

ROYAL AIR FORCE Chaplaincy









Chaplain-in-Chief's Intent

Vision:

A Chaplaincy Profession inspired and equipped to serve the RAF Community delivering Personal Resilience, Pastoral Care and Professional Ethics.

Mission Statement:

The Chaplaincy Profession will recruit, train, and sustain chaplains from a diversity of backgrounds to care for the Whole Force across the spectrum of faiths and beliefs.

Priorities:

Deliver chaplaincy effect through:

- Engaging on Units and on Operations across the air and space domains.
- Enabling the spiritual needs of all personnel.
- Expanding the Reserve cadre to meet diverse Service requirements.

Strengthen Whole Force resilience through:

- Caring for the wounded, injured, sick or bereaved.
- Facilitating Spiritual Resilience in personal and professional relationships.
- Encouraging reflective ethical decision making.

Enablers:

Recruiting and engagement strategy: ensure the recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced leaders across a spectrum of faiths and beliefs, reflecting the diversity of society.

Resourcing the professional development of chaplains: ensure a dynamic ministry of continuous education and professional development.

Developing chaplaincy within a diverse faith environment: ensure engagement with faith communities across Defence, promoting religious literacy, and seeking to serve by prayer, presence and proclamation.

A Chaplaincy Profession committed to enabling the RAF to be spiritually ready to fly, to fight and to win.

To serve, not be served.



The Venerable (Air Vice Marshal) Giles Legood MBE KHC RAF
The Chaplain-in-Chief

FOREWORD BY THE CHAPLAIN-IN-CHIEF

Operating at the very heart of our communities, Royal Air Force chaplains have, for over a century, served alongside personnel in both times of peace and of war across the world. Royal Air Force chaplaincy is a ministry that offers many opportunities, some under the most challenging of circumstances. We live alongside those we serve and wear the same uniform. We provide spiritual, pastoral and ethical support as we walk with our people, embedded within the RAF family, all of this giving us the immense privilege of sharing in a very special world.

Our Mission Statement is that: “the Chaplaincy Profession will recruit, train, and sustain chaplains from a diversity of backgrounds to care for the Whole Force across the spectrum of faiths and beliefs.” Traditionally, this was Christian chaplaincy, but since 2018 other faiths have been commissioned, including Sikh, Muslim and Jewish chaplains. In 2023 it

was also agreed that Humanists UK will be an Endorsing Authorities to provide chaplaincy within the Royal Air Force. This, along with a growing number of recognised Christian churches as MOD-approved endorsing authorities, ensures a Chaplaincy Profession better equipped to deliver chaplaincy effect, enabling spiritual needs across the RAF community.

As you read this booklet, it is my hope that you will gain a deeper understanding of the work that we are called to do, and perhaps even discover a vocation to join us. You will find this a most dynamic ministry, as we seek to enable the Royal Air Force to be spiritually ready to fly, to fight and to win.

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Padre Mitchell at RAF Halton.

RAF Chaplaincy within the Christian tradition has always emphasised serving by prayer, presence and proclamation. These three elements are still critical elements of Christian Chaplaincy today.

Prayer

Prayer underpins all that Christian chaplains do within the Royal Air Force. When serving within chaplaincy teams it is vital to seek opportunity for prayer. Christian chaplains come from very different religious backgrounds, and the nature and form that prayer may take will differ.

For those serving in more isolated situations, maintaining a personal prayer life becomes even more vital in sustaining Ministry within this unique community. 'Say one for me Padre' is a common request, and it is rare that an offer to pray for an individual is ever refused. The young, and largely 'non-religious' demographic of the RAF, are in general very open to, and desirous of 'vicarious religion,' the idea that someone is praying on their behalf and indeed an offer to pray with somebody is often met extremely positively.

The role of an RAF chaplain of faith frequently encompasses opportunities for public prayer, such as acts of remembrance, graduation parades, memorials, dedications and other formal occasions, some joyful, others more sombre but all of which form the foundations of the traditions and ethos of the Royal Air Force.

Presence

Chaplains within the Royal Air Force exercise a ministry which requires a certain amount of inculcation into the community in which the chaplain serves. A chaplain must understand the ethos of the Royal Air Force in order to minister in a culturally acceptable and effectively appropriate manner.

In much the same way as one might learn a new language or various customs when working in a new context, RAF chaplains must train and learn alongside those to whom we seek to minister. It is in living, working, eating, and deploying alongside those to whom we seek to minister, that we both earn the right to conduct that ministry, and inform and inspire that ministry. Chaplains seek to serve others by walking alongside those who live and work in this unique community and seeking to serve them according to their needs.



Padre Hake in the College Chapel at RAFC Cranwell.

Proclamation

There are many occasions throughout the year where chaplains are engaged in leading worship and ceremonial occasions. Aside from leading worshipping communities on individual units, events such as Remembrance Sunday, Battle of Britain Sunday, religious festivals, and many other events within the life of the Royal Air Force community, are all occasions at which spiritual values are shared.

One of the immense privileges of RAF chaplaincy is the fact that we are also called upon to provide advice to commanders, at all levels, on many and varied issues, some obviously ethical, others may well be more moral or pastoral in essence.

All require the chaplain to be both fully engaged in the issue at stake, and confident in the distinctiveness of what we have to offer as religious leaders. Added to this are the myriad of quiet conversations, debates over the dinner table, chats in the corridor, and welfare meeting discussions, through which the chaplain is able to be a prophetic voice into the lives and decisions of the community as a whole.



Padre Shaw serving station personnel on pancake day.



Padre Colley teaching Beliefs and Values.



The Reverend Dr David Richardson

SERVING THIS GENERATION: SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE

One of the busiest buildings on any RAF station is the gymnasium, as the requirement for physical fitness extends to all Service personnel regardless of their particular military occupation. Like other armed forces across the world, the RAF recognises that its personnel must be physically robust to face the challenges of working hard in demanding conditions. Or, to put it another way, a great deal of emphasis is placed on physical resilience – equipping servicemen and women to endure whatever the operational environment may bring. Recent decades have brought recognition that other forms of resilience, particularly emotional and psychological resilience, are also required, and British military leaders have sought to develop these through a variety of means. The past few years have seen a great deal of interest by the RAF in spiritual resilience, reflecting a growing awareness that this dimension of human life merits serious consideration.

The whole concept of spiritual resilience is probably most aptly summarised by the psychiatrist and Auschwitz survivor Victor Frankl, who suggests that the meaning of life is best understood by a life that has meaning. Spiritual resilience is about placing life in a context of broader meaning, giving us a framework to understand the challenges of life, on both a corporate and personal basis. A wide variety of social commentators agree that as a culture we are generally spiritually shallow, too busy focussing on short term materialistic goals to make much sense of our world. The novelist Douglas Coupland, to name but one, suggests that we have become 'de-narrated', lacking a shared story to live within.

The individualised society that we inhabit has brought many blessings but has also left many of us feeling rootless and insecure. As a result, we struggle with questions of meaning and morality, lacking a 'big picture' to frame both our struggles and our values. We have a deep human

need to live within a framework that is bigger than us. Spiritual resilience is all about helping us identify that framework, understanding how we fit into the world, and acknowledging that we are more than mere physical entities.

RAF Chaplains are currently involved in an exciting new project to develop spiritual resilience within the Royal Air Force, alongside those working in the fields of physical, emotional, and psychological resilience. This material is being explored in classrooms on field trips and a variety of other settings. Through the Robson Academy of Resilience, what the German theologian Paul Tillich called questions of 'ultimate concern' can be addressed as part of what it means to lead a rounded human life. Where have I come from, where am I going and what am I here for? Facing up to these questions gives us a greater capacity to deal with the realities of life.

As Chaplains, we are uniquely placed to help the RAF explore this subject. From the very day that they enter the Air Force, we walk alongside men and women as they face the challenges and demands of Service life. They have now joined an organisation which has a narrative, an organisation which takes individuals and develops them into a team with meaning and purpose. With a strong sense of group identity and a calling to serve, the RAF has a story stretching back over a century. Through conversations in classrooms, crewrooms and beside desert airfields, Chaplains help our personnel explore their part in that story as it unfolds today. And, of course, we sometimes have the opportunity to share with them the ultimate story which gives life meaning and purpose.



RAF Chaplains support a highly technical and competent community.





The Reverend Paul Sweeting

SERVING THIS GENERATION: RESERVIST CHAPLAINCY

'If I knew then what I know now...'

Back in 2013 I was encouraged to explore reservist chaplaincy in the RAF by the Chaplains Branch, having got to know a number of chaplains. This was because I had been the Rector of the Falkland Islands and had worked alongside them. It took nearly a year to decide to pursue this further – I was really attracted to the prospect but needed to weigh up how it would sit with my family life and my full-time role as a school chaplain. I had previously seriously considered regular chaplaincy but life circumstances meant that it wasn't a realistic option... happily I concluded that reservist chaplaincy was!

If I could go back to 2013 I'd tell myself to definitely go for it – and to get on with it a bit quicker! I am so glad, and thankful, for the experience.

I've laughed so much with chaplains and so many others – the military sense of humour can be an 'acquired' taste but there is often joy and (friendly) mischief at the heart of it. If there is a way to see the funny side of a situation – then someone will find it!

Then there's what I've learned. You grow and develop so much. The formal training is significant and it pushes you: it's meant to. This is not always easy, but I have grown in confidence, humility, leadership qualities and can even march, sort of. The experiences that you have during training and then serving as a chaplain offer a rich mixture of opportunities to learn and grow.

The ministry is, of course, the heart of the matter. We are called to serve, and I can honestly say that I believe some service personnel's lives are better for having come to talk to me about difficult situation. I can picture some of them now as I write: and it is humbling to think that I have had a positive effect on them.

The military chaplain is willing to listen to anyone unburden themselves or to help them think over a problem, for



Padre Paul leading a service of Remembrance in the Falklands.



Leading a service of Remembrance in Stanley Cathedral.

example. Leading worship in the field or in a station chapel for people of a wide range of beliefs is sometimes a challenge but really wonderful – there are those moments when you see a person genuinely moved, or when they come up for a quiet word afterwards. These are often people who would otherwise have no meaningful contact with church and lived Christianity.

We pray for those we serve, and for their families. Then we try to live out that prayer by who we are and what we do.

One aspect of reservist chaplaincy that I really enjoy is the variety. I have my full-time role of school chaplain and then,



about 35 days a year I serve as an RAF chaplain. A typical year includes serving on two or three different stations – the past year has seen me at a rotary station (RAF Odiham) and at RAF Honington, home of the RAF Regiment and RAF Police. I have also been at RAF Leeming refreshing basic military skills and RAF Shawbury meeting with reservist chaplain colleagues. It's hard to get across how varied all of this can be – one time you are enjoying a formal mess dinner, another you are leading a training session, next it is visiting personnel out on exercise and enjoying the delights of a 24 hour ration pack...I love it all. Even the ration pack!

A particularly special aspect of reservist chaplaincy is that you find yourself alongside a huge range of colleagues whether regular or reserve: coming from many different churches and faiths, with a vast mix of experience. The gatherings of chaplains are always an enjoyable and inspiring time whether on a training course, or praying together, or enjoying a meal and drink in good company. I have learned so much from my colleagues, and continue to do so.

Then there is the pay and pension offering – this is significant and reflects the value placed on reservist chaplains both by the RAF and the Chaplains' Branch. Over and above that is the continuing ministerial education that is on offer – entirely free – and I have found this to be of the very best quality.

To sum up...

I mentioned before that I am a school chaplain – and, like school chaplaincy, military chaplaincy is embedded in a generally young organisation. Working with young people is something that I have always valued and, having come to faith myself as a young person, I recognise the impact that we can have on those we serve.

I can honestly say that, if I knew then in 2013 what I know now, I would wholeheartedly embrace the challenge and joy of reservist chaplaincy. I look forward to the coming years with expectation.



Rabbi Samuel, Padre Kevin and Padre Ashley at RAF Halton



The Reverend Phil Craven

SERVING THIS GENERATION: CHAPLAINCY AND PASTORAL CARE

One day I popped into a squadron tea bar to see who was around. I've always found that squadron tea bars are the best places to find out what's really happening. As I handed out some sweeties, I overheard two aviators as they made a brew. "Being a padre is easy," said one, "I think I'll apply." "What do you mean?" said the other as she thoughtfully stirred her tea. "Well, it's all about drinking tea and 'doing welfare,'" the first said while making air quotes with his fingers. He continued, "And all welfare is, is referring." "Oh well," said the second, "I think I might apply too".

As interesting as it was for me to consider the tea bar perception of chaplains by two aviators, it raises the question: do we as military chaplains simply 'do welfare'? If we just do welfare, then surely someone else can do the referring instead of us. But if we do something deeper, namely pastoral care, then we need to ask, what it is, what does it look like, and how can it help this generation? I would suggest that military chaplains are uniquely placed to offer pastoral care that runs deep into the soul itself.

From the perspective of the two aviators, welfare is transactional, and that's why it's easy to provide. If someone comes to you looking for a solution to a problem, then a quick Google search can often give you what you need. And so, from a time management perspective, if I can fix someone's problem in a few minutes, then just imagine how many people's problems I can fix in a day!? And I can sleep at night knowing I've fixed so many problems that day. Providing transactional welfare can make us feel valued. Job done.

But this poses another question, how do you know what the actual problem is? Catching a quick five minutes with someone as you walk to your next important meeting doesn't necessarily allow them to truly talk, or you to truly listen. And, in seeking only to fix the problems of others, we give them no agency and no ownership over their own lives, and we reduce them to problems needing our expertise to fix. We devalue them by ignoring their stories.

One of the joys of being a chaplain is having the time and availability that so often eludes other professions. We invest our time in people because we recognise that the person is not just a series of problems to be solved, but we recognise that deep at their core, people are a series of stories to be heard. Their stories tell them of where they have been, where they are going, and what is truly important to them. Their stories give their lives shape and flow. But so often in military life, people's stability is disrupted by frequent deployments to lands afar, relationships are broken by time and distance, and futures are changed by the constant uncertainty of our world. In all these things, it is easy for people's stories to get lost.

For chaplains, it is through our hearing and engaging with their stories, and more importantly how they interpret their own stories, that we can begin to help them recover, reorient and rediscover their meaning, value, and worth. To do their stories justice requires time, and lots of it. And this



Padre Norfield conducting a funeral.



Padre Lacey offering a listening ear.

is where pastoral care is distinct from welfare. The privilege of pastoral care is being invited deep into the stories of the person. One of the Psalms in the Bible talks about moments where, 'Deep calls to Deep'. I think this is a fantastic description of pastoral care. The depth of one soul is met by the depth of another. It is immensely vulnerable to expose the depths of ones stories, but in pastoral care this is exactly what happens.

As a chaplain, I am honoured that every day I have multiple engagements with people who choose to share the depths of their stories with me in a way that they would never share with anyone else. In all their sharing, at times they may find the answers that they are seeking, and we will rejoice together. Whilst at other times, they will not find those answers, and we will grieve together. But through all these times, even though they know that we cannot 'fix' them with a magic Harry Potter wand, they know that we will always 'hold them', no matter what. And this is how through the time we give, we make others feel truly valued through the depths of our pastoral care.

'Holding' the stories of others is incredibly costly to the chaplain. To hold and share in the pain of another involves personal sacrifice, and holding the often 'unfinishedness' of their stories. But this is by far the most immense honour, privilege, and joy of our position as chaplains.

The late Rabbi Harold Kushner once told this story:

A little boy was late coming home from school. Once he arrived home, his mother was worried and asked why he was late? The boy replied that he stopped to help another boy, whose bicycle had broken after he fell off it. "But you don't know anything about fixing bicycles," his mother responded. "That's not the help I offered," said the boy. "I helped him to cry."

Deep calls to deep.



Padre Cannon bringing some joy.



The Reverend Tim Williamson

SERVING THIS GENERATION: INITIAL TRAINING

My interest in military chaplaincy started 17 years prior to joining the RAF. A Royal Navy chaplain, a member of the congregation I led as a minister, invited me to accompany him on numerous occasions to various naval bases. I was greatly inspired by the role and influence of chaplains to those they serve. However, having two children under the age of 2 at the time was not conducive to a harmonious family life with me being away at sea for months. So I said 'stand by' to God for the next 15 years until I was asked to be the Padre for an Air Cadet squadron at RAF Wyton near to where I was a church minister. Two years of accompanying young air cadets on station visits and camps to RAF stations around the UK and chatting with service personnel and regular serving Padres reignited the flame of God's call into chaplaincy.

However, at the age of 52 I wondered if the ship had sailed or the aircraft with the callsign 'Chaplaincy' had already departed the runway. To my surprise each door I encountered along the way continued to open. After a very long and at times frustrating 20 months I found myself, ironing board in hand, at the RAF Officer Training Academy at Cranwell.

Gathering with all the other Officer Cadets on day one in the car park outside the main guard room, I heard my name called out on the register. My reply of, 'yes sir' was met with a stern response from the Flight Sergeant, 'don't call me sir, I work for a living!'. Not a great start, five minutes in and I had already made a rookie mistake.

We were promptly whisked away to the accommodation block and the allocation of our rooms. I was sharing with a young pilot Officer Cadet from Nigeria. I hadn't realised he was a Muslim until he laid out his prayer mat at 3.00am on the first night and began to pray. I wondered how this was going to play out for the next 6 weeks when we often only had 5 or 6 hours sleep a night. Despite this unexpected start, we had many insightful conversations about what it meant to live out our faith in distinctive ways within a military environment.

Although it sounds like the beginning of a bad joke, the Specialist Officer Initial Training (SOIT) cohort consisted of 12 doctors, 1 nurse and a Padre. I had been advised by a previous



Padre Williamson graduating from RAF Cranwell

SOIT Padre not to use the term 'Padre' for myself, after all we were but mere lowly Officer Cadets. However, from day one I found the rest of my fellow Officer Cadets and the Flight Staff referring to me as 'Padre', so 'Padre' it was then!

For the first 6 weeks on SOIT we were amalgamated with Officer Cadets from the MIOT course (Modular Initial Officer Training), with 46 of us dividing equally into two flights. These 6 weeks are known as the Military Skills Module which is delivered by the RAF Regiment. This module covers topics such as fieldcraft, general service knowledge, weapon handling, first aid, drill, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training, control of entry and search, communication and reporting.

The day would begin around 5.30am, often will final preparations for uniform, room and block inspections by the Flight Sergeants at 7.00am, with a rushed breakfast at 6.30am. Marching off for lessons would happen around 7.40am, followed by a full day of lessons and physical activities usually finishing at 5.30pm, followed by dinner in Number One mess at 6.30pm. There was no let-up in the evenings with online learning and or inspection preparation. I don't think I got into bed on the same day that I woke up for the first four weeks.

For the first two weekends on SOIT we had to remain on station. It was a privilege to encourage those on the course to



Sikh chaplain Mandeep Kaur at Reserve Officer Initial Training, Cranwell.

come along to the Sunday chapel service led by the Padres. Whether out of curiosity or the lure of chocolate hob nobs, I'm not sure, but 10 other Officer Cadets came along the first Sunday.

An important aspect of the Military Skills Module was learning how to disassemble, clean, reassemble and accurately fire the L85 rifle. Thankfully as Padres we don't have to undergo this stressful 2 weeks of the course. Instead, we accompany the existing chaplaincy team at Cranwell, learning from their vast experience and insights over many years in the role.

After successfully completing the Military Skills Module phase of SOIT we progressed on to the second six weeks of the course. This consisted of classroom lessons and many, many hours of evening online learning about topics such as command, leadership and management, air and space power and defence writing. The culmination of our leadership skills and accumulated learning was assessed on numerous practical command exercises, designed to test our ability to lead and function under pressure.

Other than the initial 2 weeks, on other weekends I was able to return home and spend time with my family. The accurate mantra for life on SOIT is 'long days and fast weeks' and it seemed to me that no sooner had I started, I had come to the end of the course. The final week was spent in drill practice for the graduation parade. For some reason, certainly not my marching skills, I was given the honour of being the colour officer for the graduation ceremony, the first Padre in the history of the RAF to be granted this privilege. As if the pressure of marching in front of all the other graduating Officer Cadets, the Flight Staff, our family and friends wasn't high enough already.

Reflecting on my time at SOIT, despite the initial shock of capture in the first few days and me wondering to myself, while running around a cold and muddy field in full battle gear, what on earth am I doing here and why did I think this was a good idea?, I soon realised the wonderful and unexpected opportunities that lay before me. I lost count of the number of times I was asked by staff and Officer Cadets, why I was a Christian or why I had become a Padre. Over

my 12 weeks on SOIT I had more opportunities to share my faith and how God calls and directs us, than in the past 3 years in church-based ministry. One time in particular sticks in my mind, when a young Jamaican Officer Cadet and I were wearing marigolds and scrubbing the block toilets at midnight ready for inspection the next morning. With him in one cubicle and me in another, toilet brushes in hand, he asked me how I knew Jesus personally and how had God led me to be a Padre in the RAF. Thank you God for unexpected gospel conversations in unexpected places!



Graduation Day Cranwell.



The Reverend Al Nicoll

SERVING THIS GENERATION: CHAPLAINCY ON A MAIN OPERATING BASE

As I started writing this article, I heard the roar of our Typhoon flying display aircraft shooting down the runway before rising almost vertically into the uninterrupted blue of the Lincolnshire sky. I admit that my colleague and I took a short break to step outside the station church and watch the Typhoon display pilot throw millions of pounds of advanced military hardware around the sky for 6 or 7 minutes! On other days we might watch a Battle of Britain era Spitfire or Hurricane, from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, perform its display routine in the skies overhead. RAF Coningsby “develops the future, delivers the present and commemorates the past of the Royal Air Force’s combat air power.”

RAF Coningsby, along with RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Marham are the tip of the RAF spear, where our air defence and ground attack aircraft are based and from which they deploy on operations around the world. Along with our other large RAF bases they are described as Main Operating Bases or MOBs. RAF Brize Norton provides the aircraft which move people, kit and supplies to where they are needed and provides essential air-to-air refuelling; RAF Waddington is the home of the RAF’s Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) fleet; RAF Benson and RAF Odiham are the home of the Puma HC2 and Chinook helicopter fleets.

At the heart of each RAF MOB is not the technology though, but the human element - those who make all these impressive, state-of-the-art aircraft work. These aircraft are not worth a thing without the people who fly them, nor could they do any of the impressive feats of aerial acrobatics nor have operational impact that they do, without the many people who maintain them, supply them or those who care for the personnel of the RAF. Amongst these are RAF Chaplains, who provide a unique spiritual and pastoral care to our personnel.

When I entered the RAF Chaplains’ Branch 14 years ago I knew that there was something very different and special



Padre Wilson with Rivet Joint at RAF Waddington.

about the ministry we provide, compared to the civilian ministry I left. Serving on an MOB definitely reinforces that belief. It is a privilege to bring prayer to the heart of the RAF community, to be a ‘faithful presence’ in a secular organisation and to have the chance to discuss issues of faith and belief with the thousands of personnel who make the RAF one of the premier air forces in the world.

It is not unusual for a pastoral conversation in a Chaplain’s office to begin with the words, “I’m not religious, Padre, but...” Whilst the people we serve with are not any more religiously observant than the civilian population we come from, the Chaplain is often the first port of call for our personnel when they are looking for support. You only have to lightly scratch the surface of most service personnel to find their spiritual heart.

Chaplains work alongside the other caring organisations of the RAF, such as medical, welfare and social work services to provide a full spectrum of care, at home and on operations. In all my years of civilian ministry I never found such a



Funeral service at RAF Odiham.

collaborative structure of care. Neither had I come across such an ecumenical model of ministry. The Chaplaincy team I led at Coningsby had Baptist, Methodist and Anglican Chaplains, succeeded by Baptist, Salvation Army and Roman Catholic Chaplains. Further support is provided by World Faith Reserve Chaplains and Civilian Chaplains to the Military. We maintain our denominational distinctions in all the ways that matter but collaborate fully on the practical day-to-day ministry of Chaplaincy. Most importantly, each day is begun and sustained in prayer together.

Serving on an MOB means that we support our personnel while they are at home, in preparation and training, while on exercise around the world, and on operational deployment. It is not unusual for our personnel to spend more than half their year away from home. The ministry of Chaplains extends to what we describe as the Whole Force, which includes the families of those who serve. We run a parent and toddlers' group, collaborate with other agencies to provide special events and meals for the families of those who are deployed, and work with local civilian churches to provide a regular 'Messy Church' event in the community. On station, we provide evangelistic and discipleship courses and lead a growing station church congregation. Within 12 months, 3 of the 5 Chaplains who have served at Coningsby over that period will have deployed on operations as far flung as the Mediterranean, the South Atlantic and the Arabian Gulf; we will also have supported one of our operational squadrons during a 4-month deployment to Romania.

Serving on a front-line MOB offers some amazing privileges. We work with amazingly talented people, see some astounding sights and get to visit far-flung locations around the world. The greatest privilege, however, is that of the call Chaplains answer - to bring faith and belief to the very heart of the RAF community. We are called to walk alongside people as they enjoy the joys and privileges of RAF service

but also walk with them as the demands and sacrifices of military life start to bite. It is a wonderfully incarnational ministry.



Padre Colley enjoying the view from a Chinook.



Imam Ali Omar

SERVING THIS GENERATION: CHAPLAINCY IN DIVERSITY

After my commissioning into the regular RAF Chaplaincy I was posted to RAF Coningsby. Here at RAF Coningsby a joint RAF Typhoon Squadron, 12 Squadron, has been training the Qatari Emiri Air Force (QEAF) in preparation for the 2022 World Cup in Doha Qatar. As the first commissioned Imam to the RAF Chaplaincy one of my roles is to provide duty of care and support to the pilots, engineers and admin elements of QEAF working and training at the joint squadron alongside station chaplain duties. Previously I had worked in this capacity as a reservist chaplain and the Civilian Chaplain to the Military; where I would visit to provide pastoral and moral support to the Qataris as well as advice to the chain of command. As a joint squadron all roles were mirrored between the Brits and the Qataris. As an example the Squadron Officer Commanding is RAF had his deputy QEAF and The the Senior Engineering Officer had his deputy from the QEAF.

To my surprise as I was signing the finer points of my engagement and 'arriving' at my 'new' station I was shocked to see the QEAF personnel packing and leaving; the World Cup preparations had started and operations of the 12 joint Squadron had to relocate to Doha Qatar. I could not go as I was busy doing my arrivals and had to be left behind overwhelmed by missing the fun. The days that followed were not easy for me as whenever I went to visit 12 Sqn someone from the rear party would comment; 'really sorry Imam all the Qataris are gone there is nobody here for you to see!'

My reply would be: 'I am actually a station chaplain and one of the Padres at Coningsby'. Very quickly personnel at RAF Coningsby stopped seeing me as the 'Qatari Imam' and I became known as 'Imam' or 'Padre'. Quite often I will be asked: 'we know you are not a Christian Padre so how do we address you?' My reply would be: 'Call me Imam or Padre' of which the reply would be: 'I will call you Imam'. While doing my visits at the Station Headquarters and other places I will be asked; 'what flavor of a Padre are you Imam?' To me this

signified a change of mindset, diversity and recognition that chaplains do come in different 'flavours'.

Sitting on my desk at the RAF Coningsby Chaplaincy HQ my colleague, Padre Chrissie, knocks on the door: 'Imam do you have a chance to speak to someone...' that becomes the beginning of a conversation which culminates in booking an appointment for a SP. This particular time it was an individual who wanted to discuss the challenges he is facing in organising a same-sex marriage. Upon finishing the session I was left reflecting and pondering my chaplaincy journey and how in my role as an Imam or even in my previous role as Civilian Chaplain to the Military such opportunities would never become available to me, unless it is concerning a Muslim SP, but now I feel I am delving into core chaplaincy business. I cannot underestimate the support from my colleagues and advice and counsel from the Chaplaincy Headquarters. My journey into regular chaplaincy has been fulfilling and exploratory. Within the station I have taken duties such as being the building custodian, attending executive and welfare meetings, as well as taking part in remembrance services; this has all been an exciting experience. I have as well been involved in



A multi faith Chaplaincy team in action.

leading services during passing out parades at RAF Cranwell, RAF Halton, RAF Shawbury and other stations. Definitely one of my core duties has always been the Subject Matter Expert (SME) on Islam related issues within the RAF where I am called to work alongside chaplaincy teams at RAF Leeming, RAF Wood Vale, RAF Honington, RAF Brize Norton and RAF Akrotiri. I have also taken part in exercises; Magic Carpet, Thuraiyat and Cobra Warrior. I look forward to my deployment in Op Shader and supporting Epic Skies.



Multi faith chaplaincy in creative action!



The Diversity of Chaplaincy: L-R a Methodist (Full Time) Chaplain; a Church of England (Full Time) Chaplain; a Sikh (Reservist) Chaplain; a Muslim (Full Time) Chaplain; and a Church of England (Reservist) Chaplain - all of whom graduated on the same day from RAF College Cranwell.

WORLD FAITHS CHAPLAINCY

REV (SQN LDR) MANDEEP KAUR, RAF RESERVIST
CHAPLAIN (SIKH)

World Faith Chaplaincy emerged in the British Armed Forces in 2005 with the introduction of four civilian Chaplains along with an existing Jewish Chaplain. It was an historic and positive step in the history of Armed Forces Chaplaincy, and these four new Chaplains were very proud to be in this role, being the trailblazers with a challenging path ahead. This was not only new for Defence but also for my own community where the Chaplaincy concept is very new. For me there was another element too, of being both a Sikh Chaplain and a female too! In the military I was questioned very often: but you are a female? Can you be a Chaplain from your tradition? These questions gave not only an opportunity to speak about my faith but also for the other person to listen. That experience of listening and working out fresh understandings happened in a variety of ways as the world faith Chaplains began their work.

Prejudice is nothing new. According to the Greek philosopher Plato, 'it is only men who are complete human beings and can hope for ultimate fulfilment; the best a woman can hope for is to become a man' (Plato, Timaeus 90e). Guru Nanak (1469-1539), founder of the Sikh faith, in sharp contrast, gave a revolutionary view in His scriptures, 'why call her evil from whom are great men born, and without woman none could exist. The eternal Lord is the only One; O Nanak Who depends not on woman.' (Guru Granth Sahib, p.473). Guru Nanak declared that there is only one Creator for the whole humanity who loves all people. So he preached oneness, brotherhood and equality of mankind and the whole world to be as one vast multi-cultural society. In summary, Guru Nanak preached that religion is not a set of rituals.

It is practised only when one's belief is actually put into practice for the welfare of society.

These values continue to be the motivational and essential spirit in all my work as Sikh Chaplain in the Military. For me, the Chaplaincy is not only about providing moral, pastoral and spiritual support to my flock, but also being the voice to the voiceless, a source to develop fair principles/policies for all and stream of knowledge to all.

World Faith Chaplaincy in the Military is a path with a cause, a calling and a mission. It has brought friendship, hope and assurance not only to service personnel but also amongst Chaplains from all different faiths and backgrounds. Chaplains have been the best faith education tool and their contributions can be witnessed through the positive change in the behaviours from junior to senior command on understanding of Faiths. Twelve years have

gone very quickly and I personally feel that it has brought new challenges, tests and experiences as time progressed. Needless to say there is still some way to go.

A Chaplain in the Armed Forces from any faith today can be a friend, a mentor and a non-judgemental listener but if that friend has the same values and faith then it becomes the icing on the cake.

RABBI FLT LT SAMUEL DE BECK SPITZER, RAF RESERVIST
CHAPLAIN (JEWISH)

Broadly speaking, military chaplaincy has been a rather surprising and yet natural progression for me within my personal journey of faith Ministry. It provides the space to offer a service of care beyond the scope of personal belief or individual denomination and offers all personnel the opportunity to access pastoral or spiritual counsel. It has thus far allowed me to build bridges across potential divides and naturally caters both for those of faith and equally, for those with no religious affiliation.

In this regard, military chaplaincy has truly come a long way. Whilst all Chaplains have a background in and have received formal training from, a recognised institution of religion, their service within the RAF reaches far beyond any specific religious framework. Ironically, I find that this helps to reinforce and to expand faith, whilst humbly focusing on our common humanity. Chaplaincy within the RAF can include solving administrative matters, emotional counselling therapy, signposting, conflict resolution, addressing professional or personal issues and sometimes just offering an empathic ear. I feel that world faith Chaplaincy has flexibly paved the way to offer additional philosophical and ethical perspectives in an ever changing and divergent society. Gratitude and blessing come to mind when reflecting on being a part of the Chaplaincy team.

DR S.M. KARIYAKARAWANA, BUDDHIST CHAPLAIN TO
HM ARMED FORCES

As the Buddhist Chaplain to HM Forces for the past 12 years I have witnessed an incremental, positive growth in the British military towards world faiths.

An individual's faith is no longer something to be afraid of or hidden. Unlike the 'good old days', one doesn't need the permission of the unit Chaplain or the Chain of Command's approval to embrace a faith of one's liking. Thanks largely to the MOD's initiative to introduce Chaplains from major world faiths, services, service heads and the defence community as a whole, seem to have understood the value of faiths working together. The original words 'tolerate one's



Padre Lancaster officiating at a memorial event. Chaplains lead ceremonial occasions for Service Personnel of all faiths and none.

faith' seem to have changed into 'respect one's faith'.

Moreover, there seems to be a lot more collaboration and collegial working of the faith Chaplains as indicated by the tri-service World-Faith Working Group. As the Buddhist Chaplain I am requested by all faith groups to talk about 'Mindfulness'.

Though 'Mindfulness' originated and spread through Buddhist Meditation, most faith traditions encourage people to practise it for health and well-being.

We certainly are living in interesting times. The 21st Century British Military is not only faith-friendly, but seems to value what faith brings to the hearts and minds of all faith practitioners.

"A CHAPLAIN IN THE
ARMED FORCES FROM
ANY FAITH TODAY
CAN BE A FRIEND,
A MENTOR AND A
NON-JUDGEMENTAL
LISTENER"



Buddhism



Hinduism



Islam



Judaism



Sikhism



Humanist



Christianity



The Reverend Alex Hobson

SERVING THIS GENERATION: DEPLOYED ON OPERATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

I'm writing this on Good Friday, almost 5,000 miles from home in 40 degree heat. My 'parish' is spread over 5 countries, between which I travel in the back of a cargo aircraft, generally at very unsociable hours in the morning. This is one example of life on deployed operations for a Royal Air Force Chaplain.

At heart, Christian Chaplaincy is about embodying God's love for people by being alongside them, accompanying them on their journey and helping them to make sense of it. It is about being fully integrated into an organisation so as to understand its culture, live the experience of those who are part of it, and be able to articulate their concern at all levels of the organisation. Nowhere is this more true than on deployed operations, where Chaplains live, work, eat, sleep and play alongside servicemen and women for a period of months.

Whilst every deployment is different, for me this is Chaplaincy at its best. It has provided me with such a variety of different experiences and so many opportunities for ministry. I have been in Basra in Iraq, when our base came under almost daily rocket attack. I spent time lying on various floors with people wearing helmet and body armour, waiting for the all-clear, and spoke to those who feared for their lives. Sadly, I also spoke at the funeral of one who died, and conducted repatriation ceremonies for others.

As Chaplain at the deployed hospital in Camp Bastion, I was present in the Emergency Department whenever injured troops came in and were operated on, prayed for those who died, and kept vigil with those fighting for their life in intensive care – British, American, or Afghan, friend or foe. I have spent time in Air Operations Centres with those whose working day revolved around making life or death decisions about dropping bombs, deciding what were legitimate targets, and how to avoid killing the innocent.

Deployed life is not all doom and gloom. Recently I took

a US Air Force rock band with me to entertain troops and build relationships at a coalition air base, and I find plenty of opportunities to be the most competitive volleyball player on camp.

But even in less austere locations, servicemen and women are spending 4-6 months or longer away from their homes, their normal lives and the people they love. This brings its own difficulties: for some loneliness; for others difficulties created by having to spend almost every hour of several months with the same individuals; and for others because things that happen at home become so much more difficult when you're thousands of miles away. In recent weeks I have supported people dealing with bereavements that have occurred since they deployed; with relationships which are running into difficulties, or have been ended over the phone; and with people seeking help in knowing how to live with watching the effects of the military actions in which they are taking part. Some simply need to talk things through; some need practical advice; some the Chaplain will speak up for with their commanders; and for all we have the privilege of praying for (and sometimes with) them.

Out here people are away from home, from their loved ones, and all the things which take our attention in normal life; there is no going home in the evening or at weekends, no DIY or gardening (although some people still find some of this to do in the strangest places!). This means that there is more time to think about the deeper questions of life, about meaning and purpose, and about what really matters to people. As a Chaplain, this means many more opportunities to have those deeper conversations with people who are not distracted by the daily round. I'm not sure that I agree with the old line about there being no atheists in a foxhole, but people away from home facing intense experiences tend to be much more open to talking about questions of meaning and faith. And crucial to these conversations is the fact that Chaplains are going through the same things – we



Bastion by night.

too are away from home, missing our loved ones, facing the same discomfort or danger, craving some random foodstuff that can't be found on deployment, longing for the kind of miserable weather we hate when at home. I have, however, had to explain to some people that sitting at the same lunch table as the Chaplain was no guarantee of safety, and that if the siren sounded I'd be the first one on the floor! Of course, often the Chaplain's contribution is not a 'deep and meaningful' but the short conversation or kind word (or Haribo!) in the midst of a stressful or difficult day, or the opportunity for a good moan about whatever, or whoever, is causing frustration.

Deploying on operations has given me unforgettable experiences. Some joyful, some very difficult. I will never forget having tea with the Sheikh of Babylon or leading a young officer to faith in the chapel in Camp Bastion; nor will I forget the Iraqi Christian interpreter telling me about his family members who had been killed for being Christians, or watching a soldier's heart stop beating in an operating theatre and walking down a corridor to tell his comrades the sad news. I have made some special friendships – including with members of other services and servicemen from other countries. Back in the UK,

I have also had the privilege of continuing to minister to people I met while deployed, ranging from conducting their weddings, to helping them deal with traumatic experiences from operational service.

Like so many others in the armed forces, I struggle with spending months away from the people I love most, and missing out on significant events. Yet, like them, I find deploying on operations perhaps the most rewarding aspect of being in the RAF. It is a very special and unique opportunity to love people in Christ's name.



Remembrance, Iraq.



The Reverend Nick Hanover

SERVING THIS GENERATION: DEPLOYED ON OPERATIONS IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Four months is a long time and 8,000 miles is a long way, yet these were the twin challenges facing not only me, but my family, once we knew I was deploying to the Falkland Islands. Just eighteen months into my time with the Royal Air Force I was heading south (a long way south!) as the Force Chaplain to the British Forces South Atlantic Islands (BFSAI). Like many before me, I awaited my 4am pickup with a mixture of excitement and nervous anticipation; concerned I was taking too much and that I was bound to be over the baggage allowance, while convinced I would inevitably forget something important. But all things come to pass and after a surprisingly comfortable 18 hour flight I arrived at the distinctly wintry Mount Pleasant Complex (MPC).

In seeking to safeguard UK sovereignty of the Falkland Islands and the Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination the permanent military presence of around 1,300 service personnel is supported by around 50 MOD civilians and 700 contractors. It's fair to say that providing pastoral care and support for such a large community is not an insignificant challenge. After all, until I deployed I had enjoyed being part of a Chaplaincy team with fellow Padres to guide and support me - in the Falklands I was on my own!

Perhaps unsurprisingly, following an all too brief handover with my predecessor, it was a case of hitting the ground running. Day-to-day welfare issues vied for attention along with the regular aspects of weekly ministry. There were Sunday services and Bible studies to lead and as well as various memorial services. There were school assemblies to deliver, newsletters to write and a weekly feature on the radio to prepare for. All-in-all, the days were long, but the weeks were short and time flew by!

Which is perhaps just as well because the Padre's office is ideally (dangerously?!) situated between the church and the Oasis Cafe with its endless supply of home-baked

cakes. Such good fortune ensures a constant passing 'trade' as everyone knows where the cafe is and that the Padre can be found next door! Chaplaincy is so often a matter of being present, being seen and being available and this deployment certainly afforded plenty of opportunity to get alongside the MPC community in all its diversity.

Indeed one of the unique aspects of life in the Falklands is that it is a Tri-Service environment. So alongside the RAF commitment there is a rotational Army infantry unit and a permanent naval presence. This meant that as well as numerous opportunities to get in the air I had the chance to head to sea with the men and women of HMS Clyde and join the Infantry 'in the field' and on patrol. Seeing the ability and commitment of my colleagues at such close quarters was always impressive and whoever you are, jumping in the back of a Chinook in the middle of the night will always get the heart going!

While I really had little idea of what to expect in the Falklands, there were certainly things I didn't expect! Although I knew the weather was likely to be cold and windy I didn't envisage 'canoe-sledging' or go-karting in blizzard-like conditions. Nor did I anticipate being cast as the victim in a Murder Mystery play, going paint-balling or celebrating the Nepalese festival of Dashain with the Gurkhas. Although I figured penguins would probably feature, I certainly didn't realise I would see a pod of Killer Whales or get as close to mating Elephant Seals as I did!

More predictably, for most, the toughest aspect of deployment is being away from home, separated from loved ones for so long and the stresses and strains that can often arise. In the Falklands this is not helped by the limited, and at times sporadic, nature of communication links to the UK. Believing all ministry, at its best, is incarnational, I have always liked the fact that Chaplains are treated the same as everyone else - same selection process, same fitness requirements, same training as other professional entrants.



Remembering the 1982 conflict.

Military Chaplaincy is unavoidably a ministry fashioned and tested through shared experiences – on deployment, that includes shared frustrations and isolation.

As such, the role of the Padre is undoubtedly a unique one and perhaps all the more so when deployed. Throughout my time in the Falklands, I felt challenged and fulfilled in equal measure. To witness and experience first-hand the pride and the professionalism of those who serve within the military community, be they military personnel, civil servants or contractors was tremendously encouraging and it was a privilege (not to mention a lot of fun!) to work alongside and share life with such incredible men and women. As my first 'out of area' experience it certainly set the bar pretty high and leaves me looking forward to the next.



Padre Hanover in the Falkland Islands.



A Memorial Service in the Falklands.

THEY SERVED THEIR GENERATION: THE REVEREND STANLEY HARRISON

GEORGE MEDAL CITATION 1941

"One night in November, 1940, an aircraft crashed and burst into flames about three miles from the aerodrome and, although it was not his duty to do so, Mr. Harrison boarded the ambulance which was proceeding to the scene.



Padre Harrison

On arrival, he immediately plunged into the wreckage and despite the scorching heat and exploding machine gun bullets, commenced to drag a member of the crew from the burning debris. He then supervised the work and led the fire picket, himself extricating a second member of the crew and assisting to remove a third. Further efforts were unavailing, however, as the remaining members of the crew were completely buried under the wreckage. Throughout he displayed the utmost courage and an entire disregard for his own safety."

began to gain ground. Undeterred by this, they continued their search of the wreckage until it was clear that there could be no survivors. Whilst Wing Commander Harrison was undoubtedly the leader in the rescue operations, Flying Officer Evans was conspicuous in always being with him in the most dangerous places."

OBE CITATION 1957

"On 5th March, 1957, a Royal Air Force Beverley transport aircraft carrying RAF personnel and police dogs crashed on the village of Sutton Wick, Drayton, Berkshire. The aircraft, which had a large quantity of petrol on board, immediately caught fire and a major conflagration ensued. Wing Commander Harrison, Station Chaplain, and Flying Officer Evans, a Medical Officer from Royal Air Force Station, Abingdon, were soon on the scene of the crash and for three hours they worked together to rescue the occupants of the aircraft. They extricated fourteen bodies from the wreckage and displayed courage and resourcefulness of a high order, refusing to give up while there was hope of finding survivors among the wreckage.

Some 1½ hours after the crash, Wing Commander Harrison rescued a police dog alive. At one stage a Calor gas cylinder bottle exploded near these officers and the fire thereupon'



Blackburn Beverley.

THEY SERVED THEIR GENERATION: THE REVEREND GEOFFREY HARDING

Padre Harding joined the Royal Air Force Chaplains' Branch in 1943. Attached to a Mobile Radar Unit in 1944, he is believed to be the first RAF Chaplain to land on the Normandy beaches during D-Day.

MILITARY CROSS CITATION

"This Chaplain landed with a unit on the beaches of Normandy on 'D' day. The beach was under intense bombardment and was strewn with dead and wounded. Mr Harding worked for 36 hours, most of the time under direct fire, giving help to the wounded and burying the dead. He set an inspiring example and was responsible for saving many lives. During the evening of 'D' day he walked along a road, which was under fire, into a village in enemy hands. He entered a house in which were many snipers and obtained water which he took back to the wounded. His gallantry and disregard for his own safety were worthy of high praise."

PADRE HARDING'S ACCOUNT

"Well, we were plagued by that beastly 88 millimetre. In fact in the end we had 25% casualties. We rushed up and down the beach one way or the other but we couldn't get out of the range of the beastly thing.



Normandy, 1944.



Normandy, 1944.

I thought we really had had it, I was giving myself up to an early grave and I must admit that most of my remarks on the previous Sunday to the congregation now felt rather thin. But it came to me very, very strongly indeed, almost as though a voice spoke in my ear that we must get off that beach at all costs and take refuge under the shadow of the cliffs. So I went forward, found a suitable site in the 3rd house up on the left where there was an open courtyard. The few Germans ran away and apparently hid themselves in the house next door thus proving no trouble to us. And I then waved forward everybody I knew to get off that blasted beach - I use the word in its proper sense - as fast as we could... But somehow we got off the beach and got our wounded off too.

Somebody told me at the time I walked up and down the beach as calmly as if I were walking up and down an aisle in the church, but that was simply due to the fact that I'm constitutionally lazy and entirely refuse to be hurried, least of all by the enemy."

THEY SERVED THEIR GENERATION: THE REVEREND JOHN WANLESS

JAPANESE PRISONER OF WAR – 1943-1945

There were 5 RAF Chaplains who became Prisoners of War at the hands of the Japanese. Most, if not all, of these men ended up in Japanese camps. During their time in the camps the Chaplains continued to minister to those among whom they lived, taking services, giving sermons, and marking significant occasions such as Armistice Day, Christmas and Easter. While four of the RAF Chaplains survived their time of imprisonment one, Padre John Thirlwell Wanless, suffered a very different fate.



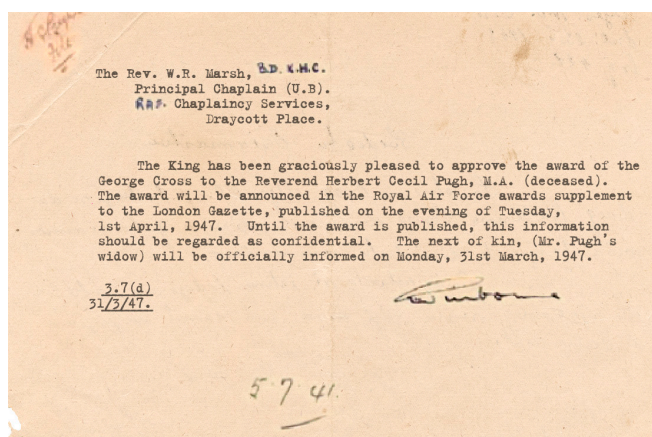
exhaustion or starvation. The very few who survived were executed just before the end of the war. Padre Wanless died of enteritis on 30th June 1945 having managed to make the march, carrying baggage like a mule, with no food. His body has no identified grave. His name is found on the Singapore memorial.

Padre Wanless received a posthumous Mention in Dispatches for Distinguished Service in October 1946.

Padre Wanless was part of the group of POWs who made the 'Death March' from Sandakhan to Ranau in Borneo in the spring of 1945. This march took almost 2,500 prisoners to their deaths. 641 of the prisoners were British, Padre Wanless among them. The rest of the prisoners were Australian. 6 Australians were able to escape and were the sole survivors. Those who managed to complete the death march found themselves at Ranau, where they either died from illness,



Japanese camp, Borneo.



THEY SERVED THEIR GENERATION: THE REVEREND CECIL PUGH

Padre Pugh was posthumously awarded the George Cross in 1947. If the letters we have in our archive are anything to go by, he may never have been honoured at all, were it not for The News of the World. In October 1946 a Flt Sgt Sharp wrote to the paper asking why Padre Pugh had never been acknowledged. This letter caused many others to write adding their support, and the Air Ministry looked into the case. From one of the letters sent in 1946:

"I was one of the more fortunate members of the troops on board, and in actual fact came out the same hold as the one the RAF Padre entered. I didn't see him enter, although while in the lifeboat waiting to be picked up by the escorting Corvette I heard several members of the boat remark to the effect that they did see the Padre enter the hold containing the trapped personnel, he must have known full well that it was impossible to come out again alive, in view of the fact that the hold when I left was covered in at least five feet of water and was still gushing in, only a few moments after I left the Anselm it gave one definite plunge and passed below the water out of sight in few seconds, in view of this I doubt very much if the Padre could have survived more than a few moments in that hold of death. Whilst I was scrambling out I passed literally dozens of screaming men with their heads fastened between the rungs of the connecting ladder, it was horrible to hear their screams and to pass them by, knowing full well that it was absolutely hopeless for them to get out alive."



GEORGE CROSS CITATION:

The Reverend H. C. Pugh, after seeing service in this country, was posted to Takoradi and embarked on H.M.T. Anselm, carrying over 1,300 passengers, for West Africa at the end of June, 1941. She was torpedoed in the Atlantic in the early hours of the 5th July, 1941. One torpedo hit a hold on Deck C, destroying the normal means of escape. Mr. Pugh came up on deck in a dressing gown and gave all the help he could. He seemed to be everywhere at once, doing his best to comfort the injured, helping with the boats and rafts (two of these were rendered unserviceable as a result of the explosion) and visiting the different lower sections where the men were quartered. When he learned that a number of injured airmen were trapped in the damaged hold, he insisted on being lowered into it with a rope. Everyone demurred because the hold was below the water line and already the decks were awash and to go down was to go to certain death. He simply explained that he must be where his men were.

The deck level was already caving in and the hold was three parts full of water so that, when he knelt to pray, the water reached his shoulders. Within a few minutes the ship plunged and sank and Mr. Pugh was never seen again. He had every opportunity of saving his own life but, without regard to his own safety and in the best tradition of the Service and of a Christian Minister, he gave up his life for others.

THEY SERVED THEIR GENERATION: THE REVEREND ALAN GILES

THE FALL OF SINGAPORE AND IMPRISONMENT 1942

"...the senior Chaplain out there at the time was Alan Giles and, obviously the Air Force was having to get out, he decided that the Chaplains who would go first would be the ones who were married, and then next the ones who were engaged and that left me - because I was neither married nor engaged - and himself. Of course, he was married, he had his own family out there but of course he stayed behind."



Padre Giles could have left Singapore with his family, but, having seen them safely onto the ship, he went back to his post. He and Padre Goss, who is quoted above, along with Padres Rorke, Wanless and Tucker became prisoners of the Japanese.

Speaking of their time as prisoners, Padre Goss recalls an episode when Padre Giles was put into solitary confinement:

"Yes, Alan Giles was suddenly hauled in and we all got very frightened and I'm sure he did too. He really didn't know what it was for and I don't think we've discovered even to this day. But I think it was something to do with, possibly, preaching at one of these services. They may have thought he said something which he shouldn't have said. Anyway they hauled him in. Rather sensibly he put his cassock on before he went to the head office and I don't think they hit him at all-surprisingly. They shouted at him a good deal, shouted at him and then put him in prison, right underneath one of these sentry points in the wall. They had a little box under there and he was locked in. But there was a tiny little flap in the door and fortunately just near to it there was a loo. So we used to go to the loo and then slip round the corner, hoping we wouldn't be spotted and we could talk to him through there. He was all by himself more or less in the dark

and we'd pass him little bits of things to eat and so forth. And I remember one day I asked him was there anything special he wanted. He said 'Yes, I want my prayer book.' So next time we went to the loo we took a prayer book with us and passed it through. He was in there about 4 or 5 days but I don't think anybody knows why to this day."



16 February 1942: Japanese forces take control of the British 'Gibraltar of the East'.

THEY SERVED THEIR GENERATION: THE REVEREND ALEC ROSS

Padre Ross was killed in Action when flying over the village of Biawak, Sarawak on 18th December 1963.

From an account written by Padre Brigg

"A very nasty but hardly remembered little war broke out between Indonesia and our small forces in North Borneo. Very rapidly as the battles developed, the original small garrisons were supplemented by units from the UK and our station at Labuan became a very busy and hard-pressed centre for both army and RAF personnel. So much so that it quickly became obvious that a full-time Chaplain (RAF) was needed."

Padre Brigg asked for a Chaplain to be nominated by the Branch. It was felt no-one should be made to go into such a dangerous setting. Padre Alec Ross volunteered, despite being told that at 'his age (50 or so) he would find the rough field conditions very taxing'.

"I thereafter returned to Singapore, and shortly before Christmas Alec Ross reported to FEAF HQ for duty in Labuan. Within a single week, I had to go to the Changi airport to receive Alec back from the front - in a coffin! An incredible story was told me by accompanying officers. Apparently, Alec had insisted on being taken straight away to the centre of the fighting so that 'the lads' might know that there was a padre close at hand and also so that he might take to them something of the Christmas message and a few simple seasonal gifts. The fact that a padre had come among them seems to have travelled like a bushfire among the forward troops, and signals for him to fly hither and around. It was on such an errand of mercy, when flying in a light spotter aircraft near the enemy lines with an Army Sgt-pilot that an enemy shot entered the craft, passed through the leg of the



pilot and into the heart of the padre sitting alongside."

So ended the tragically short 'active service' ministry of one of our most beloved Chaplains....The influence for good which his enthusiastic determination to see as many troops as he could before that fateful Christmas dawned was quite immeasurable, and it is no exaggeration to say that his image left such an impression out there that the way was wide open to the next Chaplain who was subsequently sent out to try and replace him.



Taylorcraft Auster AOP6 air observation aircraft.

THEY SERVED THEIR GENERATION: THE REVEREND DERMOT MCKAVANAGH

Padre Dermot McKavanagh received an urgent message from his Station Commander asking him to report to an aircraft hangar on his unit.

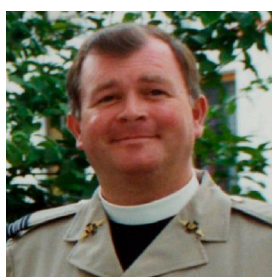
An airman working in the hangar had climbed into the cockpit of a jet aircraft and removed the safety pins from the ejector seat. The man was unable to cope with a deteriorating marital problem and was sitting in the aircraft threatening to pull the handle of the now live seat. He warned everyone to keep away; he would allow only Padre Dermot to come near. Padre McKavanagh visited the section regularly and was well known to the airman.

Dermot called out to the man that he was climbing the cockpit ladder to talk with him, and having mounted the steps, he was obliged to lean over the side of the cockpit to talk to the man confidentially.

At any moment the man could have pulled the handle and decapitated the chaplain.

After a long time in conversation, Padre McKavanagh persuaded the airman to replace the safety pins and leave the aircraft. They both returned to the church for further discussion, which resulted in a reconciliation of the man with his wife. In due course they had a child who was christened Dermot.

For this pastoral care Padre McKavanagh was awarded The Queen's Commendation for brave conduct.



SERVING THE NEXT GENERATION: THE RAF APPLICATION PROCESS

Enquiry	The prospective candidate makes an initial enquiry towards becoming a Chaplain/NRPO
Initial Contact	The Branch recruiter makes initial contact and checks endorsing authority alongside arranging a Station visit
Station visit	The prospective candidate completes a Station visit
Interview	The Endorsing Authority interview takes place and references are taken up
The AFCO process starts	The local Armed Forces Careers Office (AFCO) arranges a medical, processes the paperwork and submits it to the Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre (OASC)
Interview	The prospective candidate is interviewed at HQ Chaplaincy Services
Selection	The prospective candidate completes the selection process at OASC
Training	The successful candidate attends the 13 week Specialist Officer Initial Training (SOIT) or Reserve Officer Initial Training (ROIT) Course at RAF College Cranwell
Graduation	On successful completion of SOIT or ROIT the new chaplain/NRPO will be posted to his or her first unit or reserve squadron



During your time as an RAF Chaplain you will serve at your home unit but you could be called upon to support training, exercises and operations both at home and abroad; these detachments could range from a few days up to four months. Some of the places you could serve include the UK, France, Belgium, Norway, Germany, Spain, Estonia, Romania, Cyprus, the Falkland Islands, the Middle East, USA West Coast, Florida, Australia, Ascension Island, Turkey, Poland and, Malaysia.



Padre Carre taking part in the RAF Waddington 10K.

SERVING THE NEXT GENERATION: RAF CHAPLAINCY CAREER PATH

Requirements

To serve as an RAF Chaplain there are certain requirements that you need to meet.

You must be aged between 26 and 53 years old, attesting before your 54th birthday.

You must have the academic qualifications required by the Sending Churches / Endorsing Authority / Panel of Reference for ministerial training.

You must be accredited/registered/ordained/licensed by the endorsing authority of your faith or belief and subsequently have a minimum of 2-3 years' experience in a full-time leadership capacity (or equivalent), in a pastoral context.

You must be a citizen of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland, the holder of dual UK/other nationality or have been a Commonwealth citizen since birth.

You must initially commit to a minimum of 6 years' service, meet the health and fitness criteria and pass a fitness test, the details of which are provided in this publication.

Role

As an RAF Chaplain you will be involved in the lives of our personnel, regardless of their rank or religious background. Your personal sacrifice may be considerable as you will serve alongside our people, providing vital spiritual, pastoral and ethical support wherever they go, including deployed Operations. Your home-based duties will be equally important in support of personnel and their families on RAF stations. While exploring innovative ways of engaging with your community, you can also expect to fulfil the pastoral role of a leader from your endorsed faith or belief community, performing the duties of a Chaplain.

Endorsing Authorities

The Chaplains' Profession recruits from Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish and Sikh faiths and the Humanist belief. For up to date information on the current recruiting situation and specific Endorsing Authorities, please contact the Branch Recruitment Officer on Air-ChapServes_Recruitment@mod.gov.uk.

Specialist Officers' Initial Training

Like all RAF specialist profession officers, you will begin your RAF career on Specialist Officers' Initial Training Course (SOIT) at RAF College Cranwell in Lincolnshire. You will follow a challenging 13-week course designed for professionally qualified entrants to the RAF, exploring how to apply your ministry in a military context. The course includes fitness development, military training and academic study as well as practical outdoor leadership challenges.

Reserve Officer Initial Training

Chaplains wishing to serve in the Royal Air Force Reserves follow a similar process to those joining the Regular forces, however their training and commitments are very





different. Selection is dependent on reaching the same standards as regular officers, currently they are required to complete 4 specific residential weekends and also a 15-day residential period at the RAF College Cranwell. On successful completion, candidates would then be given the opportunity to attend a short period of graduation training prior to graduating alongside SOIT and Main Squadron officer cadets. Applicants are required to commit to attend 27 days per year for an initial 12 year term.

Specialist Training

After SOIT, you will complete a chaplain/NRPO-specific induction and philosophy course at an appropriate time within your first 6 months of service. The course explores the theology of military chaplaincy and considers its application to practical life in the Armed Forces.

Foundation Tour

For your first tour, you will probably be posted to a large base where you will work within a team to serve your community. There will be a senior chaplain on base who will be able to guide you and give you the benefit of their experience.

Your Career Prospects

You will join the RAF on an Initial Commission (IC) of 6 years as a Reverend (Flight Lieutenant), with an option to leave after 4 years (with 12 months' notice). Chaplains on a 6-year IC may apply for a 12 year commission after completing 3 years regular service. Promotion to Reverend (Squadron Leader) is after 3 years' satisfactory service from

the date of commission. A chaplain/NRPO may be eligible for competitive boarding for promotion to Reverend (Wing Commander) once they have completed the requisite amount of time in rank as a Reverend (Squadron Leader).

Ongoing Development

The Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre (AFCC) at Beckett House, Wiltshire is the chaplaincy training centre for all 3 Services and you will visit frequently for continuing ministerial education and other training courses. There are also opportunities to study at postgraduate level at a later stage of your chaplaincy career.

Transferable Skills

As a chaplain in the RAF, you will have all the development opportunities and career prospects available to your civilian counterparts, together with the chance to work around the world and gain unique personal experiences. Many RAF chaplains go back into civilian ministerial work when they leave the RAF.

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT US

COMMANDING OFFICERS' COMMENTS ON CHAPLAINS:

"In all that he has done, he has been the epitome of a successful Station Padre, caring for those who seek his support and counsel in an unobtrusive but extremely effective manner. His hallmark is his strength of character which has been so vital in his meeting the many demands placed upon him."

"Although largely invisible in the UK, the tempo of ops throughout his tour has been exceedingly high, and this has placed a tremendous burden on the personnel here. Add to this the relentless loss of life, punctuated by numerous Repatriation Ceremonies, the terrible injuries we have seen and the hostile deployed environment, and one can begin to appreciate the incredible emotional strain our people are living with. It is not overstating the issue to say that this Chaplain has been the outstanding shining light of understanding, compassion and humour for all those he has met; his altruism and resolve are inspirational and I consider him the finest padre I have seen in 15 years of ops."

"There can be few ministers of the Church who compare with him. I have no doubt he is one of the best, and most effective, Padres it has ever been my pleasure to work with."

"Our Padre carries out all his duties with the highest degree of professionalism, and is equally at home in the classroom, visiting sections on the unit, or offering pastoral counselling. Typically, much of this work goes on out of the public gaze, but it is there in abundance."

"The Padre does not shy away from a challenge and I was touched recently by the sensitive, caring and highly professional manner in which he dealt with a particularly tragic death of a young girl. He has a delightfully deft touch,

is the soul of discretion and has elicited nothing but praise from the families who have benefited from his support."

"Finally, he has been a good friend and provided wise counsel. He has enjoyed my complete trust and features high on my 'must take on ops' list."



Bastion memorial cross made from empty shell cases, now at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire.



ARE YOU CALLED TO MINISTER HERE?

search: RAF Chaplains

Contact Us

If you would like more information about RAF Chaplaincy, please do contact us.

Branch Recruitment Officer

Email: Air-ChapSrvs_Recruitment@mod.gov.uk

Telephone: +44300 1608332

Or visit our Website:

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





THE RAF VISION

The RAF's role, in conjunction with Defence organisations, is to deliver the UK Defence vision:

- | Defend the UK and its interests.
- | Strengthen international peace and stability.
- | Be a force for good in the world.

Recruiting now

- | Competitive pay and pension
- | Training and life-long learning
- | Six weeks' paid leave
- | Free medical and dental care
- | Subsidised food and accommodation
- | Sport and adventure training

Equal opportunities

The RAF is an equal opportunities employer that recognises the value of an individual's ability regardless of their gender, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, background, religion or belief, sexual orientation or marital status or civil partnership. The RAF believe that harnessing the talents and skills of individuals from different groups enhances operational effectiveness.

Welfare in the RAF

To find out more about the RAF's commitment to the care and welfare of its personnel, visit www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/lifestyle-benefits/life-as-a-regular