr Tim Hodgson on Pastoral Narrative Disclosure as a tool for responding to Moral Injury has been recognized internationally.



1.3 Moral Injury and Pastoral Narrative Disclosure

“Moral injury is a complex trauma related syndrome involving a correlation of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual symptoms that can have substantial impact upon health and well-being.” The groundbreaking work of Reverend Lindsay Carey and Reverend Timothy Hodgson uses a holistic bio-psycho-social-spiritual approach to moral injury, by including chaplaincy in the screening and treatment of moral injury among actively serving military members and retired veterans.”¹ Some people not only present with PTSD but also with Moral Injury and this research has demonstrated the value of bringing chaplains alongside other professionals in responding to personnel who present with complex conditions. The training of chaplains across the ADF has equipped chaplains with a tool for screening for Moral Injury and a new technique for treatment called, Pastoral Narrative Disclosure.

The work of these two Uniting Church Chaplains has gained momentum and other Uniting Church chaplains are amongst those who are leading the training of chaplains in Navy, Army and Air Force.

In October 2023 a team of Uniting Church Chaplains presented sessions on Moral Injury and Pastoral Narrative Disclosure at the Australian Military Medical Association Conference in Perth. There is already interest from the Defence Forces of our allies to have the MI and PND training delivered in their organizations. In February 2024 ADF Chaplains road tested the training with chaplains from Uniting Care Queensland. Raising awareness of Moral Injury amongst chaplains, especially in aged care and hospital sectors, means that veterans have a better chance of receiving the spiritual care that they need.

2. VETERAN AND FAMILY SUPPORT

The Royal Commission into Member and Veteran Suicide is drawing to a close. Some chaplains have made submissions, supported their Commanders and staff to prepare for and present to and respond to the Inquiry. The staff who have read and listened to the very harrowing stories have appreciated the skilled support of chaplains. It is likely that the recommendations will include some chaplaincy support for people after they have been discharged. That means that even more Chaplains will be needed.

Identifying veteran friendly communities and congregations and training local people on the ground to understand what is needed in order to be a safe community for veterans and their families is an opportunity. Congregations and ministry agents can be trained to “be Christ” and to stand with veterans, and to assist people towards wholeness and mending the wounds of life and military service. Pilot programs for Chaplaincy to veterans are happening in Perth, Townsville and Brisbane.

3. UCA DEFENCE CHAPLAINS

All serving Uniting Church Defence Force Chaplains have been ordained and have a degree in either Theology or Ministry. The thorough formation and years of pastoral experience required prior to serving in the ADF prepares them well for providing one-on-one pastoral ministry and it prepares them for leadership in the Chaplaincy Departments. Comment was made recently by one ADF Senior Officer that in their view, UCA chaplains in Defence are notably well trained and formed for their ministry and work in ADF chaplaincy.

Chaplains are trusted advisors for Commanders on matters of faith, religion, ethics and character and Uniting Church chaplains continue to be advanced and promoted to greater responsibilities within the organization. Two Uniting Church women RAAF chaplains have been advanced to Chaplain Division

¹ Lindsay B. Carey and Timothy J. Hodgson “Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care and Considerations regarding Screening and Treatment” Original research
Frontiers in Psychiatry, 05 December 2018 Volume 9 - 2018 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2018.00619>



3. Rev'ds Christine Senini and Robyn Kidd, are now in roles that are in equivalent rank to WING COMMANDER. Further, two chaplains have been advanced to Chaplain Division 4, Rev'ds Charles Vesely (Army) and Alan Williams (RAAF) now occupy senior officer roles in the ADF and chaplaincy. Chaplain Division 4 is equivalent of COLONEL/GROUP CAPTAIN respectively. That means that significant experience and giftedness for leadership has been recognized by the ADF and more responsibility placed on these chaplains' shoulders.

4. WOMEN IN CHAPLAINCY

The number of Women serving as Chaplains in the ADF has fallen in recent years - down to 8/36. It is a difficult to recruit women as many have responded to a call to ministry in later years so the number of years available to gain enough experience to contribute at this higher level is limited.

Defence always needs effective Support Chaplains, but it also needs a pool of capable trusted leaders in Chaplaincy.

5. RECRUITING

Identifying sufficient Uniting Church ministers to serve in the ADF, part-time or full time, is an ongoing challenge. Recruiting for ADF chaplaincy happens from the same pool of ordained clergy who the Church needs to serve in various ministry roles. ADF chaplaincy needs people who are prepared to move around the country, leap out of their comfort zones, be away from home for long periods and deploy. Australian citizens who feel called to chaplaincy in the ADF need to meet the criteria as follows:

- less than 55 years of age,
- qualified ordained ministers with a Bachelor Theology/Ministry,
- three years experience post ordination,
- fit and healthy and suitable to serve in the context of military life,
- openness to serve in a secular organization which is multi-faith, diverse and inclusive.
- applicants need to be endorsed by the Uniting Church member to the Religious Advisory Committee for the Services.
- Only about one in ten people who apply make it through the Defence Force recruiting process.
- Another pathway is for serving Defence Force personnel to discern a call and candidate through their Presbytery and embark on a season of in-service training to prepare them for chaplaincy.

In recent times, Rev'd Lyall Reid commenced as a Navy Chaplain in HMAS Stirling last October after completing his in-service training program. Rev'd Brendon Lukin is preparing for Army Chaplaincy after completing the required 3 years of Pastoral Experience.

6. MAINTAIN BRIDGE WITH SENDING FAITH GROUP

In order to maintain their endorsement by Uniting Church as chaplains, each chaplain must comply with the UCA policy on Safe Ministry/Safe Church (or equivalent) and awareness training for Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice. Remaining current and compliant is difficult because not all Presbyteries and Synods offer parallel programs for training. There is the added complication that ADF programs govern our chaplains and activities, which often do not synchronize with the programs and activities of the church. For example, in South Australia chaplains attend "Through Their Eyes" a program delivered by the Safe Environments for Children and Young people of the Government of South Australia. In Queensland Code of Ethics training days are often only offered once per year and if ADF chaplains are on exercise, at a training course or deployed it is challenging to stay compliant.



Chaplains who are posted across the whole nation would benefit from being able to do their Safe Ministry Compliance nationally. Each Chaplain also does the ADF Youth Safety Training at Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3. This is a requirement of the ADF.

This committee seeks to work with local Presbyteries to conduct the five yearly Vitality of Call conversations for full time chaplains.

7. RESERVE CHAPLAINS AND CHAPLAINS OF CADETS

We could do with many more part-time chaplains who are prepared to continue in their regular ministry placements and at the same time offer some military chaplaincy. Unfortunately, the variety of ways that ministry agents can fulfil their obligations for military service are not well understood by some Presbytery leaders and those involved in the Placements processes. The RACS member can assist Presbytery ministers, JNC members and Synod Placements staff to understand both the possibilities and obligations for part-time chaplains in the military. Some Reserve chaplains are “bi-vocational” in the best sense of the word. The training and experience gained in the ADF means that they are well placed for connecting with Veterans and their families as well as currently serving ADF members.

There are legislated protections for Reservists who offer service in the ADF, to prevent reservists from being discriminated against or disadvantaged in their employment relationships. (Defence Reserve Protection Act 2001) While technically a Placement is not deemed to be an employment relationship, the Church needs to adopt a policy that values, protects and supports those who are chaplains, especially Reserve Chaplains. It is time that the UCA adopted a policy which reflects the spirit of the legislation. Congregations and UCA organisations that release a part-time chaplain for ADF ministry such as a “call out” can apply for financial assistance that recognizes that the Reservist is not available for usual duties while fulfilling their Reserve obligations.

<https://www.reserveemployersupport.gov.au/employers-of-reservists/employer-support-payment-scheme/>

<https://esps.defencereservessupport.gov.au>

Chaplains are encouraged to connect with the local Presbyteries and attend Synods where possible.

Some Uniting Church Ministers and Deacons serve as Chaplains, as an Officer of Cadets, in the Australian Army Cadets, Australian Navy Cadets and Australian Air Force Cadets. While the UC DF CC does not have oversight of these people we are grateful for the service, care and support that they offer to young Australians and the Officers of Cadets as they conduct activities and annual camps for these youth programs.

8. TRANSITIONS

For ADF members and specifically for Chaplains, the transition into and out of Defence can be difficult. Some discharge because they reach compulsory retirement age, others because of adverse health assessments, or injury and others because of the outcomes of Disciplinary and Administrative processes. Support from the wider Uniting Church family as well as colleagues is deeply valued by chaplains who are making the transition into and out of the ADF. Uniting Church Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee members and the RACS member seek to stay in touch with retired Chaplains when such contact is welcomed. In addition, we value hearing about the passing of former ADF Chaplains and we stand ready to provide what information we have at hand with regard to their period of service.

9. MANDATE REFRESHED

The Committee has refreshed the Mandate last approved by Assembly in 2003. The custom and practice of the Committee has been to elect a Chair who assists the Convenor, the Uniting Church member of the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services, to attend to a range of responsibilities.



10. VALE REVEREND A. GALE HALL

Rev'd A. Gale Hall served as a Reserve Chaplain for 25 years including in the Royal Australian Navy, the Australian Army, and the Royal Australian Airforce. Gale enlisted as a Chaplain on 25th May 1976 with the Air Force at RAAF Base Townsville. Later he transferred to the Army. While working in Darwin, Gale supported those working at the Navy facility HMAS Coonawarra (in his Army uniform.) During the early 1990s he was the Senior Army Chaplain at 1 Training Group at Wacol where all of the reservists were trained, and Chaplaincy support was provided throughout the year to those attending short courses. In 2001, Gale spent six months as the Chief Instructor at the Chaplaincy College (ALTC) at Bonegilla, in Victoria. Gale had the gift for mentoring Chaplains through their development and life challenges.

Gale discharged from the Australian Defence Force on 31st July 2001. All of this happened whilst filling various ministry appointments for the Uniting Church including General Secretary Northern Synod, Director of the Division of Child and Family Welfare and the Director of Mission Blue Care, Queensland.

The Uniting Church Assembly appointed Gale as the Uniting Church member to the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services in 2001 and he served in that capacity until December 2013. In retirement, Gale was active with his local RSL Sub-branch and took on various appointments to serve the members there. The church is grateful to his wife Phyllis and their children, Leisl and Robert and families for supporting Gale during seasons of service with ADF and Uniting Church in Australia. Gale died 3 November 2023.

11. UNITING CHURCH DEFENCE FORCE CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE

I am grateful to Reverend Charles Vesely for Chairing the Committee and for Reverend Andrew Watters who was secretary during this past three years. Reverend Maumau Monu served as Treasurer but has now resigned and Reverend Matthew Stuart has stepped up to carry out those duties. Other members who continue to make very helpful contributions to the Committee and the Retreat Planning Committee are Rev'ds Alan Williams (AF), Santina Waugh (A), Andrew Watters (N), Andrew Morris (AF) Andrew Delbridge (A), John Dansie (A), Nikki Coleman (AF).

Reverend Kaye Ronalds

Uniting Church Member of the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services

Uniting Church ADF Chaplains 2022 – 2024

Navy

Finau, Simote
Lund, Murray
Reid, Lyall
Watters, Andrew
Keva, Toby

Army

Dansie, John
Delbridge, Andrew
Dickens, Mark





Fungalei, Lief
Lavaki, Alamoti
Rosinsky, Ron
Monu, Maumau
Nicholas, Will
Prior, David
Ruhle, John
Saunders, John
Stuart, Matthew
Yu, Louisa
Vesely, Charles
Waugh, Santana

Air Force

Butler, Mark
Brook, Roger
Carey, Lindsay
Hodgson, Tim
Flynn, Geoffrey
Follett, Andrea
Kelly, David
Kidd, Robyn
McWhinney, Janice
Quilty, Dean
Morris, Andrew
Page, Sue
Shumack, Anthony (Tony)
Senini, Christine
Williams, Alan

Reverend Brendon Lukin is on the In-service Training Program

Discharges 2022 -2023 Their seasons of service have been deeply valued.
John Marshall; Stephen Estherby; Noel Williams; Sharene Fechner; Nikki Coleman; Greg McConnell;
Lindsay Parkhill; Gary Whelband.

David Prior has been very unwell and is unlikely to do any more Army Chaplaincy.

