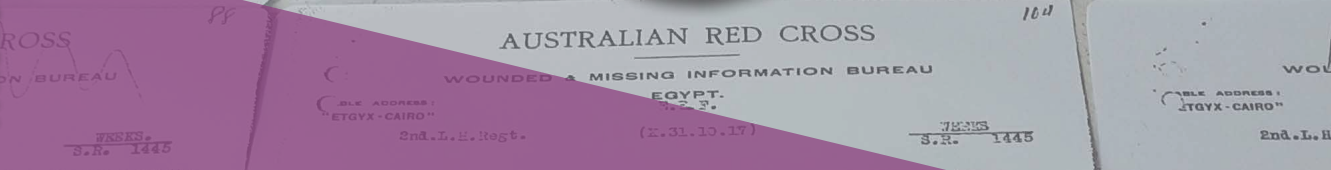
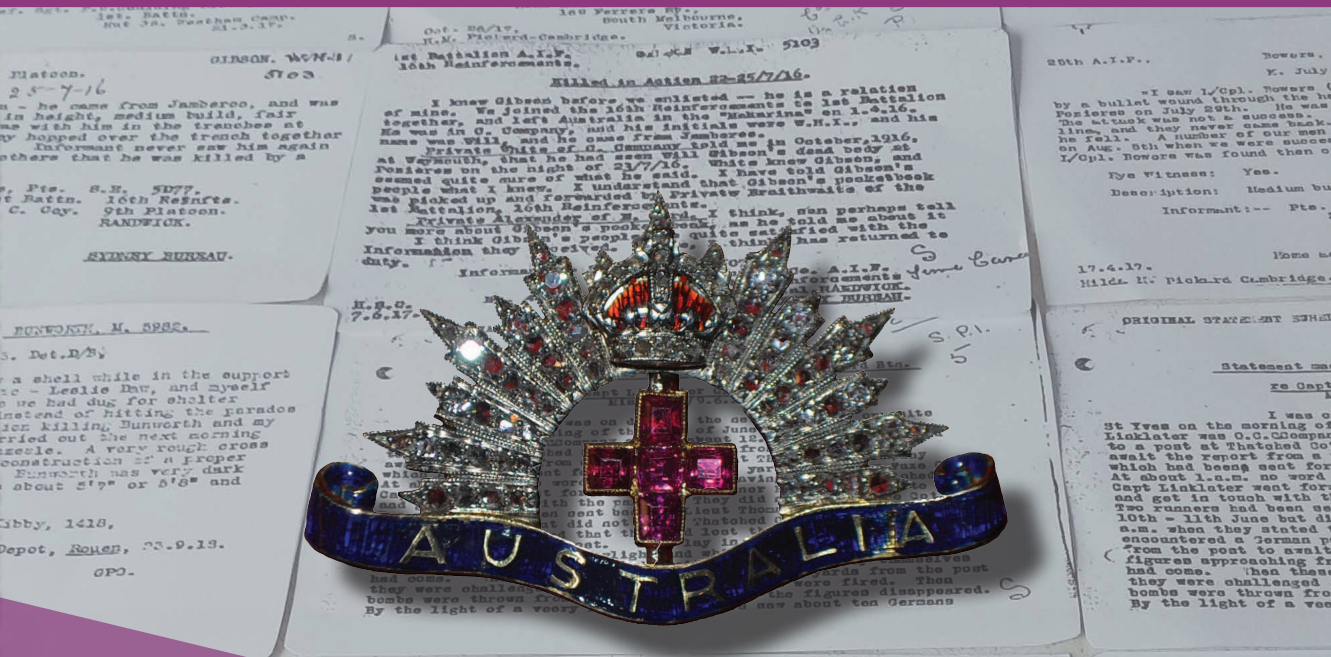




Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department

Positioned to Serve



AUSTRALIAN ARMY CHAPLAINCY JOURNAL

DESPAIR UNSCHACKLED BY HOPE

JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARMY CHAPLAINS DEPARTMENT 2024

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Note: All articles contained herein are subject to an independent peer-review process.

Cover Photograph: *Lady Vera Deakin White was presented an Australian Rising Sun Brooch by the Red Cross to acknowledge her work in establishing the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau in Cairo in September 1915. It is currently on display at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne in an exhibition of Vera Deakin White's photographs and Service medals; on temporary loan from Judith Harely, Vera's daughter and grandchildren. (Photograph and Cover Design: CHAP Geoffrey Traill)*



Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department

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Editorial

Chaplain Stephen Brooks, CSM

As a casual observer it may appear that much of modern society's focus is invested in fixing the problem, be it the economy, future energy needs, housing availability, mental health, climate change, healthcare, the crime rate or education standards, to name but a few. But what if you couldn't fix it, what if the situation was lost, or was beyond your ability to make things right again?

I recall one such occasion when working in a northern suburb parish in South Australia. Each week I would visit a nursing home located in what was once a beautiful federation mansion from a bygone era. The vast majority of the residents were bed ridden and required constant care. Each time I would pass by one of the resident lounges I would be greeted by an elderly frail gentleman seated alongside his wife. He would often strike up a conversation telling me how life had treated him well. It was when I asked him if he lived locally that I came upon a most remarkable story, of how despair had been unshackled by hope.

Michael told me that he visited his wife every day, and having surrendered his licence some years earlier was totally reliant upon the public transport system. The daily journey began at 6.30 am with a walk to the local bus stop near his home, which took him to the Glenelg to city tram station. Upon arriving in the city it was another short walk to the railway station bus stop to catch the northern suburbs line, and upon arrival in Salisbury a further bus ride which dropped him off 1 ½ kms short of his destination. One tram, one train, three buses and 3kms walk was Michael's daily pilgrimage starting at 6.30 am and finishing at 6.00pm upon his return home, all to visit his beloved wife of 64 years. And though one may be suitably moved by his dedication, what was even more remarkable was the fact that his wife had severe dementia and did not know who he was. She simply referred to Michael as the nice old gentleman who liked to chat and hold her hand. As for Michael his reason was simply *'just because my wife's memory is lost, does not mean my love for her is dead.'*

This year's Journal seeks to explore how hope is something more than just a naïve attempt to explain a loss or to make things right again. It goes beyond the common saying – *'it is what it is'* as if life's challenges can be simply brushed away like clearing crumbs from a counter top. Confronting loss or despair requires hope. Why? Because there is something greater to be found within the tragedy. One such example is the work of Vera Deakin, who together with a group of dedicated Red Cross volunteers set out to search for and find soldiers listed as missing in WWI. Such was their effect that one bereaved father in acknowledging the finding of his son's marked grave wrote: *'May I thank you most sincerely for your kindness in this matter. Such human sympathy does more to soften the agony of bereavement than your kind and devoted workers can possibly realise.'*

I commend to you the 2024 Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal not as a series of articles or book reviews but a literary journey to unravel the mystery of how hope is not bound by success, rather the act of faithfully seeking the good when the fix fails and despair takes root.

Vera Deakin's Search for the Missing in World War I

Carole Woods

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The Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau's main room, London 1918. Vera Deakin can be seen on the telephone wearing a hat in the rear far left of the photograph. Public domain.

The industrial-scale slaughter of World War I led to public demand for the dignified burial of the fallen and a sustained search for missing soldiers, a search that continues today. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission honoured individual soldiers in hundreds of war cemeteries and memorials. The lingering horror of lost soldiers is captured in Will Longstaff's spectral painting *Menin Gate at Midnight*, set in the foreground of the most famous of these memorials.

After the outbreak of World War I, Major James Lean, Officer in Charge of the Australian Imperial Force Base Records at the Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, struggled to cope with a flood of enquiries about soldiers reported wounded, missing or killed in action. Thousands of letters to Base Records reflected 'the anguish of waiting for news [and] the heartbreak of bereft families'.¹ Many of these letters were from families contending with the dreaded word Missing and their distress was compounded by Australia's great distance from those searching the battlefields. In 1920 some 16,000 Australian soldiers remained missing.²

Increasingly, from October 1915, soldiers' relatives sought assistance from the new Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau in Cairo, which was dealing with cases from the Gallipoli campaign. This bureau was directed by an accomplished and compassionate young woman named Vera Deakin.

Born on Christmas Day 1891 to Pattie and Alfred Deakin, Vera grew up with her two older sisters Stella and Ivy in the gracious two-storey home 'Llanarth' in South Yarra, and enjoyed long interludes at the family holiday home 'Ballara', Point Lonsdale. While Point Lonsdale fostered Vera's intrepid spirit, it was at 'Llanarth', and her school, Melbourne Church of England Girls Grammar, that she acquired a strong sense of social responsibility and the leadership skills required to play a major national role in the Red Cross.

Vera's father, Alfred Deakin, demonstrated impressive leadership as a powerful proponent of federation and three times prime minister of Australia. Although an entertaining companion to his three daughters, he never ceased to instill seriousness of purpose. Pattie Deakin, Vera's mother, set an example in welfare leadership, especially as president of societies designed to assist neglected children and low-income working mothers.

As a girl, Vera absorbed the zeitgeist of a society saturated with British imperialism and dual loyalty to Britain and Australia. The peace of Vera's youth was in fact a time of preparedness for war exemplified by the network of fortifications that gave the Port Phillip Heads the reputation of being 'the Gibraltar of the South'. On Empire Day 24 May 1909 Vera was one of around 1500 schoolgirls who attended an assembly in the Melbourne Town Hall. Her father Alfred Deakin, one of the speakers, concluded his address by warning of 'the duty they might be called upon to perform in the event of war'.³

Accompanied by her Aunt Catherine and friend Ida Woodward, Vera visited Budapest in 1913-14 where she studied voice and cello. This trip to the second capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire placed her near the vortex of war. On leaving Budapest in late June 1914, she saw troops training in the Austrian Tyrol and soon after learned of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and the outbreak of war.

While in London after Britain's declaration of war on Germany in 1914, Vera quickly became frustrated at the lack of opportunities for women to serve. She wanted to fight on the frontline and not be relegated to the stifling confines of a women's knitting circle. Her frustration erupted in mid-August when she watched new recruits being drilled at Green Park. She exclaimed: 'Why aren't we women who have no real ties of duty standing at the Cannon's mouth shoulder to shoulder with the men?... I want to be doing, helping. Taking a share in the sacrifice for Great Britain & not hiding behind my petticoats & curls'.⁴

Back in Australia, Vera felt similarly frustrated. During World War I the Australian government employed only nurses among women for the overseas war effort, turned away women doctors and failed to organise women's auxiliary defence services, such as the Australian Women's Army Service which existed during World War II.

Vera and her mother Pattie participated in the work of the new Australian branch of the British Red Cross Society and its Victorian Division, both launched in August 1914. As president of the Australian Red Cross Society, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, wife of the Australian governor-general, set an example of strong leadership, supervising humanitarian service across Australia and to Egypt, England, France and beyond. The Red Cross provided valuable opportunities for women to exercise leadership at home and abroad, albeit in a volunteer capacity.

In 1915 Vera read of a British Red Cross group trying to trace missing soldiers in France, and she wondered whether she could do similar work in Egypt. Aged twenty-three, Vera cabled an enquiry to Norman Brookes, the Wimbledon tennis champion, who was then one of two Australian Red Cross commissioners in Egypt. Norman was the brother of Herbert Brookes, husband of Vera's sister Ivy. Brookes cabled back: 'Come at once and bring as many like yourself as you can find'.⁵ Feeling very daring, Vera booked a passage on the P&O liner *Arabia*, and her friend Winifred

Johnson readily agreed to accompany her. A petite, elegant woman and member of the Syme family of *The Age* newspaper fame, Winifred did not want to languish at home while three of her four brothers enlisted.

Vera and Winifred Johnson reached Cairo on 20 October 1915 and stayed at Rossmore House. The following morning they travelled with Norman Brookes to the offices of the British Red Cross Society in Gresham House, Sharia Soleiman Pasha, where they were welcomed by Lady Barker, secretary of the British Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau in Cairo. The understaffed British enquiry bureau which was in partnership with the Australian Red Cross, had been struggling to cope with enquiries for both British and Australian missing soldiers.

Vera as secretary and Winifred as assistant secretary opened the independent Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau in Gresham House on 21 October 1915.⁶ Initially, it appeared that the Australian Red Cross would replace Vera with a man but Lady Barker indignantly intervened to protect her protégée. Lady Barker wrote that at a time when the work of the British enquiry bureau was at its heaviest, Vera and 'Miss Johnson seemed to drop from the sky'. From then on Lady Barker regarded Vera as the mainstay of the Australian office – 'so clear-headed & tactful & above all so conscientious & reliable'.⁷

The Australian bureau was patterned on and cooperated closely with the British service. Like its British counterpart, the Australian bureau had the threefold aims of obtaining information about the missing, ascertaining details of the death and burial of those killed or who had died of wounds, and keeping relatives informed about sick and wounded soldiers.



Vera Deakin 1918. Portrait, AWM PO2119.001

The London headquarters of the British enquiry bureau issued a monthly printed Enquiry List which contained the names of missing men and the names of men killed, of whom members of the public wanted more information than could be obtained from the War Office. These lists, which became horrifically long, were given to volunteers known as 'searchers' who fanned out to hospitals and army camps to enquire about the missing.⁸ The Australian bureau attached its Enquiry List to the British List to ensure the widest possible circulation through the British searcher network.

Liaising closely with the War Office, the British enquiry bureau was able to access official records and in return supplied the War Office with searchers' reports when they contained evidence of a missing man's fate. Similarly, Vera Deakin worked closely with the AIF administrative centre known as the Intermediate Base in Egypt. In mid-1916 the British Red Cross decided to make enquiries for all missing men listed by the War Office, regardless of whether a private enquiry had been received and Vera Deakin adopted a similar policy. She knew a delay in searching could mean loss of crucial information, for the missing man's comrades could disperse or themselves be listed as missing or killed.⁹

Enquiries for missing men tested a searcher's skill, for reports received were sometimes conflicting and especially difficult to obtain if the man had disappeared in the turmoil of a battle that inflicted huge casualties. Vera was never able to find information about some men listed as missing after the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915 and the assault on The Nek later that year.

A searcher needed social and sleuthing skills combined with knowledge of battles fought and the military units involved. Whereas men and women worked for the British Red Cross, the Australian bureau used men only but, after moving to England in 1916, relied heavily on British Red Cross searchers to cover the large number of hospitals caring for wounded Australians in England and France. Vera argued that men with legal training and 'those who had the common touch' made the best searchers. Two of her most reliable Australian searchers were William Isbister, a lawyer, and Stanley Addison, a science graduate, both from Adelaide.

If the Red Cross found that a missing man had died, searchers tried to describe his last days and burial. The information was valued by numerous relatives who craved details of their loved one's end and preferred closure to ghastly uncertainty. The famous English writer Vera Brittain, after the death of her brother Edward on the Italian front, 'was driven and impelled by a remorseless determination to find out as much' as she could.¹⁰ Her resolve was shared by thousands of bereaved Australians.

Whereas military notification of a man's sad fate was formulaic and brief, the British and Australian enquiry bureaux staff wrote informative and sympathetic letters, which either quoted from or enclosed searchers' reports. Relatives of soldiers also valued regular reports on severely wounded men obtained by the Australian bureau from hospitals.

Most enquiries to the Australian bureau in Cairo and later London were channelled through Red Cross Information bureau in the capital cities of the Australian states. In Victoria, solicitor J. Beacham Kiddle, father of historian Margaret Kiddle, led a team of lawyers located at 60 Market Street, Melbourne. Vera's head bureau cabled frequently to the six state information bureaux in Australia and often longed for one central bureau.

After the transfer of Australian troops from Egypt to France in 1916, Vera moved her staff to 54 Victoria St, London. Owing to a huge increase in work, she later moved to a mansion at 36 Grosvenor Place. Staff became frantically busy in July 1916 when Australian troops participated in the battle at Fromelles, sustaining huge casualties. At that time Vera had about twenty-seven volunteer staff and three paid typists.

All of the senior staff at the Australian bureau were young volunteer Australian women. Vera continued as secretary and took charge of cabling. Winifred was assistant secretary while Marjorie Syme, a cousin of Winifred, supervised the sorting and assessment of many thousands of searchers' reports. Lilian Whybrow, a Melbourne University graduate, managed the group that wrote letters; Vera described Lilian as radiant with youth and intelligence and 'a pillar of strength & sanity'.¹¹ They earned the respect of key figures in the Australian Army, co-ordinated a network of Australian and British searchers, and secured the assistance of other people to supply relevant information such as hospital matrons and army chaplains.

The enquiry bureau's statistics for 1917 documented the magnitude of the tasks performed. During 1917 the bureau received nearly 27,000 cabled enquiries from Australia and more than 9,000 by post; another 11,444 enquiries arrived from Britain and France. Searchers' reports amounted to nearly 33,000 while soldiers, matrons and padres submitted 4,500 reports.¹²

Chaplains often provided valuable information and this was evident in the enquiry bureau's file on 2nd Lieutenant Ronald McMillan, 6th Battalion, who was killed by enemy shell fire in September 1917, aged twenty-one. Ronald's mother, Jane McMillan, was a close friend of Vera's mother. The Chaplain of the 6th Battalion wrote: 'He was very badly hit and death was instantaneous... his body was buried at the post where the fatality occurred in Glencourse Wood, East of Ypres. I do not know if the grave is registered probably not. The whole locality is badly churned up with shell fire. I have written his next of kin'.¹³

As in Cairo, Australian bureau staff befriended soldiers on leave and the enquiry bureau gained the reputation of being a home away from home. Vera attended the revues, variety shows, comedies and musicals favoured by soldiers seeking relief from the horror of war. She rued the long seasons of some musicals. So as not to disappoint soldiers, she saw *The Maid of the Mountains* twenty times!¹⁴

The tragic story of one soldier 'adopted' by Vera and her colleagues illustrates the concern shown by bureau staff for individual soldiers and efforts by Australian local communities to honour them. Vera first met Stanley Davis from Drysdale near Geelong when he was a lieutenant with C Company in the 46th Battalion stationed in Egypt in 1916. Nicknamed 'Sunny Jim' for his breezy nature, Stanley later fought at Pozzières and was promoted to Captain. He spent leave periods in London with Vera's circle and enjoyed theatre parties.

Vera recorded in her letter-diary of 17 April 1917 that Stanley Davis 'was killed outright—leading in the charge on that fatal day 11th April at Bullecourt ... He now lies out in no man's land'. Red Cross searchers gathered many reports but could not find the body. As evidence of the tenacity of the enquiry bureau, the file on Stanley Davis shows that efforts were still underway in 1919 to locate his grave.¹⁵

The name of Captain Davis appears on the war memorial in High Street, Drysdale, and on the Honour Roll of Drysdale State School. As a member of St James's Anglican Church, Drysdale, Captain Davis had corresponded with the vicar from the front. On hearing of Stanley's death, the vicar told a Geelong newspaper 'Profound sorrow has fallen upon the Anglican community of St James'.¹⁶ Stanley's father, John Davis, commemorated him by donating a brass missal stand and a carved oak lectern to the church.

Jay Winter in his book *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* discusses how 'a kind of kinship bond' developed between families in wartime and those who helped them.¹⁷ This was especially true of Australian families stranded half a world away from the battlefields and Red Cross agents dedicated to finding information. Mrs Boyle from Warrnambool, in thanking Vera in 1918 for news about her son, wrote: 'We mothers in Australia are far from our dear ones. Now you will quite understand how dear to us are those who are doing all they can for them'.¹⁸ Vera Deakin formed a bond with Stanley Davis's father and corresponded with him until his death in 1929.

Vera proved herself a formidable advocate for the Australian enquiry bureau when dealing with the Records Department of AIF Administrative Headquarters in London. Although her toughness could have alienated AIF staff, it appears to have won respect and co-operation.

Vera demonstrated impressive leadership skills at the enquiry bureau. She welded office volunteers from disparate backgrounds into an effective team, set an example by her own dedicated work, conferred closely with leading colleagues, clearly defined the bureau's goals and motivated staff to realise them. By her own admission, Vera ruled with an iron hand when the enquiry bureau was under pressure but her warm and considerate nature at other times engendered strong loyalty and lasting friendships.

In 1918 Vera received the OBE for her humanitarian work. After the Armistice, the bureau tried to manage a flood of information from demobilised soldiers and repatriated prisoners of war. In December 1918 Vera met one of the prisoners from Turkey, Captain Thomas White, who had served with the Australian Flying Corps in Mesopotamia. Three weeks later they were engaged.

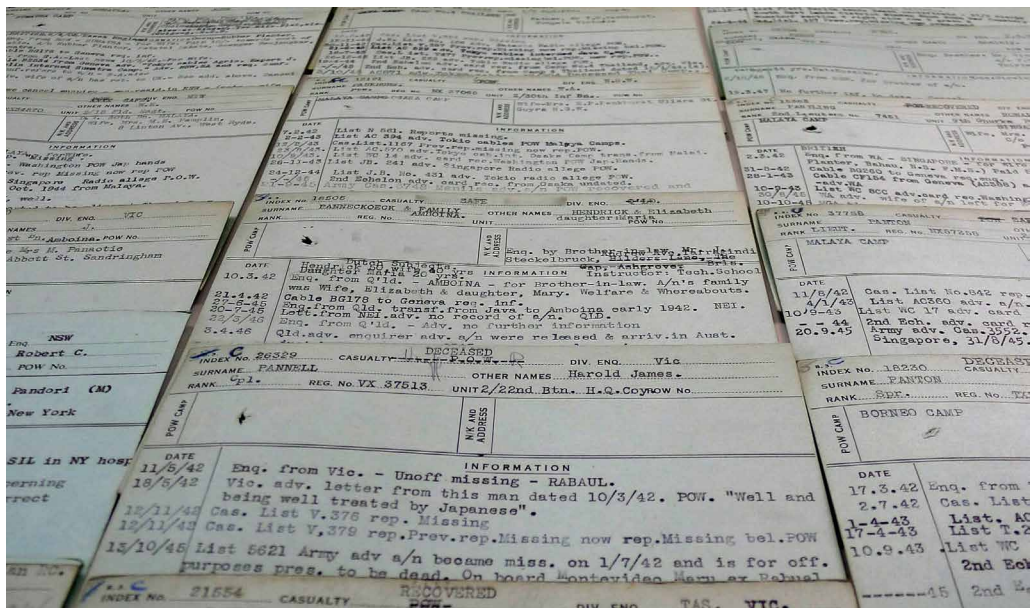
After presiding over post-war work at the bureau until March 1919, Vera sailed home to be with her father during his final illness. In a tribute, Lilian Whybrow described Vera as the bureau's 'chief inspiration and motive power' since its inauguration. Staff presented her with an exquisite diamond and ruby brooch in the shape of the AIF's rising sun insignia. An image of the brooch appears on the cover of this journal.

Vera married Captain Thomas White in 1920 and they had four daughters. Vera was the traditional supportive wife when her husband was elected to federal parliament, held ministerial office in the Lyons and Menzies governments and became Australian high commissioner to the UK. When Thomas White was knighted in 1952, Vera became Lady White.

However, Vera informed Tom when they became engaged that she could not countenance a bird-cage existence. Marriage would not clip her wings. She employed successive nannies to care for her children as she pursued extensive welfare work at an executive level for several organisations.

Above all, Vera was dedicated to the Red Cross and during World War II she provided advice from the outset to the national council on how best to search for the missing. Vera and her friend Lilian Whybrow (now Mrs Scantlebury) revived their enquiry work for the Victorian Division in Melbourne. They opened the Bureau for Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War in 1939 and operated from Red Cross House in Swanston Street, a building lent by the Myer family.

Remembrance of the fallen was a strong theme in the lives of Vera and Tom White. In 1938 they went on a pilgrimage to the war cemeteries of France and Belgium before reaching Villers-Bretonneux where they were members of the official party for the unveiling of the Australian War Memorial. Vera was a longtime friend of Sir Fabian Ware, founder and vice-chairman of the Imperial War Graves Commission. Her search for the missing dovetailed with his on the creation of war cemeteries and memorials.



World War II Investigation Cards from the Australian Red Cross Bureau for Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War

Vera Deakin was one of the very few women to rise to high office in the Red Cross overseas service during World War I. The enquiry work of Vera and her volunteer team during two world wars foreshadowed the Australian Red Cross tracing services that continue today under the name Restoring Family Links. This project is part of an international tracing network of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies coordinated by the Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

The Australian Red Cross enquiry bureau during World War I generated a remarkable collection of records; the Australian War Memorial has made 32,000 enquiry bureau cases available on its website. These eyewitness accounts, direct and powerful testimony to horrendous suffering, are part of the bedrock of the Australian archive on World War I. They are used intensively by war historians, family historians and increasingly by battlefield archaeologists. In recent times these records assisted in efforts to locate and identify Australian soldiers lost in the battle of Fromelles in July 1916. More than 200 of these soldiers buried in unmarked mass graves were reinterred in the new Fromelles Military Cemetery in 2010.



Vera Deakin White OBE, oil painting by Robert Hofmann, 1946, Private Collection.

In 1935 Vera established the Victorian branch of the Anzac Fellowship of Women, the main purpose of which became the provision of refreshments inside the gates of Victoria Barracks for people attending the Dawn Service at the Shrine. She continued as president until her death aged 86 in 1978. The Anzac Fellowship planted a pin oak in Vera's memory in Kings Domain opposite the Victoria Barracks.

Vera gained recognition in her lifetime for service in World War I but she and her team of Australian women subsequently faded from historical view, largely owing to preoccupation with male participants in the war and the demeaning treatment of volunteer work in our society. Widespread interest in women's history has again brought Vera into focus and prior to Anzac Day 2024 the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne unveiled a display on her service. Aged only twenty-three, Vera sailed to Egypt and led the Australian Red Cross search for the missing. This was a major national humanitarian wartime service with international significance.

A letter from a bereaved father encapsulated the value of the service of Vera and her volunteer staff during World War I.

*'It will give great comfort to his mother that he was buried and his grave marked. It will also be a great consolation to know that he was killed outright without long suffering. May I thank you most sincerely for your kindness in this matter. Such human sympathy does more to soften the agony of bereavement than your kind and devoted workers can possibly realise.'*¹⁹

Endnotes

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Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away The Search for the Missing Continues

Chaplain Geoffrey Traill

Chaplain Geoffrey Traill is posted to the office of DGCHAP-A as a member of staff. He also provides pastoral support to Defence members, APS and their families at Victoria Barracks Melbourne. A volunteer committee member of the Victorian RSL - War Graves Working Group he is President of the Headstone Project Vic Inc.

Abstract

Remembering the enormity of the First and Second World Wars and the number of Australian soldiers whose lives were forever changed as a result of their service, this article examines the cost to veterans and their families. Recalling those who came home and are now lost to our collective memory, having been buried in unmarked graves across Victoria, it gives an account of a small group of volunteers in Victoria who seek to honour their service and reconnect them with their families by marking their graves at their point of burial. A limited opportunity exists to help defray the total cost of headstones for WWI veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The article affirms the role of Army Chaplaincy in bringing honour to the dead and hope to those still in distress.

Key Words World War I, veterans, missing, unmarked graves, Headstone Project, honour, hope

Introduction

The ongoing search for Australia's 35,000 missing service men and women from the first and second world wars has slowed considerably in the last fifteen years with very few past Veterans now being identified overseas.¹ Attention has been drawn to Australian soil where it is estimated that up to 25,000 service personnel lie buried in unmarked graves across the country; many having died directly as a result of their war service. The Headstone Project, established in both Tasmania and South Australia, has sought to ensure that these veterans have their last resting place suitably marked to recognise their service, at no cost to their family.² Their motto: *"They served, they deserve to be remembered"*.

A small group of volunteers have worked to establish a branch of the Headstone Project in Victoria. This article recounts their struggles and aspirations to honour those veterans who have volunteered and put on a uniform, yet lie buried in unmarked graves in Victoria. In the first ten months they have established a not for profit charitable organisation, refined their administration and research methods through a pilot project at Point Lonsdale in Victoria and have begun to examine the admission records of military hospitals and asylums in Melbourne with startling results. Throughout their efforts, a call to provide spiritual and pastoral support to Army's people, by bringing honour to the dead and hope to those in distress, is affirmed as a hallmark of Australian Army Chaplaincy.

Remembering Gallipoli and the Western Front

Two recollections from my childhood shape my ministry as an Army Chaplain; both give rise to a sense of grief; a tearing of the heart. One put me on a path towards atonement³ and the other a search for understanding. Both inform a call to support and serve soldiers and their families; especially those who struggle with the physical and mental demands of military service as well as the administrative systems and possible consequence of Army life.

I vividly recall standing in the school quadrangle at Primary School, lined up with my class for an assembly, to commemorate the 50-year anniversary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli. In the midst of the service I realised for the first time the implications of my Grandfather's actions – a Sergeant serving with an 8th Infantry Battalion Machine Gun Section. He had lost half of his men at the

landing and was pinned down in front of the line for two days close to the 'Neck'. Within three months he was asked to return to the spot to maintain an over-watch position at the 'Battle of Lone Pine' (06 to 10 AUG 1915) where six Australian battalions suffered with nearly 2,300 killed and wounded.⁴ He later wrote to a cousin about the battle:

"Our job was to try and keep the Turks' heads down when our mates went over. They got mown down like chaff going across No Man's Land, but when parties got down into the trenches, they went through the Turks like ferrets down a rabbit burrow. There would be parties of Turks that would get trapped and they'd leap out and try to run back to their reserve trenches across open ground. Then it was our turn... it was like potting bunnies in a rabbit plague. I don't think I missed too often."^{5, 6}

My parents had spoken about the letter the night before the school assembly and in the minute's silence after the sounding of the last post I recalled their conversation. Tears were running down my face as I wondered how my grandfather could be involved in something like this? Such an unspeakable horror, described in such simple terms, his attitude suggesting a vengeance that I could not understand or justify as a seven-year-old boy. It was in that moment I felt undone.

My second recollection comes from a tour of WWI battlefields on the Western Front. I was fourteen years old when my parents took my brother and I on long service leave; retracing both our Grandfather's WWI service through the Western Front.

Seeing the countryside of Northern France and Belgium scattered with pill boxes and cemeteries – evoked a sense of the land crying out with the blood of so many soldiers. The tour culminated with a visit to the Tyne Cot Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery and Memorial near Passchendaele outside the city of Ypres.⁷ I was devastated by the sheer volume of lives lost, with the rows of headstones that seemed to stretch to the horizon. Over 295,000 Australians served on the Western Front between March 1916 and November 1918. Of those service men and women, 46,000 lost their lives and over 134,000 were wounded or captured. Battle conditions were so dire that more than 18,000 of the fallen had no known grave. Trying to comprehend the implications and industrial scale of warfare during WWI was overwhelming; they were all so young and so many are still unidentified Australians.

Recently Tony Wright wrote an article for the Age Newspaper that resonated with my childhood experience:

To wander among perfectly maintained grounds and gardens of the war cemeteries of the Gallipoli Peninsula or northern France and Belgium, or at any of the other places around the world where young Australians lie beneath row upon endless row of headstones, is to feel the heart wrenched asunder. The foreign graveyards transmit a haunting beauty. Flowers bloom at the feet of the headstones, the occasional tree casts shade, and the lawns are mowed to perfection."⁸

The Entitlement

Between 1914 and 1918 Australia's total population was about 4 million and the 416,809 who enlisted for service represented 38.7 per cent of the total male population aged between 18 and 44.⁹ Of these, an estimated 62,335 died and 166,811 were wounded. Two weapons that caused the most casualties were artillery and machine-guns. Shell fragments, shrapnel or even blast concussion from artillery rounds accounted for 51 per cent of Australian battle casualties, while bullets spat from rifles, and particularly machine-guns, made up another 34 per cent.¹⁰ A further 4,098 AIF were made prisoners of war, and 87,865 suffered life threatening or prolonged sickness.¹¹

From 1939 to 1945 during the Second World War, almost a million Australians served.¹² An estimated 27,073 Australians were killed; 23,477 were wounded in action and 22,264 POWs escaped, recovered or were repatriated.¹³

Such was the nature of first and second world wars that vast numbers of casualties were never found or never positively identified; resulting in over 35,000 Australians having no known grave.¹⁴ The Lone Pine Memorial at Gallipoli bears the names of over 4,000 ANZACs. The Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux commemorates over 10,000 missing Australians. Many bereaved families are still haunted with the memories of sons, brothers, fathers, husbands and grandparents who disappeared without trace. The scale of the loss has made this a shared national experience.¹⁵

As a result, The Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) describes an entitlement for soldiers who died as a result of their service:

If identified, then the Australian soldier's war grave will feature a headstone with his name, regiment, and date of death, if we were given the information at the time of burial... other features are added like an epitaph.

The conditions of World War battlefields were such that many casualties were never identified. If their remains were recovered, then their headstone will read "An Australian Soldier... Known unto God".

Those with no known grave are commemorated on Commonwealth War Graves memorials to the missing.¹⁶

Those who made the ultimate sacrifice are honoured with a Commonwealth War Grave and a promise that their grave will be maintained in perpetuity in remembrance of their service and the OAWG declares: "For what they have done, this we will do."

Those who came home

Of the remaining 351,200¹⁷ World War I veterans who returned home to Australia more than 156,000 were wounded, gassed, or taken prisoner.¹⁸ Many returned with missing limbs, shrapnel and gunshot wounds, tuberculosis, Spanish Flu, influenza or fractured minds.

The National Archives of Australia, to their great credit has digitised and uploaded the service records of 376,000 veterans. Files that contain information of deaths in battle, hospitalisations for wounding, injury and illness, deaths from disease, accident and suicide, hospitalisations for shell shock, venereal disease; even admissions resulting from the bites of camels and dogs, and kicks and falls from horses.¹⁹

The soldiers of the AIF returned home having seen and done things that they had never dreamed possible – fighting hand to hand at close quarters; seeing colleagues killed under barrages of artillery fire, mates blown up, dismembered, buried alive, killed by machine gun or sniper fire. Many who came home were unable to talk about it and suffered from debilitating and profound melancholia.

"Shell shock" was a term introduced in early 1915 to explain a range of symptoms soldiers were presenting with, such as hysteria, shaking, stuttering, tics, tremors, as well as loss of speech, sight, and hearing. At the time it was thought the concussion of exploding shells caused physical damage to the brain and nervous system (something that is being discussed again today).²⁰ Symptoms such as fatigue, headaches, confusion and chest pains, were generally labelled as neurasthenia.²¹

The disease that affected the greatest number of Australian troops during the First World War was venereal disease (VD). The statistics are shockingly high, ranging from around 53,000 to 60,000

men who were treated before the advent of penicillin; the treatment was imperfect and could be lengthy, painful and not always successful. Apart from the social stigma and embarrassment of contracting VD, the men risked infecting future partners or their wives,²² which often resulted in birth defects and a high infant mortality rate. Those diagnosed with 'General Paralysis of the Insane' as a result of contracting syphilis were cared for in military institutions but were not eligible, and still appear to be ineligible for Commonwealth War Grave funding no matter what their service history entailed. Until relatively recently the same held true for veterans who suicided (*see the article by Jamieson and Carey, 2024, on suicide and the role of chaplains in this issue*).

In many cases the burden of day-to-day care of disabled or incapacitated veterans fell upon the families. To a great extent it was the parents, wives and children who provided daily care and endured the hardships of nursing returned soldiers back to health over the years. For some it meant living with, and enduring, that suffering until the end mercifully came. The 1933 Census, records the deaths of some 38,000 veterans in the fourteen years following the First World War.²³

Many who returned died in hospitals, sanatoriums and asylums, or desperate and alone suiciding by their own hand. Their war experience killed them; the only difference being that they died after they returned to Australia.

The OAWG has buried and commemorated many who returned, yet it is estimated that close to 25,000 remain unaccounted for, buried in unmarked graves across Australia.

You can read about them at the Public Records Office or in Coroner's Reports.²⁴ Their stories lie in the National Archives of Australia, buried in archives of asylums for the insane and in hospitals that no longer exist. To all intents and purposes they are lost. The Commonwealth has forgotten them, the community has forgotten them and often their families do not even know where they are buried.

Finding Service Men and Women buried in Australia

In 2010, John Trethewey, a Tasmanian historian researching WWI veterans, discovered twenty soldiers buried in unmarked graves in Hobart. This led to four volunteers establishing the first Headstone Project in Tasmania. After eight years of effort: researching, finding families, planning, fundraising and erecting headstones — the group finally dedicated the last of 316 previously unmarked veterans' graves at Hobart's Cornelian Bay Cemetery in December 2018. On a farewell trip to Tasmania, Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove AK, CVO, MC visited the Launceston Cemetery to inspect the work of the Tasmanian Headstone Project and thanked the volunteers. He said: *"The effort you have gone to in finding these soldiers more than 100 years after the event... makes you proud to be an Aussie"*. The team have since dedicated over 500 veterans' graves across Tasmania.

A similar group was formed in South Australia in 2016 and have dedicated over 165 graves in 8 years with another 366 on their books to complete once they have raised the funds. The Headstone Project Mission Statement states:

The Headstone Project came into being with the sole purpose of ensuring that Australian veterans have their last resting place suitably marked in such a way that recognises their service.

We seek to locate the final resting places of veterans, currently lying in unmarked graves. When found, and service credentials are verified, we erect a headstone and memorial plaque to honour the person's service to Australia. If possible their family is located and invited to attend a commemorative service to dedicate their relatives grave.

Veterans buried in Australian Cemeteries

If you walk through any Australian cemetery – be it a suburban or regional cemetery – you will find that there are significant numbers of military personnel who lie buried in what look like empty plots. There is nothing to record their service to Australia or their name, just bare earth or mown weeds. Few visitors would even recognise these as graves of lost war veterans who died in the years following the war.²⁵ In my spare time and over weekends I began to read up on how to locate and identify Australian military personnel buried in unmarked ground.

In April 2023, retired MAJGEN Mike O'Brien, CSC²⁶ who had overseen the exhumation and reburial of 250 Australian soldiers from a German mass grave at Frommels, encouraged me to get involved. I was asked to attend the dedication of a grave at Fawkner Cemetery and subsequently offered to provide genealogical support to research a veteran for the South Australian Headstone Project (HPSA). I was given the name of a WWI Soldier from the 48th Battalion who was buried at Renmark on the Murray River. Working through the HPSA investigation template I was able to access the soldier's cemetery record, his military service, his family's genealogical data, as well as newspaper and social media information; to build a picture of his life and service with a view to locating and connecting him with his family.

A year later I was able to attend 1686 Private Edward Lane's headstone dedication and met his great nephews in person. They had travelled from different sides of the country to be there. The research effort had afforded Private Lane a full OAWG commemorative grave. He had been wounded in action with gunshot wounds to his hand, leg, knee and face. He subsequently died in 1928 aged 38 years from pneumonia as a result of having contracted tuberculosis on the Western Front. His 35-year-old great grand-nephew stood with me and was moved to tears seeing his uncle and father attending the unveiling of the headstone. He was very moved to have learnt of his family's service record and spoke about his own service on back to back deployments with the Special Air Service Regiment in Afghanistan and Iraq. He felt he could talk in confidence with a military chaplain.



Army Chaplain Geoffrey Traill supports John and Peter Fulton at the dedication of PTE Edward Lane's grave at Renmark S.A. 29 June 2024

In August the National Convenor of the Headstone Project - Tasmania³¹ and the President of the South Australian Headstone Project³² came to assess the possibility of establishing a branch of the Headstone Project for Victoria. Discussions were held about a local 'Pilot Project' being raised to help a volunteer group understand the research and administrative requirements in locating veterans and their families to mark a grave. It was stressed that a group would need to be well established before any consideration could be given to any other cemeteries across Victoria.³³ A quick visit to the Queenscliffe Historical Museum revealed a second unmarked grave at Point Lonsdale and an invitation to establish a Victorian branch of the Headstone Project was accepted.

Liaising with the President of the Fort Queenscliff Heritage Association,³⁴ an undertaking was given to support a 'Pilot Project' at Point Lonsdale. Members of the Heritage Association were quick to respond and within weeks conversations and planning saw the administrative burden of a constitution and applications for incorporation and charitable status drafted. By the end of January 2024 a Headstone Project for Victoria was officially launched and registered as a Not for profit Charity.

In the first ten months 38 members have signed up to walk the ground, to photograph existing headstones and check unmarked graves against maps in order to research each veteran's story. Volunteers identified 646 servicemen and women from the 1870s through to the modern era associated with the Borough of Queenscliffe. Of that number 78 were found to be buried overseas, having been killed in action or having died of wounds, 14 of those are still missing presumed dead. Of the 568 who returned to Australia, 160 were found to be buried in other cemeteries outside of the Borough or Interstate.³⁵ At Point Lonsdale 408 are buried and 28 or 6.8% of that number have been found in an unmarked or 'tin plate' grave.³⁶

The following short biographies are examples of the stories to be told:



Evan Donohue, Siranne Hose Gordon, Geoff Trail, Bruce Murray, George Ballas and Graham Christi at the grave site of PTE William Charles Dunk. Photo by Ivan Kemp, published in the Geelong Independent 8 Mar 2024. Ref:393330_19 (Used with permission).



1275 Corporal Frederick Broughton³⁷



CPL Broughton enlisted in the AIF on the 12th February 1915 and served on the Western Front with the 23rd Battalion and the 6th Light Trench Mortar Battery; spending most of his time in trench warfare close to the front line, enduring relentless barrages of enemy artillery fire. He had enlisted at Wodonga and was originally posted as a Batman at 4 Brigade HQ. He attested to being 21 years and 2 months when in fact he was only 18 years and 2 months old. He gave his occupation as a farm hand and his religion as Church of England. His next of kin was his aunt, Miss Lucy Osborne c/o Mrs Webb of 200 Canning Street, North Carlton.

Returning to Australia – aboard “Port Macquarie” on the 28th March 1919 Frederick returned to farming near Wodonga. He was granted a Soldier Settlement Block at Peechelba, near Wangaratta in January 1921,³⁸ but struggled to make a go of it. Nearly four years later he found work as a cook and walked off the block before signing up with the Australian Permanent military forces for 11 years at Queenscliff, Melbourne and Darwin.

Aged 40 years, Frederick Broughton was found dead on the beach between Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale on 13th October 1936. He un-expectantly discharged at his own request after having just signed up for a further 5 years’ full time service, when he took his own life by consuming strychnine. A coroner’s inquest was conducted where a friend recounted Broughton saying: “He was finished, and asked me to promise that I would not see him buried a pauper.... and make arrangements for his burial. I thought the deceased was joking and did not take him seriously. And said “Don’t be silly you would not do anything like that”. Deceased said: “That is right Arthur.”^{39 40} Greatly respected, a funeral was accorded by the Queenscliff branch of the Returned Soldiers’ Association and he was interred at Queenscliff Cemetery, Point Lonsdale section 1A grave 41. Mr Broughton was not married.⁴¹



3842 Private Arthur Jenkins



Private Arthur Jenkins was born in London in February 1896 and died on the 1st May 1918. He enlisted in the AIF on the 12th July 1915 and saw overseas service. His AIF attestation showed that he was of 21st Battalion, 9th Reinforcements, Number 3842, attested 22nd July 1915 at the Ascot Vale Show-grounds, Victoria. His occupation was listed as a labourer. His next of kin was his father in London. His religion was given as Church of England. He was described as 5’4” tall with blue eyes, light brown hair and fair complexion. He had no previous service before joining up.

Arthur Jenkins, who had been wounded in action and had suffered from a chronic ear condition, was returned to Australia and attached to A Company, Third District Guard (Victoria’s Home Guard). He had been on duty at Fort Queenscliff when found dead at Point Nepean on Wednesday 1st May 1918, having, it is believed, accidentally shot himself whilst on duty. A coroner’s Inquiry was held. The deceased had recently married an English girl before he was repatriated back to Australia. He was expecting his wife to join him but had been told she was not able to come. One can imagine being alone on guard duty on a cold windswept remote guard post on the other side of the world at Point Nepean having learnt the news. He was interred with military honours at Queenscliff Cemetery, Point Lonsdale section 1B grave 101. His commemorative grave and headstone were both decommissioned and replaced with a tin tag in 1992 due to ongoing maintenance costs.



Lady Vera Deakin White, OBE CSStJJ

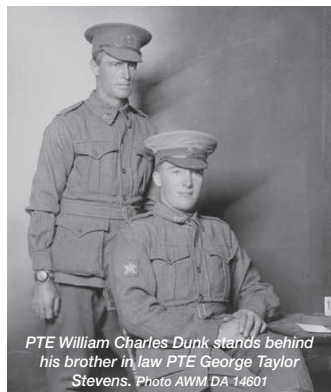


Vera Deakin was born on Christmas Day 1891, the youngest of three daughters to Pattie and Alfred Deakin, Australia's second Prime Minister. She was in London when WWI broke and returned to Australia to join the Red Cross to complete a course in Nursing. Wanting to do some war work she made contact with a relative who was the Red Cross Commissioner in Cairo. He invited her to come to Egypt with a friend Winifred Johnson. On 21 October 1915, aged 23, she opened the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau as its inaugural Secretary. (See article by Carole Woods pages 9 - 16).

She became Lady White in 1952 when her husband, Sir Thomas Walter White DFC, VD, MP was knighted as Australia's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. Sadly, he died in 1957 and was buried at Point Lonsdale. She died at home aged 87 on 9th August 1978 and was cremated at Springvale. Her ashes were interred in an unmarked plot next to her husband at Point Lonsdale, Section 2A, Grave 63A. A small plaque **on his** grave brings them both together. As a member of the Australian Red Cross, Volunteer Aid Detachment, the OAWG has sadly stated that they are unable to fund a commemorative grave for her.



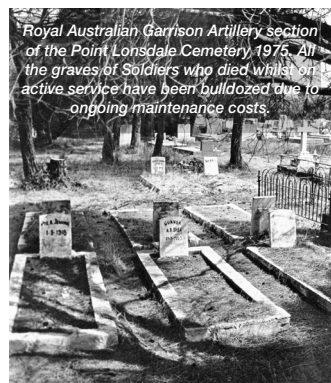
4420 Private William Charles Dunk



PTE William Charles Dunk stands behind his brother in law PTE George Taylor Stevens. Photo AWM DA 14601

Private William Charles Dunk, known locally as Billie, was born on the 18th October 1879 at Port Albert near Wilson Promontory, where his father Frank was the lighthouse keeper. His father moved to Point Lonsdale in 1881 to man the light at Port Phillip heads, where he built the 'Terminus' to house his twelve children. Billie enlisted with the Victorian Colonial Navy for 5 years in 1901 and served as a 2nd Class stoker aboard HMS Katoomba.

His attestation shows he joined the AIF at Broadmeadows on 1st February 1916 and was posted to the 22nd Battalion - 11th Reinforcements. His occupation was listed as a fisherman. Fighting on the Western Front for 2 1/2 years in bloody trench warfare he was twice wounded in action; a gunshot wound to the head and a shrapnel wound to the wrist. Returning to the front line he saw out the remainder of the war and was discharged in September 1919. He returned to fishing at Queenscliff and died on 8th July 1949 aged 70 years; he never married. He was interred at Queenscliff Cemetery, Point Lonsdale section 1C grave 48.



Royal Australian Garrison Artillery section of the Point Lonsdale Cemetery 1975. All the graves of Soldiers who died whilst on active service have been bulldozed due to ongoing maintenance costs.

852 Gunner Robert Henry Cannan

Gunner Robert Cannan was born on the 5th April 1882. He enlisted in the Victorian Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery (VRRAA) on the 10th June 1901 and later served with the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery (RAGA) post Federation. At the time of his first enlistment, he was living in Gellibrand Street, Queenscliff, and was employed as a groom. His religion was given as Church of England.

He died, aged 43, whilst still serving. He is buried in a grave marked by a Tin Plate at Point Lonsdale Queenscliff in Section 1B grave 71. Robert Cannan died from injuries received in a fatal motor vehicle accident at Drysdale on 25th March 1926. All 14 of the RAGA commemorative gravestones were removed in 1992 due to maintenance costs and are now just bare earth. HPV are seeking to have them reinstated.

Why Veterans' graves are unmarked

The Commonwealth has very tight conditions on the eligibility for supplying and installing Commonwealth headstones. If a Veteran's death for example is not attributable to their war service, as recorded on their service record and verified on their death certificate, they missed out.⁴²

Similarly, if a Veteran's family was unable to afford a headstone, which often occurred due to financial hardship during the 1930s Depression years and WWII, or where a Veteran died alone and estranged from their family, their grave would often have been without a headstone.

Some of our soldiers are buried in unmarked graves due to:

- Physical Injury / War Injuries / Illness / Spanish Flu
- Mental Health
 - War Service
 - PTSD
 - Moral Injury
 - Mont Park Asylum – suicide on trial leave
- Estranged from their family
 - Failed Soldier Settlement Blocks
 - Unemployed
 - Alcohol
 - Gambling
 - Domestic Violence
 - Venereal Disease
- Misadventure
 - Road Accident
 - Drowning
 - Suicide
- Family / Financial circumstances (Great Depression 1930's)
 - Choice between putting food on the table or a headstone on a grave
 - Lack of knowledge for family about how to apply for a Commonwealth Grave
- Last surviving member of family, parents, siblings, spouse or children predeceased them

RSL Victoria – War Graves Working Group

The Victorian RSL - War Graves Working Group (WGWG) have researched some 3,180 Veterans' graves in the past ten years and successfully made application to OAWG for commemorative recognition for 1,459 Veterans, either at their point of burial or through a commemorative plaque at a Garden of Remembrance.

The remaining 1,200+ Veterans have been put to one side and remain unaccounted for in unmarked dirt plots across Australia because they do not meet OAWG criteria; having died outside the gazetted period or of non-war related illness or injury such as psychiatric conditions, venereal disease (general paralysis of the insane), self-harm or suicide. This list has been made available to the Victorian Headstone Project (HPV) who have begun to review them.

A dedicated group of HPV volunteers in Melbourne have begun to match many on the WGWG list with case cards of veterans who were admitted to Mont Park and Larundel Military Hospitals after the wars. The astonishing finding is that many were long term residents with chronic psychiatric illness and physical conditions as a direct result of their service. Of the 700+ reviewed so far an estimated 25% appear to be buried in unmarked graves. HPV intends to honour these veterans at their point of burial with a headstone that provides details of their service, at no cost to their families.

Funding Applications for OAWG and DVA support

The Department of Veterans Affairs currently have a limited WWI grants program to help volunteer organisations and families defray the costs of installing a headstone, giving \$620 for eligible veterans for a limited period of time.

HPV funding applications are currently being written to OAWG and DVA for seven WWI Veterans graves at Point Lonsdale, two of whom died as a direct result of their service. With a hope that the remaining 21 will be funded or sponsored by individuals and businesses, at no cost to the veteran's families. There are a number of people who have agreed in principal to support the project. Some are considering a long term sponsorship over a number of years.

With over 560 cemeteries across Victoria, ranging from simple family plots on private land to large public cemeteries in metropolitan Melbourne, it is easy to see that if a small cemetery like Point Lonsdale has 28 unmarked Veteran graves; that there will be many more across the State.

Conclusion

The role of Defence Chaplaincy in facilitating appropriate burial is affirmed by our purpose as stated by RAACHD: "Chaplains are to provide spiritual and pastoral support to Army's people by bringing honour to the dead, comfort to the sick, hope to those in distress, and support to all."⁴³

The Headstone Project offers a tribute to soldiers as well as a bridge between past and present. As families rediscover their connection to those who gave their lives at such a cost, we are reminded that remembrance is an active pursuit.⁴⁴

Grief and loss are enduring for families, friends and colleagues of Veterans who have died as a result of their service. As an Army Chaplain I have experienced first-hand what it means for a family to find a relative who served buried in a dirt plot, to then have their service honoured, their story told and their grave marked at their point of burial. It tells them that their life and their service is important enough to be remembered. It brings solace and hope to families whose lives have been affected by war.

We pray that the offering of their lives may not have been in vain.

*Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.*

*O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.*⁴⁵

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22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Tony Wright; The AGE Newspaper; 27 Jan 24; When the graves of our war dead were desecrated – to save the government money. <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/when-the-graves-of-our-war-dead-were-desecrated-to-save-the-government-money-20240125-p5ezzy.html>
25. Ibid.
26. MAJGEN (Retd) Mike O'Brian CSC, President of the Royal United Services Institute of Victoria.
27. The replica set of medals were supplied by the Headstone Project – South Australia.
28. Bryan Marra, WWI Volunteers born in Queenscliff. Researched in 2014. Queenscliff & Point Lonsdale Volunteers – World War One 1914-1919, Researched in 2012 for the Queenscliffe RSL. Held by the Queenscliffe Historical Museum. Accessed Jun 2023.
29. Roll of Honour. Queenscliff and District. Queenscliff Sentinel, Drysdale, Portarlington, Sorrento Advertiser. Sat 14 Dec 1918. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/90759701>
30. There are a number of web pages that provide data on deceased veterans including the: WWI AIF research project, the Virtual War Memorial of Australia, Find a Grave and many others.
31. Andrea Gerrard, OAM. Chairperson and National Convenor of the Headstone Project (Tas) HPT
32. John Brownlie, President of the Headstone Project (SA) HPSA
33. A Headstone Project for Victoria would need to become an incorporated body, registered with the Australian Tax Office and the Australian Charities Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC). It would require an executive committee with formal processes and a bank account.
34. COL Bruce Murray, AM is a senior Defence project officer at Fort Queenscliff as well as President of the Fort Queenscliffe Heritage Association.
35. These graves are still to be checked for headstones.
36. A tin plate grave is one marked by a small, simple stamped metal sheet, rather than a proper headstone and plaque. These graves were decommissioned in 1992 at Queenscliff due to maintenance costs.
37. 2nd Veteran found by the National Convenor of the Headstone Project Inc. Andrea Gerrard OAM.
38. Granted Soldier Settlement Lot No. 57 & 57A at Peechelba Wangaratta, Vic 01.01.1921
39. Public Records Office (Vic) Coroners Report, Frederick Broughton. <https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/AEC9F768-F8C8-11E9-AE98-A575D95E3EF1>. Accessed 20 Aug 24
40. Former Soldier Found Dead On Beach. The Herald (Melbourne, Vic) Tue 13 Oct 1936 Page 2. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/248559007?searchTerm=%22Former%20Soldier%20found%20dead%20on%20beach%22>
41. Former Soldier Found Dead On Beach Near Queenscliff. The Sun New-Pictorial (Melbourne, Vic) Wed 14 Oct 1936, Page 16. <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/277603056?searchTerm=%22Former%20Soldier%20found%20dead%20on%20beach%22>
42. If a Veteran has spent months or years in a Military hospital as a result of PTSD and is officially certified as having died from heart failure, their entitlement to a commemorative grave can be rejected by OAWG as unattributable to their war service.

43. The role of a Defence Chaplain: Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department
<https://www.army.gov.au/about-us/army-corps/royal-australian-army-chaplains-department>
44. Editor's Note, *'Project offers fitting tribute'*, p. 14 Geelong Advertiser Tuesday 24 Sept, 2024
45. "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past" is a hymn by Isaac Watts in 1708 that paraphrases the 90th Psalm of the Book of Psalms. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_God,_Our_Help_in_Ages_Past Accessed 10 OCT 24

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 Kings Funerals – Geelong
 RSL – Victorian - War Graves Working Group
 RSL – Geelong
 RSL – Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale Sub Branch
 Australian Red Cross – Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale Branch
 The Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages – Victoria
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The Role of Chaplaincy in Providing Support for Defence members Experiencing Suicidality

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Abstract

This article addresses the role that chaplains can have with regard to providing support for Defence members experiencing suicidality with a focus upon the Australian military context. This is particularly important given the recent report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. Drawing upon relevant research and theoretical frameworks from the fields of psychology, public health, spirituality and pastoral care, this article presents an understanding of the importance of the bio-psycho-social-spiritual support which can be provided for Defence members experiencing distressing suicide related behaviours.

Key Words Chaplaincy, Military, Suicidality, Moral Injury

Introduction

Research continues to focus on mitigating the risk of suicide and suicidality (related thoughts and behaviours) amongst populations documented as being at a higher risk such as veterans (Kopacz et al., 2014). The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) indicates ex-serving Australian Defence Force members are at an increased risk of suicide compared to the general Australian population (AIHW, 2022). Noting that some ex-Serving populations such as those under 30, were as high as three times more likely to die by suicide compared with other Australian males (AIHW, 2022). [See Figure 1].

Mental health problems have been linked to service exposure (Van Hooff et al., 2014), however, research has identified that more than 50% of those who died by suicide did not have a psychiatric diagnosis (Bertolote & Fleischmann, 2002) highlighting the multi-dimensionality and complexity surrounding suicidality, emphasising the need for a multi-dimensional response.

In moments of profound distress, crisis and despair, individuals experiencing suicidality often seek support and guidance from various sources, including mental health professionals, friends, and family. However, the spiritual dimension of their experience is equally significant but can often be overlooked by traditional bio-medical services and responses. Chaplains, with their unique blend of pastoral, and spiritual insight, and care, can play a vital role in offering support to those experiencing suicidal distress.

This article explores the contributions of chaplains in addressing the needs of Defence members experiencing suicidal distress. It highlights their capacity to provide holistic care that encompasses spiritual, emotional, and psychological dimensions of mental health and wellbeing, and provides an overview of the role of chaplains in supporting a Defence member experiencing suicidal distress. Drawing upon empirical research and theoretical frameworks from the fields of psychology, public health, spirituality, and pastoral care, this article enhances an understanding of the importance of bio-psycho-social-spiritual support for Defence members experiencing distressing suicidality.

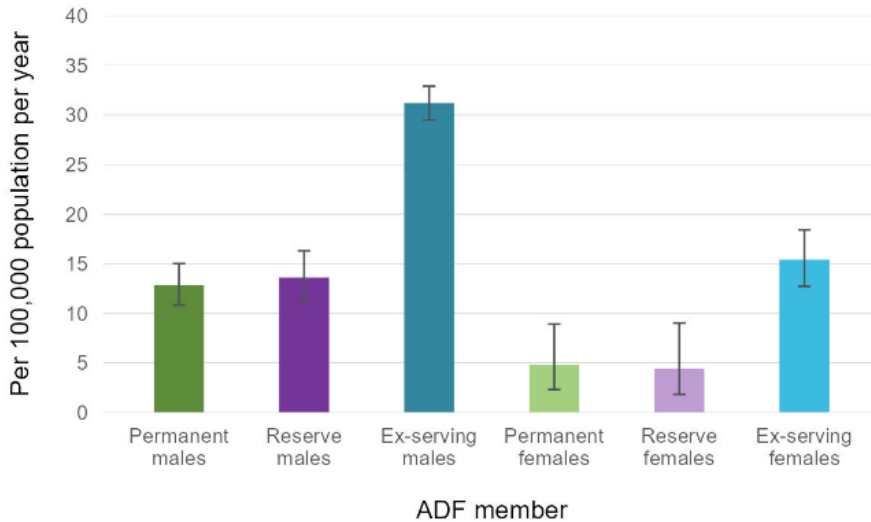


Figure 1: Average suicide rate per year of ADF members by service status group and gender 1997-2021
 Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2022).

Understanding suicide and spirituality

Suicide is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon influenced by a multitude of distal and proximal factors. These factors may include mental health challenges, life stressors, and existential despair. Religion and suicide have been inextricably linked since Durkheim’s seminal work from the late 1800’s (Durkheim, 1897). Contemporary practice also understands the importance of religion/spiritual beliefs when considering suicide behaviour (Koenig, VanderWeele & Peteet, 2023).

For many individuals, religiosity/spirituality serves as a cornerstone for coping mechanisms. Religiosity/spirituality also provides a framework for understanding anguish, and finding meaning amidst such distress. Thus religious and/or spiritual well-being is of significance to suicide prevention efforts as these domains are considered to traverse the various behavioural, physical, psychological, and social factors which might lead one to suicidality (Brown, Carney, Parrish, & Klem, 2013; Koenig et al, 2023).

There is a paucity of empirical literature associating religious and/or spiritual risk factors relating to suicide. Chaplains however, are trained to navigate existential domains, offering compassion, companionship, empathy, and a non-judgmental space for individuals to explore their distress, as well as help them to build a sense of purpose and well-being, that are documented to be protective factors against suicide (Błazek, Kazmierczak, & Besta, 2014).

The Chaplain’s role

For centuries chaplains within health care and military settings have provided a multitude of services (Carey, 2012) and continue to do so — many of which are not directly affiliated with any particular faith tradition such as: crisis intervention, ethical or moral consultation, life reflection and review, patient advocacy, counselling, bereavement, as well as empathetic and compassionate listening (Handzo et al., 2008).

Despite criticism from various secular rationalist organisations, research indicates that ADF chaplains continue to uphold and increase their utilization and value despite a change in national and/or Defence personnel demographics.

An ADF 2021 national random sample survey exploring the utility of chaplains (Best, et al, 2024), involving 2,783 active military respondents indicated that approximately 44.2% (n=1230) of respondents, had sought support from a chaplain, of which 85.3% (n=1049) found chaplaincy care to be satisfactory or very satisfactory. Further, respondents were just as likely to prefer chaplains for personal support (24.0%), as they were to seek help from non-chaplaincy personnel such as a non-ADF counsellor (23.2%), their workplace supervisor (23.1%) or a psychologist (21.8%). This evidence affirms that the spiritual care provided by military chaplaincy remains one of several preferred choices and thus a valued part of the holistic care provided by the ADF to support the health and wellbeing of its members (Best, et al, 2024).

Royal Commission acknowledges the role of ADF Chaplains

As noted in the report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans Suicide, Chaplains have an important role in providing support to Defence members. Chaplains are responsible for using their pastoral, theological and mental health training to:

- a. counsel, support and provide pastoral care to Defence members
- b. refer Defence members to mental health professionals for appropriate risk assessment and support
- c. assist Defence members to access emergency services
- d. support a member with a crisis management plan, or support development of a crisis management plan
- e. support commanders to carry out their responsibilities in relation to Defence members at risk
- f. encourage commanders to involve Defence members in the mental health programs delivered by Joint Health Command (RCVS, 2024: Vol. 4, p.193)

More specifically with regard to suicidal intervention Chaplains can be integral in providing professional support in a number of specific ways [See Figure 2]:

1. Crisis Intervention and Emotional Support
2. Spiritual Intervention and Exploration
3. Meaning Making and Existential Support
4. Collaboration with Mental Health Professionals

Crisis intervention and emotional support

In moments of acute crisis, chaplains can provide immediate emotional support and crisis intervention. Drawing upon their training in pastoral care and active listening, Chaplains offer a compassionate presence, instilling hope and conveying unconditional acceptance to individuals in distress. For many veterans having felt abandoned, an increased distrust can negatively affect help seeking. Chaplains are well placed to re-establish a sense of trust, safety and consistency for veterans who are at risk of suicidality (Kopacz et al. 2014).

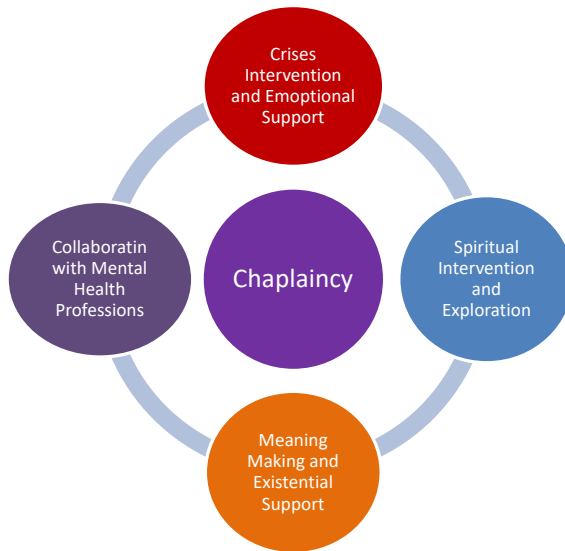


Figure 2: Chaplaincy roles in relation to suicidal behaviour

Spiritual interventions and exploration

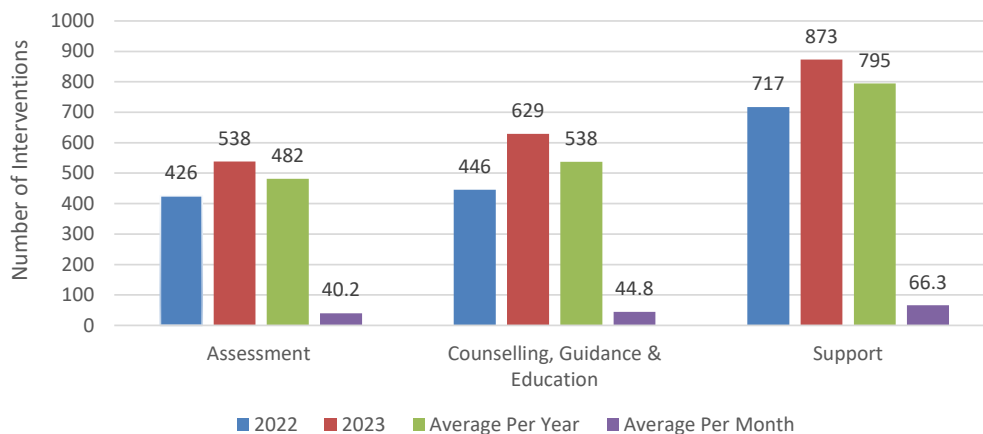
In accordance with the World Health Organization ‘Spiritual Intervention Codings’ (commonly abbreviated as the ‘WHO-SPICs’), chaplains fulfill a number of key interventions, namely: (i) spiritual assessments, (ii) spiritual counselling, guidance and education, and subsequently provide (iii) spiritual support and (iii) spiritual rituals (WHO, 2017). Spiritual assessments (whether formal or informal assessments) are particularly important as these allow chaplains to gain insight into an individual’s belief system, values, and existential concerns.

During 2022- 2023 ADF Chaplaincy Interventions using the WHO SPICs (noted earlier) indicated that an average of 482 ‘Assessments’ (40.2 p/month) were undertaken by ADF Chaplains which related to suicidality. Over the same period an average of 538 interventions related to ‘Counselling Guidance and Education’ (48.3 p/month), and an average of 795 interventions (66.3 p/month) required additional support [See Figure 3].

Through respectful dialogue and active listening, chaplains can ensure a safe environment for Defence members to explore their spiritual distress and reconcile conflicts within their faith framework. This is particularly pertinent with Defence members experiencing moral injury or moral distress. Moral injury is representative of the challenge of having to reconcile certain organisational experiences with individual interpretations of right and wrong. A sense of meaning, purpose and trust can also be damaged, increasing the risk of suicidal behaviour (Jamieson et al., 2023; Khan et al 2023). As Kopacz et al (2014) note, “Interpretations of right and wrong may draw on individual experiences related to religion and/or spirituality. In attempting to deal with different types of trauma, some veterans might turn to spiritual and pastoral care for support” (p. 3).

Indeed, ADF chaplaincy intervention codings identified that during 2022 and 2023, approximately 4,000 interventions related to moral injury (DSHW, 2023). Various literature has verified the important and proactive role that chaplains can have with regard to interventions concerning moral

ADF Chaplaincy Interventions and Defence Member Suicidality 2022 - 2023



(*Refer to explanatory notes)

Figure 3. Total ADF Chaplaincy Interventions (Navy, Army and Air Force) in relation to defence member suicidality (2022-2023)

injury and suicidal behaviour (Hodgson & Carey, 2017; Carey & Hodgson, 2018) and hence the development by the ADF of professional development programs such as Moral Injury Skills Training (MIST) and Pastoral Narrative Disclosure (PND) (Hodgson & Carey, 2022; Carey, Bambling et al, 2023).

Chaplains also encounter people managing other life events such as divorce, illness, grief, loss and bereavement (Wortmann and Park 2008), and are well placed in postvention support for Defence members who may have lost loved ones or other veterans to suicide. Chaplains support individuals with sharing their struggles in a non-judgemental and compassionate way. Providing feelings of safety and security and supporting Defence members rebuild relationship with themselves or others, supports mental health and wellbeing, and reduces the risk of suicidality (CDC, 2013).

Meaning-making and existential support

It is widely acknowledged that meaning and purpose are important for positive psychological health outcomes (Steger, 2022). Suicidal ideation may stem from a profound sense of hopelessness, burdensomeness, and despair (Joiner, 2005). This can often lead to disrupted relationships with oneself or others and an increased sense of meaninglessness. Chaplains focus on relationships to build a person's sense of purpose and meaning (Kopacz et al., 2014). Chaplains also help Defence members to navigate existential questions, facilitating a process of meaning-making and providing comfort through spiritual narratives and rituals. By acknowledging the sacredness of human life and affirming the inherent worth of individuals, Chaplains offer a counter-narrative to suicidal thoughts by focusing upon compassion and hope.

Collaboration with Mental Health Professionals

Whilst physical wounds may heal, "invisible wounds" such as moral injury may take much longer or for some, not heal at all. As diagnosis in mental health conditions continues to increase (AIHW, 2024) it is timely to consider the range of supports both traditional and alternative that are available for those who need them, when they need them.

A wide range of supports are available in the veteran community that can be difficult to navigate for veterans and mental health professionals. Chaplains can work collaboratively with mental health professionals and families to ensure comprehensive care for Defence members experiencing suicidal distress or behaviour. By integrating spiritual support into therapeutic interventions, Chaplains contribute to the holistic well-being of individuals, addressing not only their psychological distress but also their spiritual and emotional needs.

Conclusion

Chaplains can play a pivotal role in supporting Defence members experiencing suicidal distress, offering spiritual guidance, emotional support, and existential reassurance. They can also play a crucial role in early intervention, prevention and postvention. By integrating spiritual care into suicide prevention efforts, Chaplains contribute to a holistic approach that addresses the multidimensional nature of human suffering. Through their compassionate presence and commitment to fostering resilience, Chaplains often serve as beacons of hope for those navigating the darkest elements of the human experience.

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Figure 1. Notes:

1. *Data beyond 2021 currently under embargo.*
2. *Suicide rates in this Figure should be interpreted with caution when the number of suicides is fewer than 20.*

Figure 3. *Notes:

Source: ADF Directorate of Spiritual Health and Wellbeing – Chaplaincy Coding and Reporting 2022 – 2023.

- (i) **Suicidality:** suicidal ideation, plans and/or suicidal attempts;
- (ii) **Chaplaincy intervention data** is based upon type and number of interventions – not the number of ADF personnel who may request/receive multiple interventions;
- (iii) **ADF Chaplaincy Interventions:** Refer WHO-ICD-10-AM (WHO, 2017) Spiritual Intervention Codings:
 - (a) **Spiritual Assessment** [1824: 96186-00] Initial and subsequent assessment of wellbeing issues, needs and resources of a Defence member. This intervention can often lead to other interventions. Includes: informal explanatory dialogue to screen for immediate needs including spiritual, religious and pastoral issues and/or the use of a formal instrument or assessment tool;
 - (b) **Spiritual Counselling, Guidance and Education** [1869: 96086-00]: An expression of spiritual care that includes a facilitative in-depth review of a person's life journey, personal or familial counsel, ethical consultation, mental health, life care and guidance and education in matters of beliefs, traditions, values and practices;
 - (c) **Spiritual Support** [1915: 96187-00]: The provision of a ministry of presence and emotional support to individuals or groups. Includes: Companionship of person(s) confronted with profound human issues of death, dying, loss, meaning and aloneness, establishing relationships and hearing the person's narrative, providing emotional support and advocacy, enabling conversations to nurture spiritual wellbeing and healing;
 - (d) **Ritual** interventions were not included, as this data cannot be separately itemised with regard to suicidality.

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Presence of Hope in the Despair of War: A light to the dying, waiting and surviving

Chaplain Matthew Stuart

Chaplain Matthew Stuart is a Minister in the Uniting Church in Australia serving as an Army Chaplain. He is currently posted as the Coordinating Chaplain with the 3rd Armoured Amphibious Brigade in Townsville.

I had a conversation with the then Brigade Major of the 3rd Combat Brigade. We were discussing if we can truly prepare soldiers for the emotional and moral impact of future conflict, noting that developmentally most sailors, soldiers and aviators are still “adolescents.”¹ He reflected:

I don't know if we really can. I wasn't prepared when faced with the reality of the situation. For me it was doing Notification Officer training, I thought I got it, yeah it was challenging but I figured I would be fine if I ever had to deliver news of a soldier's death to the family - the notification. Yet despite not having to deliver one, I don't know if anything could have actually prepared me for how I felt when I ever handed over that folded flag to the spouse of a soldier I had lost!

There is a harsh and inescapable reality for the Profession of Arms that sets it apart from other professions. I would suggest that there has been something of an indifference to this reality in our training as we generally focus on the physical and intellectual components of fighting power. I am not talking about the use of lethal force; Police are trained in the use of lethal force. I am not talking about high standards; health care providers are bound by the need for high standards. I am not talking about physical demands; athletes train themselves constantly to perform at ever increasing levels of physical ability. What I am alluding to is that members of the Profession of Arms are sent into chaotic and tumultuous places that are emotionally and morally compromising; places where others restrict their actions and hope has been smothered. Other professions at the end of their shift are able to have a physical separation from the traumatic event; the sailor, soldier and aviator will not. Into this reality the chaplain bears the role of holding out hope as sailors, soldiers and aviators must remain and see the mission completed returning again and again into that traumatic and hopeless area of operation.

The focus of this article is to look at three potential tasks of the Chaplain in the Land Domain as an agent of hope to soldiers during potential times of distress whilst on combat operations. I emphasise the growing importance of chaplains being able to operate in a combat environment and in particular to ensure that as an enabling capability they are suitably readied through participation in Unit and Brigade field exercises. Whilst other corps look to current and past conflicts to better prepare for war, I will look back to the major conflicts (WWII) to understand how chaplains served on the front line in support of soldiers and command prior to, during and post bloody operational conflicts. I will relate these examples to the three areas of dying, waiting and surviving that chaplains need to be ready to provide hope for soldiers in combat.

From Barracks to Combat with Hope

As a coordinating chaplain I am aware of the broad range of welfare and wellbeing issues that support chaplains deal with in their respective chaplaincy contexts. They support a staggering number of people who are experiencing significant stress in their lives, workplaces and relationships.

The support is to help soldiers to remain on task while supporting complex welfare situations. Or to provide command with the assurance that soldiers are connected during extended rehabilitation programs. Or to help soldiers access the right entitlements when they are overwhelmed by the system while transitioning. This wellbeing support is important and provides quantifiable evidence to the effectiveness of *chaplaincy*. My concern is that it is often seen simply as a barracks role. Some chaplains recently have actively encouraged this barracks focus.

This section comes from increasing observations and conversations with support chaplains who either do not want to go field or are looking for ways to remain in roles that are in barracks. We unfortunately do not always name the elephant in the room. We have heard stories or have witnessed the extreme negative of chaplains who “just want to make people happy”. Historically we’ve derogatorily referred to them as “lolly chaplains”. This is epitomised by the narrative of this experience:

I remember an exercise where I was asked to take on a junior international chaplain, which I was more than happy to do. They arrived with their Headquarters, prepared to stay with me for a week, and they were back on the vehicle before the end of the first day. What I had mistakenly taken to be their gas mask pouch turned out to be a bag full of lollies. Whenever they saw an international soldier they’d walk up to them, open their pouch, and swing their hips at them winking. I saw this the first time when we visited the main position and later at the detainee centre. We were meeting the International Red Cross to do a “welfare” check. As part of the exercise the ICRC were invited to provide some training. As I was talking with the Platoon Commander and the Sergeant, waiting for the ICRC team, this chaplain approached me and asked me “Good to go?”. We had been there for ten minutes and they had already been around the facility handing out lollies to everyone; except, it turned out, to the role-playing detainees whom he had declined to visit.

I have lost count of the number of times I have been asked where my lollies were, or if it was true that I get a lolly allowance. Just as people have been surprised by my desire to go field or to be involved in the planning conferences. Very rarely have I been asked how I plan on supporting the moral component of fighting power nor been allocated specific tasks to enable me to be a force multiplier.²

The chaplain is called upon to reinforce fighting power through supporting the soldier in the moral component. The reality is that the care provided by the chaplain in the barracks correlates directly to the field environment, as well as to operations and combat. While on exercises, as well as in operations, I have often been approached by a commander to speak to a member in reference to something that is not “scenario based” or “connected to the mission.” This reinforces the notion that chaplaincy does not have an influence to fighting power, generally nor in relation to combat. I would argue that these requests often come as a soldier who has been holding significant stress finds in the long piquets on the radio or in the pit that their stressors have transitioned into despair. Yet the soldier doesn’t want to “abandon” their responsibilities and definitely doesn’t want to let their mates down.

As the Prussian Carl von Clausewitz maintained, while the nature of war changes the character remains constant.³ The toll on the human being has endured many different names from shell shock to dents in the soul to now moral injury. While much of the Australian Army looks to learn from the physical and intellectual components of current conflicts I suggest that Chaplains should also look to the past.

Regardless of the conflict or operation for the Australian Army a constant for over a hundred years has been the unassuming presence of the chaplain. While not all would pronounce the same declaration as General Montgomery, “I would as soon think of going into battle without my artillery

as without my Chaplains”, there is a strong theme of appreciation for chaplaincy support through all of Australia’s conflicts. Michael Gladwin’s 2013 book *Captains of the Soul* lays out countless accounts from 1788 to 2013 of the impact and influence chaplains on the moral component of fighting power.

It is clear that in many ways the chaplain’s role on the battlefield had changed little from the Great War: holding voluntary and compulsory church parades where possible (the former were almost universally preferred by chaplain and soldier alike); burial of the dead and recording of their details to pass on to loved ones and war graves officers; assisting as medical orderlies and stretcher-bearers where necessary; censoring letters; acting as social workers, counsellors and friends; visiting the sick in unit lines and personnel in unit guard rooms; cooperation with representatives of philanthropic societies; and providing practical help and welcome comforts such as coffee stalls.⁴

I would like to provide three vignettes from World War II that demonstrate what I view as inescapable situations in which soldiers will face the cold breath of despair. Into that despair chaplains in the Land Domain will potentially once again find themselves sought after by those in need of hope. Then I will provide some of the multi-disciplinary discussions from the current chaplaincy team of the 3rd Armoured Amphibious Brigade in Townsville.

Waiting with a Dire Sense of Despair

At Eora Creek in the Kokoda Campaign, while under mortar fire for several days, Chaplain Charles Cunningham continued in his duties of attending to the wounded, comforting those dying and burying the dead. During a particular march where several medical staff were killed from mortar and small arms fire, Chaplain Cunningham organised the RAP. Without sleep for two nights and



Shaggy Ridge, New Guinea. 1943-12-27 Photo by Norman Bradford Stuckey. Public Domain

three days he remained to provide care and hope to the wounded who could not be evacuated due to the Japanese patrols.⁵ Like many chaplains in the Pacific region these duties were provided regardless of creed and in the face of the extreme of circumstances.

Numerous citations awarded to chaplains indicate the diverse roles and range of conditions they humbly served in, often winning the respect of soldiers. United Churches Chaplain James Methven's example of courageous devotion was experienced by soldiers across his formation who were positioned across the Torricelli Mountains. As he trudged through the Aitape-Wewak district Chaplain Methven's "kindly tolerance, unselfishness and behaviour under enemy fire" exerted to all who he came in contact with were inspired by luminous hope.⁶

The medical system must focus on repairing physical injuries and offering strategies to manage stress for soldiers to continue in the battles ahead. The welfare process offers support resources and access to agencies to manage problems, for soldiers to remain focused on the tasks that remain. Yet despite all the excellent medical and welfare care on offer, people still find it difficult to overcome the shadows of despair in their lives especially if there is no one to walk along side. The role of the chaplain is not to replace other forms of professional care but to provide that which requires and sustains hope.

There are times when we must simply push forward while weighted down and surrounded by darkness. To do that generally we just need someone alongside us, someone to let us know we are not going crazy and that in fact we are worthy of hope. We may not be able to see it right now, nor imagine it in the near future. The chaplain can show all sailors, soldiers and aviators that hope is being held for them regardless of the distress around them.

The Chaplains of the 3rd Brigade have wrestled with the limitation of not being able to be present at every point of despair. We have worked tirelessly to ensure we have an understanding of the wider chaplaincy network, for which the chaplains of North Queensland have been invaluable. We have given focus to being intentional in building and maintaining professional relationships with each other. This is to enable each chaplain to provide a hope that regardless of what uncertainty lies ahead that each soldier will be honoured. We foster hope that is able to answer the wondering questions of life and death on the gun piquet waiting for the pending counterattack. We bolster hope that is able to bring calm and peace to the joint operations room waiting for confirmation of battles far off. We sustain hope that reinforces the fathers, mothers, siblings, and lovers' concerns that they will be forgotten in the cold foreign lands far from all they hold dear.

Dying in a Desolate State of Despair

On 3 August 1941 at a position called "the Salient", 106 soldiers were killed or wounded. With darkness half a day away and the possibility of another attack, Australian soldiers had to endure the moans of their mates in no man's land. Chaplain Tom Gard, a Catholic Priest, decided it was time to intervene. Commandeering a truck, enlisting the assistance of Sergeant Wally Tuit and a stretcher-bearer, Chaplain Gard drove into no man's land. With the sergeant on the bonnet waving a Red Cross flag, they were waved down by a German officer. Through the exchange of cigarettes and over broken English, Chaplain Gard discovered that they were stopped due to them heading for a minefield.

With negotiated permission, the collection of the wounded and dead Australians got underway. Eventually both sides emerged and assisted each other in the recovery of mates. There were reports that the Germans provided engineers to defuse parts of the minefield to recover Australian soldiers.

Even when the British, not knowing what was taking place, had started bombing the area Chaplain Gard was able to maintain the activity while having the bombs stopped. In the end all of the

Australians were accounted for. Chaplain Tom Gard was awarded an MBE acknowledging three years of service as well as his “heartening and encouraging presence with the most forward of troops.”⁷

The impact of the chaplains in North Africa was reported on by the war correspondent Alan Moorehead.

*The padres were very brave on this front, and some had been decorated for it. They were armed only with their helmets and their faith, and often they went forward with the attacking infantry to be at hand to help with the wounded. At these times they did not pray or preach on the battlefield: they dealt out brandy to the dying and administered morphia and helped bind the wounded and get them back in trucks and Bren gun carriers to the dressing stations. They carried food and water and medical supplies. In return for this the men looked on the padres with an affection and respect which they had never felt at home.*⁸

The world has watched on as the war in Ukraine has unfolded before our eyes. We have all been shocked by the grit and determination of what was deemed the underdog; by the atrocities inflicted upon civilian populations and infrastructure; by the rapid adaptation of technology and the cyber domain dominance; by the use and employment of non-state players. Perhaps the most confronting has been the overwhelming number of deaths with estimations of over eleven thousand civilians, thirty thousand Ukrainian military and half a million Russian military.

If we take the modest estimation of Ukrainian deaths of thirty thousand in the last two years that equates to roughly three hundred and fifteen deaths a week. In a PME session the North Queensland ADF chaplains heard of the situation for medical personnel trying to ease the passing of soldiers as evacuation sometimes was longer than 24 hours. The limited medical supplies meant that those who would in other circumstances be treated and evacuated were surrendered to death. Then the dead were, by necessity, loaded into any vehicle often on top of fellow soldiers into whatever transport were leaving the field of combat.

As confronting as it is, Chaplains deployed in support of forces operating in the Land Domain need to be prepared to offer ministry to those who are dying, to those who have died, and also to those involved at the different points of the evacuation process. Here the peaceful presence of the Chaplain will be needed to bear hope for the multitude of un-nameable questions, and into which the chaplain may need to take the lead for those who are paralysed by the crushing moral fracture. Still the battle continues with another day of death awaiting them. Here again the Chaplain must hold hope for all soldiers to pick up their weapons and meet whatever awaits.

Surviving Amidst the Despondence of Despair

The same legendary status given to Gallipoli and Kokoda is appropriately also given prisoners of war in World War II. In countless places and experiences of true despair there are countless stories of the impact of faith in maintaining hope. Throughout Southeast Asia there are accounts of forty chapels and two synagogues constructed, with even the great Sir Edward Weary Dunlop providing a recollection of them.

*There is beauty in this spot with the quietness of the river and the large stone altar with simple bamboo table and cross built over it. Alongside is the little cemetery with some great tree. The altar rail and seats are provided by bamboo ... and these rise up the bank theatre-wise. All around the green life of the jungle and the challenge of the little cross down by the river.*⁹

Chaplain Paddy Walsh is one who showed the extent that Australians chaplains went to in order to ensure that soldiers were cared for. While in one camp it was his recommendation, with an epidemic of cholera and the significant decline of soldiers' capacity due to malnourishment, that instead of burial that they turn to cremation. Chaplain Walsh would pray over those who died before being placed on bamboo funeral pyres. The following day he would take pieces of bamboo to collect the ashes, seal them with mud and engrave the soldier's name and regimental number before placing them in a cemetery.¹⁰

Michael Gladwin's book provides a powerful witness to the presence of Chaplains in the POW camps through the recollection of a Geoffrey Bingham. He was twenty-three years old at the time of his internment in both Kranji and Changi camps. He wrote about the impact that Chaplain Aubrey Pain had by sticking with the young sergeant through all the suffering and torment.

One day he said to me, 'Geoffrey, you have a very good mind. You pose significant questions. But I don't have the answers. He smiled his deliberate and devised sanctimonious smile and said, 'I can't prove God to you. But I tell you something,' he peered into my eyes. 'I tell you, Geoffrey, I know him!' With that he lowered his head as though heading off into a gathering storm, and, forward bent, he loped off. I half-grinned, but I knew he was better than my literary mentors ... Aubrey Pain was a man in whom there was no guile and everybody seemed to love him ... a chaplain to whom men came time and again. He had stuck with me in my struggles to find something beyond what I had known. He would wave away my polemics as they counted for nothing. Although very much an Anglo-Catholic he would preach on Good Friday in the Changi Square like a Salvation Army officer or a militant Methodist preacher. When he was a priest before what he called 'the altar', he was a sacerdotal minister of the holy rites and a different person in manner of speaking ... he seemed to love the times we talked on theology and practical spirituality. The test of the man was that the men loved to talk to him. They appreciated his ministrations at the bedside or just where they were working. He was unmarried, but in no way effeminate. In the services he would have his glass of beer with the men but he had no time for blue jokes or bawdiness. Men appreciated him and acted accordingly. Every so often the memory of him comes to me ... For me he was one of the greats.'¹¹

When new chaplains have joined the 3rd Brigade Chaplaincy team I have encouraged them to be prepared for the deep pastoral connection that happens quickly. It is an inherited trust, I tell them, that is a result of over a hundred years of other faithful chaplains simply being present. I cannot recall the number of times I have been told that simply my presence has emboldened, reassured or encouraged soldiers. We have historically used the Christian term of Incarnational Ministry, or more broadly *ministry of presence*.

Nearly every chaplain has encountered a commander who has provided the guidance: "Chaplain I don't know what you do but I want you to go out and do your thing." When I first started as an Army Chaplain in a 2nd Division unit I recall an interaction with a Company Sergeant Major. We were in the car park after a training exercise and I was at my car when I heard: "Padre? I think your lot are important and I will be encouraging my diggers to come speak with you. Don't be offended but I won't take it up myself though." As I expressed my appreciation for their support I was not expecting that four months later they would be in my office in tears. It turned out that over several demanding exercises and activities they had been watching me and felt that I could be trusted with the despair they carried from previous deployments.

I had a short deployment that included an experience in the hospital of Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) during an international mass casualty event. Much of my time was spent moving around the edge of the rooms, gently placing a hand of support on the shoulder of medical staff, wiping blood off the floor that had been missed, or standing with overwhelmed soldiers not sure what to do. Afterwards and into the next week many of the medical staff sought me out as too did a number of the international soldiers. For most they just wanted to thank me for being there. They didn't quite know why they sought me out other than to sit with me. The Senior Doctor of the hospital approached me and remarked that though they questioned my presence at all the rehearsals they were glad I was there when it actually happened.

This can be one of the hardest aspects of offering hope that a chaplain in the land domain will face: feeling out of place, having people question their role, and yet constantly turning up and being present. LTCOL Chris Johnson, Director of PME, told the 3rd Brigade chaplaincy team: "You don't have to lift the same weight or run as fast, but never underestimate the importance of you doing PT with the soldiers and the units. If there is one thing I would encourage you to do is to always turn up with the soldiers."¹²

To be a Presence of Hope

The chaplain was struggling. Workplace generated stress was breaking down relationships between colleagues. The chaplain had just met with a junior officer, who had been performing higher duties, who was near the end of their tether. During the conversation they had broken down in front of the chaplain. The chaplain approached me as the Coordinating Chaplain with a simple question: "What do I do?" My answer was not what they were hoping for and yet they knew it was the only appropriate response: "You listen."

Soldiers acknowledge the reality that they may one day die. This may happen away from loved ones, in foreign lands, albeit hopefully beside their mates. It is not something anyone wishes to spend too much time dwelling on. As such the chaplain humbly and often unnoticed must be present to the moments of waiting, dying and surviving. It is a presence where the chaplain is prepared. We need be prepared with hope to hear the questions of doubt and life bought up from the dire sense of despair; prepared with hope to bear the expressions of fear and anger that sprout from the desolate state of despair; prepared with hope to return to the memories of guilt and shame lingering amidst the despondence of despair.

Endnotes

1. "Adolescent Learning", *The Cove*. (2022). <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/adolescent-learning>
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3. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (1832).
4. Michael Gladwin, *Captains of the Soul*, Big Sky Publishing (2013), Kindle Edition, location 2590 of 9134.
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The FSU: a Gateway to Hope

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Abstract

There is an increasing focus on Large Scale Combat Operations and what future conflict might look like for Australia and its allies. This year the theme of the Chaplain's Journal is Despair unshackled by Hope. In this article I have attempted to combine these themes by reflecting on the reading I have done, the experiences I have had as a Force Support Unit chaplain during 2024 and on conversations I have had with chaplains who previously served as theatre gateway chaplains in the Middle East. Chaplains have an important role to play as bringers of hope to the personnel who are moving into and out of the Theatre of Operations. In this article I will show that there is one way into theatre but four ways people can exit the theatre and that in each of those cases there is space for the chaplain to offer hope. My hope is that this provides a starting point to help chaplains reflect on and discuss how chaplains offer hope to people at the start and end of their deployments.

Introduction

"I'm a chaplain. That's a fancy word for the bringer of hope. I remind soldiers when the bottom drops out and the worst of the worst has imposed itself upon the best of the best, with tragic consequences that God has not forsaken them no matter what it feels like."¹ Chaplain Dicks gives this understanding of the role of military chaplaincy in the opening of his book, *Hope on a Strange Planet*. The axiom that was taught on the Chaplain's Initial Course in 2015 was that chaplains provide religious care for their own, facilitate religious opportunities for others and offer support to all. Later that year, at the Army Chaplains Regional Seminar, Principal Chaplain Glynn Murphy presented what he called the *Hallmarks of Chaplaincy*: that a chaplain's ministry should include religious, pastoral and spiritual dimensions. More recently the Army has sought to define the role of the chaplain as being:

*"Officers who provide SME [Subject Matter Expert] advice to Command and administer spiritual or religious support and pastoral care to members of the Army and their families. The foundational role for Defence Chaplaincy is to bring honour to the dead, comfort to the sick, hope to those in distress and support to all."*²

The quote at the beginning of this article, and each of the subsequent attempts at explaining the role, serves to highlight the breadth and depth of the potential tasks that a chaplain might be asked to undertake. The choice of opening with the quote from Chaplain Dick's suggests that seeing chaplains as "bringers of hope" is the most fundamental aspect of military chaplaincy. Hope is the unofficial 'task verb' of chaplains.³ In this essay I will begin by defining hope from a secular point of view and then articulate my personal position on what it means to have hope from a Christian perspective. I will then discuss some of the generic ways in which chaplains can offer hope. Next, I will offer some initial reflections and discussion around how a chaplain, working as part of a theatre gateway team, might offer hope in the challenging situations military members face on deployment. In particular, I will focus on the *One way in and Four ways out*⁴ of the theatre and how the chaplain might balance this against offering unit chaplaincy to members of the Force Support Unit (FSU) who live and work as part of that theatre gateway and are arguably their primary area of pastoral responsibility. I have written this article based largely on my own observations and

reflections as an FSU chaplain but have also spoken with several RAAF and Army chaplains who were deployed to Kuwait or Al Minhad and worked as part of a theatre gateway team in the Middle East Region (MER).⁵

Hope

Hope is a word that is used frequently by people in a variety of situations. People often use the word hope as a verb, to describe what they are looking forward to or anticipating. They are waiting with a sense of expectation that something will occur and it will be good. Sometimes people use it as a noun, to name something or someone that this desire is centred upon. During times of crisis or despair, to have hope usually means looking forward to a time, place or situation where life is better, or there is less suffering or pain. It could be when healing has occurred, the impacts of grief are felt less harshly, life has returned to a steady state or someone has returned to a more positive outlook on life. Many psychologists recognise the positive impact that hope has for the clients they work with. For example, Long suggests that “Hope is most commonly operationalized as a cognitive-motivational set comprised of reciprocally derived pathways (the perceived capacity to identify routes towards goals) and agency (the will to employ those pathways). Hope is robustly related to positive functioning and fewer symptoms of mental illness.”⁶ Long is arguing that when hope is viewed as a verb by the person in crisis, they can be empowered to find ways to improve their situation and put those steps into practice which will lead to better outcomes. Often, when people speak about hope, they are looking to a time or place in the material world where the situation is improved for the person in crisis. While the same might be true for chaplains, many religions have a broader view of hope and what might be hoped for by its adherents. I will now share my personal theological understanding of hope.

The Christian hope is that God is faithful and just, that God loves his creation and that God is working to redeem that creation. God’s faithfulness to Israel is demonstrated in the history books of the Old Testament. Many of the stories it contains demonstrate how God has faithfully upheld God’s covenant promises to Israel when Israel has lived up to their part of the covenant. In the New Testament, the story of salvation and hope continues as the gospels record the life, death and resurrection of Jesus who offers a new covenant for all people. The idea that death is defeated and humanity is set free from sin to live in relationship with God is the cornerstone of the hope that Christians have. Many of the events recorded in the history sections of the Old and New Testament occurred within time and space and are held as fact by the majority of historians. This means Christians can have certainty about what has happened and can assume that if God was faithful in the past that God will continue to act faithfully in the future. Christian chaplains live out this hope and need to be able to articulate it when military members ask about it. But one of the key questions being asked by society today seems to be: is faith still important and is this idea of hope still necessary? In this section I have articulated my sense of hope as a Christian. In my opinion it is vital for all other Chaplains and Maritime Spiritual Wellbeing Officers to have studied, reflected and thought about how they might offer hope to the people they work alongside. I will now describe some of the ways in which chaplains offer hope to those around them, common in all elements of their ministry.

Offering hope

I began by suggesting that chaplains must be “bringers of hope”. In any given week there are many occasions to offer this hope. It can be during difficult times, such as when families or relationships are in crisis, when there is workplace stress or conflict, when there is injury or death in the family or circle of friends. Often there are opportunities to offer hope while supporting and encouraging people in the mundaneness of life, by attending meetings and briefings, Physical Training and Professional Military Education sessions or by visiting people in the workplace. There are also opportunities to speak about hope or realise and celebrate hopes being fulfilled, with people at

work when they get postings, promotions or awards they have desired, or at home when they get married, have babies or grandchildren. When a chaplain deploys on exercise or overseas this field of experiences and potential tasks shifts. The focus becomes less about family and barracks style concerns and more about combat focused problems, although concerns and problems at home still affect military members who are deployed. Such problems include death, injury, fear, tiredness, challenging tasks, the frustrations that come with working and living in small teams and many other issues. Utilising the aforementioned *Hallmarks of Chaplaincy*, I will now look at how chaplains can bring hope in their ministry.

As a faith group leader the chaplain has a specific religious ministry. Chaplains can use hope as a theme during times of corporate worship. In this setting, hope can be preached about in sermons, it can be articulated in corporate prayer or sung about in hymns. As part of worship or in private settings, chaplains can offer rituals such as reconciliation, prayers of confession and similar things that can assist members distressed or feel hopeless to be restored to the community. Within the spirituality hallmark, chaplains might organise or offer reflections, or prepare study group materials which focus on hope. A chaplain might engage in practices, rituals and devotions which bring them hope or offer them hope, so that filled with hope themselves, they might be in a better headspace to offer that hope to others. Chaplains might also develop or provide resources that other military members or groups of soldiers can utilise which will offer them hope. In the pastoral setting chaplains offer hope or share in hope through their conversations. These might occur in private or in a group and might consist of the chaplain and the military member sharing stories about life, expectations, fears and hopes for the future. In these encounters, as the chaplain sits and listens, the chaplain can point out those things that offer hope or sound hopeful.

Outside of these *Hallmarks*, there is an overarching way that the chaplain can offer hope wherever they go. This is by the example they set in how they live their life. A Christian chaplain (in my case) can be a beacon of hope by living an example of a faithful Christian life. Soldiers and officers watch the chaplain carefully to see if they walk the talk. Evidence of this can be found in Michael Gladwin's *Captains of the Soul*. Gladwin, gives many positive examples of how chaplains have brought hope to the people they serve alongside.⁷ At times the chaplain can offer hope to their unit by simply being a calm non-anxious presence and offering their time freely and generously. Another key way that chaplains on deployment and exercise are able to demonstrate hope is by choosing to not carry weapons. In this way, the chaplain is, in a very visible way, demonstrating the hope that one day weapons and war will no longer be required. I will now focus on some of the specific circumstances an FSU chaplain might find themselves in and offer specific ways that hope might be provided in those circumstances.

Hope in the FSU

The FSU acts as a theatre gateway for personnel and logistics moving into and out of the theatre. Military members can enter the theatre one way: as reinforcements, but can exit under four broad categories: death, injury, because of some crisis either at home or self-generated, or because their tour is over. The chaplain has a role to play in offering hope in each of these situations. Former Royal Navy Chaplain Godfrey Hilliard offered the following reflection,

“On that journey to the Falklands, I spent a lot of time listening – I really honed my listening skills. I was told not to expect many people to come to church on Sunday, but it was actually packed. There were even more on the way home, because of the sense of relief and also that sense of guilt – why were others wounded and killed and not me. It was humbling to listen to people sharing their experiences.”⁸

Reinforcements

During the recent Middle East deployments, chaplains at the theatre gateway worked as part of the Reception Staging On-forwarding and Integration team and while little has been officially documented about chaplains providing hope to military members moving forward, lessons can be learnt from anecdotal evidence. Theatre gateway chaplains often welcomed people arriving to the MER at the airport (Reception) and were available to talk with members as they waited. Chaplains would also deliver some of the briefs as part of the lesson pack. This would include mentioning specific arrangements for chaplaincy in the various locations as well as highlighting some cultural/religious customs of importance and reminding people to look after themselves (Staging). Chaplains would also occasionally accompany people to the range and first aid stands in order to be available for members to discuss any hopes, fears, angst or anxiety they may be experiencing about heading forward. This author knows from personal experience that there are occasionally members who are about to deploy who are uncertain of their future and are a little scared or anxious about what might happen on deployment. A former British Army chaplain, David Cooper, recalled the words he offered when asked to speak to the members of his unit on the night before they were to go ashore in the Falklands. He said he “didn’t believe in a God who could divert the path of a bullet, but I did believe in a God who had the capacity to care for an individual both this side and the other side of death.”⁹ Soldiers moving forward into dangerous locations to undertake dangerous roles may be excited at the prospect of finally getting to “do their job for real”. However, there may also be underlying concerns, fears or worries and so the chaplain is a good resource to bring hope to those who are about to go forward into the unknown conditions of a deployment. The chaplain can also bring hope and familiarity by connecting people with the chaplain who is serving on the ground at those forward locations. Once people are in theatre they will inevitably return home and this happens in a number of different ways.

Death

The most catastrophic way that someone exits the theatre is by being killed. Death is an inevitable part of conflict. Tragically, 42 Australian military members were killed overseas in the 20 years Australia was involved in the Afghanistan conflict. Whilst these numbers were much less than previous conflicts, the overwhelming experience of people is that, when a death occurred, everything would shut down and the focus would be on repatriating the casualty. In the kind of large scale combat operations Australia and its allies are thinking again about and planning for, this will not be possible.¹⁰ The FSU has the potential to either provide a Mortuary Affairs Collection Point, a Theatre Mortuary Evacuation Point or a consolidated facility that functions as both. The chaplain has a role in Mortuary Affairs, not least because one of chaplaincy’s core roles is in honouring the dead. In this respect, the chaplain may need to ensure that some form of appropriate ritual is conducted to honour the loss of life as deceased soldiers are repatriated or temporarily interred. In these cases, the chaplain may have five or fifteen minutes to share a few words of hope that tie in points about suffering, death, the reason for fighting and that we hope to one day restore ourselves or the host country to peace. However, the chaplain may also find themselves conducting temporary interments and the associated memorial services. Through these services and by spending time with escorts who are passing through accompanying human remains, the chaplain may have opportunities to speak about or demonstrate hope which can add to the healing. The chaplain may also have opportunities to support the Mortuary Affairs (MA) workers but this will be discussed below in support to the FSU members.

Wounded

A second way military members might exit the theatre is when they are wounded or significantly injured and cannot continue to fulfil their function. The FSU may be co-located with a hospital or

have a facility where wounded soldiers are waiting to be repatriated. In these situations, the FSU chaplain or the chaplain attached to the medical facility may be able to care for the wounded and bring hope to those in distress. In civilian settings chaplains often sit with patients and help them come to terms with life changes as a result of injuries or medical diagnoses which have big impacts on the patient. In the podcast *Faith for Normal People*, Joon Park, a hospital chaplain, discusses the problems and pitfalls he has seen in pastors, friends and family rushing in to offer platitudes and faith based statements to try and support the patient. Park describes how he came to realise that in part these people are also trying to reassure themselves and prop up their own faith. Instead of offering platitudes and clichés, he advocates listening to feelings of frustration, disappointment, anger and grief, then normalising and naming them.¹¹ Through the listening skills that they have acquired over years of practice, chaplains are well placed to be able to support the wounded. They can normalise and name the negative emotions, as Park suggests, but they can also listen for the seeds of hope in the dialogue and, where appropriate, point to them as they sit with wounded soldiers.

Military Members Returning Home due to a crisis

Sometimes a military member might need to return home as the result of a crisis. This could be self-generated because they got caught doing something wrong, or external such as the death or serious illness of a close family member. In these situations, FSU chaplains have worked alongside medical and mental health staff to support the people who are returning home, spending time listening to them in a non-judgemental way or supporting them through offering an appropriate ritual. In the case of individuals who have been caught doing the wrong thing, they might be feeling foolish, isolated and disappointed in themselves. The presence of a chaplain, who is willing to listen to their story without judgement and help them name and start to work on their behaviour, can help the military member to start to restore their faith in themselves as a person and can offer them hope that they can be restored in some way with the community. Where military members are returning home because of some other crisis, the chaplain can be the safe, confidential person that the member can share their hopes and fears with.

Soldiers Returning Home when their mission is over

The best and most satisfying way a member can return home is with the knowledge that they have completed their assigned task or the period of time they were set to be deployed for. As a part of this the chaplain, working in conjunction with the medical and mental health team, can help prepare military members for their return to Australia. This can be done through the provision of the standard returning home briefs. These briefs can lead to conversations around mediating expectations about hoped for reunions with partners, children and family. Another way the gateway chaplain can assist members returning to Australia is by organising day trips to safe places where members can start to see, observe and experience normal, safe life again. By providing these opportunities, the chaplain is spending time with people in order to build a trust and rapport with them so that they might feel comfortable reaching out for assistance.

The soldiers and officers in the FSU

The chaplain to an FSU has a key role in assisting military members in moving into and out of the theatre but they also have a primary role of supporting the members of the FSU itself. Sometimes this will be support to the Mortuary Affairs (MA) workers who must work to identify and process the human remains and organise for the return of a member's personal effects to their next of kin. Research undertaken in the United States of America has shown that MA workers are more likely to engage with a chaplain for support if that chaplain has experience in MA or has been engaged with the MA teams while they work.¹² It is thought that it is because the chaplain becomes a shared insider and is seen as understanding the process and what MA workers are going through.

When chaplains work alongside the MA teams they will have opportunities to support the MA team members, watch and see if any of them are being over exposed to trauma and offer support and hope to those in distress. By the very nature of their work MA workers will be confronted with their own mortality which may bring up questions for them. While psychologists and other health staff may be available to assist, the FSU chaplain, embedded within the MA team, is ideally placed as a first option for support. The chaplain can listen to their stories and assist them in working through what is happening. The other key theatre gateway staff that the chaplain will support are the medical and psychological personnel. The chaplain can assist the medical staff by taking referrals to chat with military members who need assistance but do not meet the threshold for medicalising the issue. Chaplains can also assist medical staff by making time to support and listen to them and help them find hope in the messiness of the life they are experiencing. The main focus for the chaplain in terms of FSU staff will be on supporting the logisticians, operations and planning staff of the unit itself. In many ways this is the same as unit chaplaincy everywhere, addressed in the initial sections in line with the three hallmarks. However, being in a theatre gateway brings the additional role of supporting personnel as they transit through the gateway and the chaplain will need to balance the priorities of support that they give to each area.

Conclusion

Hope is a theme that I constantly think about as a chaplain. Hope is something I look out for in my conversations with military members and their families and in my own life. In this essay I briefly discussed some of the secular concepts around hope and then offered my own theological understanding of Christian hope. In 2022 I had the privilege of serving as the Chaplain to one of the Chaplain's Initial Courses and I shared with them in a spiritual reflection the importance of chaplains as bringers of hope. The challenge for all military chaplains and MSWO's, regardless of faith or professional background, is to have an understanding of hope and to be able to articulate that to the military members they are sitting with. During 2024 I have been posted to 10 FSB. A unit that has in the past, and is preparing to act in the future, as a theatre gateway. As people move through the theatre gateway they experience a range of emotions and feelings and chaplains have a key role to play in supporting that. Chaplains can listen for the range of emotions that military members experience in these situations, they can name them and help explore them. The chaplains can also listen for the hope in what is shared and point that out where it is appropriate as they are positioned to serve alongside those who serve.

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3. Before switching to "Positioned to Serve" the Chaplains Department used the tagline "a Force for Hope" in its official branding.
4. Broadly speaking members enter a deployment as reinforcements, either individually or as a group, one way in. But they could leave because they are killed, wounded or injured to the point they cannot continue serving in theatre, have acted inappropriately and are being returned early, or because their tour is finished.
5. The ADF often conducts Joint Operations and these are increasingly becoming Whole of Government or Interagency Task Groups as well. I acknowledge that chaplains of all services have, in the past, offered, and will continue to offer, support as part of a theatre gateway team. However, given my current posting, this article will refer to the theatre gateway unit as an FSU.
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The Role of Identity as a Contributor of Hope within ADF Personnel Experiencing Despair

Chaplain Neil Anderson

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Introduction

The concept of 'Identity' lies at the centre of the human journey from despair to hope. Human beings invariably seek an 'identity' as a central part of their experience. Identity provides great strength / weakness and clarity of purpose. This contributes to moving from despair to hope as they face the experiences of their lives. Providing opportunity for members of the ADF to explore their 'Identity' will strengthen their resolve and provide resilience as they participate in the arduous nature of the profession of Arms. Identity also provides balance and discernment as they make life choices amongst competing demands in their lives whilst serving, as well as life after Service.

The importance of shared collective values and beliefs (culture) between 'the group' is clearly named as central to the organisational culture within the ADF. This shared collective trust and bond is closely related to the concept of Identity. It is articulated within the Australian Army as noted below:

*"Organisational culture is a system of shared values and beliefs that govern the way people behave within an organisation. Army's cultural and ethical foundation is its values and the bonds of trust between each and every person who joins in service to the nation."*¹

This concept is elaborated across the ADF in the Department of Defence 2030 strategy when it states:

*"As Defence moves towards 2030 there will be many uncertainties and challenges. However, there will remain one enduring constant; the importance of our people and their central role in the security of our nation. Platforms and networks allow us to conduct and sustain military and security operations, but people are at the heart of all our systems"*²

The purpose of this article is three-fold: firstly, to introduce and explore the concept and importance of Identity as it relates to human wellbeing. Secondly, to demonstrate the connection of Identity to a robust hope in the face of despair. Thirdly to briefly discuss the unique role of Chaplaincy in the exploration of Identity within ADF personnel.

Definitions: What is Human Identity?

The concept of 'Identity' is at the centre of our felt experience as a human being. Very simply it answers the questions "Who am I"? and; "Who do I belong to"? in our lives. It is a question that is answered both externally and internally in our lives. Externally by the way we look, speak, and express our declarations. Internally by our allegiances within. Human beings invariably seek an identity as a central part of their human experience - even though it is important to note that not all identities are equally helpful.³

Identity provides great strength or weakness; and clarity of existence as people face the experiences of their lives. Understanding identity as a member of the ADF strengthens resolve as a person, and provide resilience. It will also provide balance amongst competing demands in life.⁴ Exploring this concept will provide a helpful platform to strengthen ADF personnel in the midst of felt and lived experience of personal despair.

The concept of Identity is drawn from human studies in Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology and other fields of study that seek to understand how humans think about their place in the world. Human Identity exists as a part of our "Worldview".⁵ Worldview can be briefly defined as:

"A set of ... assumptions held consciously or unconsciously, consistently or inconsistently, about the basic make up of reality." ... It is ... an interpretative framework ... by which one makes sense ... of life and the world."⁶

Worldview involves assumptions about reality so deep that we just take these for granted. We rarely examine them deeply or consciously except in times of great crisis. An example of this is that in the western world, when our children get sick, we most often take them to the doctor rather than the Witch doctor. Why do westerners do this? Because germs are real, and the right antibiotics work even if you don't believe in them or understand them – because they are real. This is a circular assumption about reality. It is a worldview assumption.

A simple and general definition of human identity we can use is this:

"A person's Identity is the internal and external allegiances they make to their personal experiences, in which the relationships between themselves and other persons and groups are organised in relatively stable structures over their lives..."⁷

The importance of Identity

The concept of 'Identity' is at the centre of our existence and felt experience as human beings. Human beings invariably seek an identity as a central part of their human experience. We ask the question "Who am I?" Identity provides us with great strength or weakness, depending on what it is, and also provides clarity about who we are and our purpose in life as we face the experiences of their lives.⁸

We carry our identity deep within. Though we may externally identify with a group, identity is also deeply internal. We carry it everywhere we go, even if we leave a group. This is healthy and allows us to be strong even when we leave the ADF. ADF members share identity as members of a group.

Exploring the concept of Identity will deeply strengthen ADF member existence and resolve in their roles, and provide resilience as they serve in arduous nature of the profession of Arms. It will also provide balance amongst competing demands in our lives whilst in reserves, as well as life after serving in the ADF.

Categories of Human Identity

There are a number of categories of identity that have been identified by researchers as very important to humans.⁹ Five of particular significance are:

1. **National Identity:**
Australian, British, Chinese, English, French, Irish, Russian
2. **Racial / Cultural / Language Identity** (Ethno-Linguistic Identity):
Aboriginal, Han, Noongar, White, African-American
3. **Role Identity** (Sociological Identity – Vocational identity / Activity Identity):
Soldier, Plumber, Surfer, Father, Mother, Man, Woman, Truck driver, Dockers fan
4. **Sexual/Gender Identity:**^{10, 11}
Male, Female, Indeterminate, Transgender etc. This list has grown over time – even between 2016 and 2024. However it is important to note that the current position in Australian Society is broad and it is reasonable to say that sexual/gender identity is far more nuanced and complex than the terms “LGBT” or “LGBTQIA”
5. **Spiritual Identity:**
Animist, Atheist, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, Sikh etc.

Much of our identity as human beings is found within five categories or a combination of them as shown in **Figure 1**:

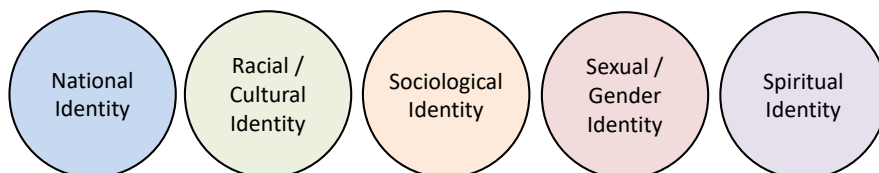


Figure 1: Five Human Identity Categories

Group Identity and Individual Identity

It is also important to name the concepts of ‘Group Identity’ and ‘Individual Identity’. Some societies and cultural groups and families privilege individual identity so much that the concept of ‘group or collective identity’ is minimalised in their thinking and importance. In the western world we may be taught that each of us decides this individually. “I decide who I am”. Some societies privilege collective identity and the idea of the individual is minimalised. The idea of an individual identity can be reduced to almost nothing. E.g. Tribal societies. They answer a person’s identity by saying “We tell you who you are.”; “We decide your identity and you agree”. This influences your view of these five categories of identity.

How do we form our identity?

Human beings are both thinkers and feelers in their decisions and allegiances. Both are very important to human identity.¹² Identity is therefore a choice deep within us that involves thinking and emotions/feelings. Through our thinking and emotions, humans choose to identify ourselves with certain group of people or organisations. We do this because in doing so we receive something from them. We also receive something when we *contribute* to this group we have given ourselves to.

Identity is formed within us as we are influenced by people or ideas that form bonds of love or reason that make sense within us. We abandon or add to our identity if other things exert a greater influence over us. An example of this is our families. We identify with our family of birth because they love and care for us from our first breath. They teach us about the world and survival and how things work etc. They also teach us about the reality of the universe and culture, how we should do things, what to believe and what is truth. We trust this and identify ourselves with these things because they are given with reason, logic and love. As we grow older and learn to think for ourselves and are influenced by other people and ideas, we have to make choices about alternative truths, rights and wrongs, good and evil. We meet other people and they influence us.

Out of these experiences in our lives come commitments to people and ideas about who we are and what is important to us. We decide whether we will connect with these ideas and people in a way that privileges them over other people and ideas. The moment we make this decision we are identifying with a group.

We add other groups to this identity within as we decide on their importance. Once we make a commitment to a group or idea deeply enough to make it part of our identity, we begin to gather thoughts around our mind to solidify these commitments.¹³ We want to think like the group we identify with and be supported in this. This is called 'Groupthink'.¹⁴ When our identity to a group or ideology is complete, we may justify what might be considered bad or evil behaviours because of our identity.

Sometimes during a crisis, a person may change their identity and allegiances. It can be through the influence of a person, or an idea, or for the desire to belong to another group, or to make sense of the world. If this identity is connected to their worldview, the identity change can have far reaching consequences in their lives. An example of this is 'Ideological conversion' to a political or ethnic philosophy or religious philosophy such as ISIS.

As a human being, it is very helpful and important to examine the forces that influence or deepen identity as they do make us who we are. Through this process we may also find strength to say no to 'Groupthink' when such groupthink violates a deeper identity as a human being. This is the case in war crimes and atrocities in war. Thinking through our allegiances is an important part of having the ethical courage to refuse to act unethically, or strength to act when others will not.¹⁵

How do we prioritise our Identity Allegiances?

At the centre of human identity is a struggle for allegiance. Which identity will take precedence? Humans are 'choosers'. We choose and make allegiance commitments. We cannot prevent this process and research shows that this is a core struggle within us. We strive to have what is called 'Insider Status' in a group we commit to. 'Insider status' is the part of us deep within that says: *"I am in and you are in this group and they are out. We are insiders and they are outsiders."*¹⁶

It does not mean, however, that we cannot hold two or three or ten or more identities at the same time in our minds.¹⁷ We can and we do. We can be Australians, Truck drivers, men/women/heterosexual/homosexual/trans etc., Muslim, Dockers supporters all at the same time. However - we usually have a deep allegiance that the other allegiances serve – especially in certain places, groups and times. We tend to choose one. The how, what, when, where, who, and why of this allegiance is the critical issue.

For example: In the **Figure 2** below; National Identity is privileged – other Identities are submissive to this (although any Identity can be privileged)

This struggle for allegiance, and the capacity to embrace multiple allegiances at the same time, is contributing to current conflict in our world, whether it is between nations, or cultures, or families, or footy clubs!. An example of this in Australia is the current political fight of what it means to be 'Australian'. Does being 'Australian' mean committing ourselves primarily to our sovereign national identity as 'Australians first' and submitting our racial, cultural heritage under this? Or do we identify our cultural heritage equally – such as identifying ourselves as an “Aboriginal Australian” or Chinese Australian”? Or can we hold them all equally? Can we privilege one for a time or whilst in a role, but only change when we are asked to violate a higher principle?

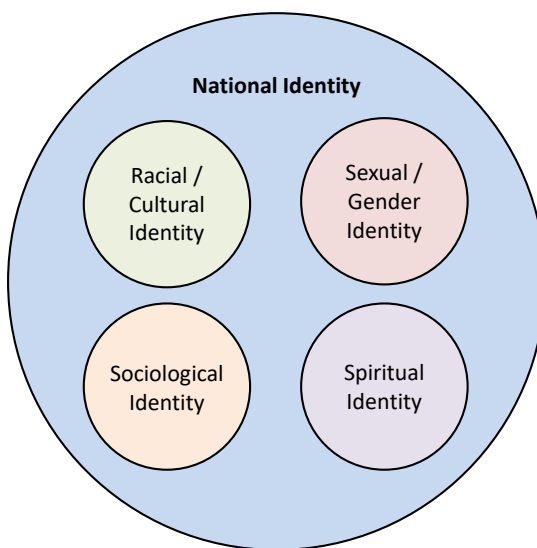


Figure 2. National Identity / Personal Identity Allegiances

The role of Chaplaincy in supporting ADF Identity and the path from despair to hope

ADF Chaplaincy is uniquely positioned as an embedded resource within Units to support ADF personnel in their journey from despair to hope as they explore their Identity and as they grapple with Service personally and professionally every day. Within the confidential and holistic care relationship with Chaplains, ADF members can explore questions such as:

- Who am I?
- How and why should I decide my allegiances?
- What effect will this have on me and my family and career and life after ADF?
- Where lies the seeds of hope in this journey?

Chaplaincy’s role in exploring with an ADF member’s deeper identity and service will inform their professional wellbeing. It will acknowledge that being a member of the ADF is part of their lives as they serve. It will also acknowledge that other Identities are also valid parts of their being.

When ADF members leave their Service; identifying their enduring identities that existed before, during and after their service will help to strengthen them to cope with life once they discharge. This helps to answer questions such as:

- Who am I after I leave the ADF?
- How do I define it? - Nationally, culturally, racially, spiritually?
- How do these relate to each other and my life?

Answering these questions is not the enemy of our service in the ADF, it is our friend.

So how do Chaplains navigate this?

I would like to offer four principles that Chaplains can ask of ADF personnel:

1. **Name your identities:**

What is your: National identity; Cultural identity;
Gender/Sexual identity; Spiritual Identity; Socio-People Identities

2. **Which is your deepest identity?**

Would you choose one above all others?
If so which one?
Why or why not?

3. **What is your Identity allegiance?**

Do these identities require allegiance priorities at certain times?
When and where?

4. **Are your identities permanent or impermanent?**

Are you an ADF member forever?
Can that continue after leaving the ADF?

Conclusion

Identity is an essential aspect of human felt and lived experience, that contributes greatly to a sense of purpose and wellbeing, including a sense of hope. This contributes to the mitigation of despair in people lives – as despair is alleviated by the purpose and meaning of both their individual story and collective place within their group - that includes a future focus. ADF Chaplains are uniquely positioned to serve ADF personnel in their journey from despair to hope. This is through an embedded model of holistic and confidential care. This model of care allows the exploration of deep existential questions concerning identity and its implications for the ADF member's current service and post service life.

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The Force of Hope: Breaking through the Storm

Chaplain Damien Styles, CSM

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Introduction

What is a chaplain? If you ask the average military member, you might hear a number of different responses to this question. Yet few would link the answer to the underpinning foundation and source of what it means to be a chaplain. The source is found within sacred texts, or what is commonly referred to as the Bible. It offers guidance to those seeking answers to what happens at the end of our lives, to the history of the world, and issues that are beyond this realm. Equally so, it reveals how the effect of one person (Jesus Christ) had such a profound influence that many choose to follow him and model their lives on what he embodied; the gift of hope eternal. (Heb.11:1) Yet Jesus did not offer easy alternatives to his followers; rather he offered them the cross, which symbolised selfless-sacrifice, atonement, and renewal. (Mt. 16:24) Like so many institutions in our secular society; Army Chaplaincy is an enduring legacy of one whose life was authentic and intentional; focused on overcoming injustice, supporting all, bringing hope to those suffering, comfort to the sick, and honour to the dead.

Chaplaincy therefore is not some generic term, which can be simply applied to someone who cares for another. Its meaning in the context of Military Chaplaincy is quite specific. Chaplains provide hope influenced pastoral care. Historically chaplains, through misplaced humility, have tended to shy away from acknowledging the positive effect of their pastoral care within people's lives. Clearly though, in the current secular alignment of our society, some would attack the very idea of having a 'religious chaplain' in their organisation. Yet it is precisely because of the religious element of Army Chaplaincy that an authentic pastoral care model can and does foster positive and holistic outcomes. Hope in this context is not some empty concept or life gamble lacking foundation or purpose. Authentic hope is that which finds meaning in 'other'. Driven by selfless sacrifice it embodies love. One need only reflect on our great traditions of remembering the fallen on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day; '*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for their friends*' (Jn 15:13) to understand what a chaplain is.

Hope Influenced

The questions that arise are; how is '*hope influenced*' pastoral care provided to defence members, and what must chaplaincy do to ensure the delivery of pastoral care remains founded on authentic hope?

As a starting point, chaplaincy must not shy away from its historical identity as if the influence of one was something to be ashamed of or ridiculed. As clearly shown in recent studies,¹ many military personnel who have embraced *hope influenced pastoral care* from chaplains are not from a faith background. Why? Not because chaplaincy has a monopoly over access to their care, but moreover the care offered is centred on the dignity of the person seeking it, irrespective of lifestyle or background. It is precisely because of the religious chaplaincy model that inclusive hope influenced pastoral care can and is provided to religious and non-religious people alike. It

is the ability to walk alongside people, within both the barracks and the battlefield, which makes it so unique and accessible. The challenge for the chaplain is to get their *hands dirty*, not in providing life's answers to people but to help them ask the right questions, which in turn leads to self-discovery and a deepening awareness of self. Pastoral care in this context is more than just providing comfort and care. The honoured position of the chaplain is not to control the person or their situation but lead them to where they can find the inner strength and courage to take control and manage their own lives. Whilst the care of the sick, dying, and grieving remain important aspects of pastoral care, a chaplain's vocation and responsibility are to encourage nourishment and life. Returning to its source, the term *pastor* is Latin for "shepherd", found in the oldest strata of the Scriptures and used by Jesus to refer to himself as the "Good Shepherd." (Jn.10:11-16) The biblical shepherd's first task was not to care for the weak, the sick, and the dying, nor was it to offer protection, but to lead the sheep to food and drink, where nourishment could be found. The shepherd like the chaplain is focused on showing where the means can be found to avoid becoming sick, frail, and dependent on others. And like the analogy of old; *You can take a horse to water but you can't make them drink!* Which when applied to *hope influenced pastoral care* is understood as enabling a person to choose, not control their destiny.

Duty to Foster

Defence Chaplaincy and especially Army chaplaincy has an opportunity to highlight the significant effect that it is providing to members and therefore defence as a whole. It is extremely important that this task is done well, for now is not the time to have a lower standard of experience for people seeking pastoral care from Army chaplains. The potential for the ADF to be faced with a peer adversary, with casualty rates higher than has been experienced in recent years, is a real and present threat not known since the dark uncertain days prior to World War II. Therefore, the focus on chaplaincy must be on what is known and trusted, from an enduring legacy that offers support to all, brings hope to the suffering, comfort to the sick, and honour to the dead.

Chaplaincy provides a means for not only for physical survivability but moreover spiritual health and wellbeing; prior to, during and post operations. Suffering in battle is a recognised reality, that can and does permeate the very essence of what it means to be human. Whilst a chaplain is not a standalone capability, being uniquely embedded within a Battle Group or Unit means they are well positioned to provide *hope influenced care*, an outcome which in times of trial can become a force multiplier.² For in reality 'Chaplains are not a luxury, and chaplains are not employed in the ADF for decoration.'³

Reason for Hope Influenced Pastoral Care

Hope is a powerful tool, it can help buffer against difficult life events, by seeking that which validates purpose and meaning, even in the midst of suffering and uncertainty. For a military member who may be called to make the ultimate decision to kill or be killed in order to achieve the mission, it is essential they have prior opportunity to explore the fundamental questions of life and death. Such an opportunity may be the difference in facing an uncertainty with mind wide open to the moral and ethical dilemmas at play. Hence the reason chaplains provide commentary on topics such as ethics and moral thought to assist members in developing sound decision making skills. Why? In making moral decisions based on sound ethical foundations, a person can in turn live with the consequences of their decision, in the knowledge that they sought to do what was morally right. Yet even the most moral of soldiers can still be affected by or exposed to poor leadership, unethical decisions, and unbridled violence which is beyond their control thus leading to moral injury (MI). In such circumstance a member may experience profound guilt or regret. It is the chaplain who is well placed to identify the important values causing moral tension and assist with working through MI by introducing the concepts of self-forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption.

Chaplaincy holds an important role within Defence as stated by MAJGEN Field, when he says: 'they are not there for decoration'.⁴ However, in recent years with the decline in spiritual and religious affiliation of military personnel across Western cultures, some commentators have begun to question the utilisation of religious chaplains by defence personnel.⁵ The irony of course is that it remains an essential command capability, one that provides 24-hour in person pastoral care alongside members, no matter where they are called to serve. Distinct from many professions, the role of a chaplain is defined as a vocation or calling to serve, in order to be present to others. It means that a chaplain must be authentic and comfortable within their own identity, not as one taking advantage of their entrusted position but ensuring those who seek their care can grow in the understanding of self.

Chaplain Responsibilities

Effective chaplaincy is built on trust. It is up to chaplains to stay current with healthy pastoral practice, remain connected with their sending faith groups, and practiced in basic chaplaincy skills, such as pastoral counselling, bereavement support and ritual practices. The members of the Army expect their chaplains to be effective in this space. When a group is poorly trained and equipped for a particular theatre of war, it often results in terrible casualties and potential mission failure. Chaplaincy also needs to deal with the questions of how are chaplains trained, how they are assessed as being suitable and how is this communicated to both Defence and the individual chaplain.

To be an effective chaplain requires being involved in the military process. Chaplains must build resilience and competency by participating in demanding and realistic training, that focuses and challenges a chaplain's perspective to practise *hope influenced pastoral care* on the battle field. Chaplains must understand their role within the formation they serve to be an effective presence rather than just a presence. They must participate in planning, professional military education, and exercises. More importantly they need to get their *hands dirty*, in order to be challenged in their trade and informed in their understanding of the warfighting professionals to whom they are providing *hope influenced care*. It is therefore essential that an embedded chaplain prioritises training opportunities in the deployed environments, by regularly deploying out field with a Unit. It is essential that they train as they fight, as if on real operations. Dealing with the issues such as movement restrictions, distances, limited communications, mortuary affairs support and basically doing the *hard yards* with those they serve, not looking for the easy option and avoiding the learning outcomes from dealing with the problems associated with being away from home.

The full immersion of chaplaincy into the military mindset assists in promoting the agreed points that chaplaincy can be guaranteed to deliver, no matter what the individual chaplain may have been assigned to a group within a particular formation. It also ensures that chaplains, while person focused, are keeping up with the ethical challenges that members are facing on the battlefield with new equipment and new capabilities.

Authentic

Chaplains must practise what they preach, because it is from their core beliefs that they provide hope influenced pastoral care. If a chaplain is not living the life that they are called, unhealthy practices may appear in that chaplain's ministry. They are then not promoting the hope influenced pastoral care and instead are hiding behind a mask. If this has happened it may be that some chaplains have lost sight of why they serve, potentially corrupted by the secure work, pay and conditions of a military member. This would mean they have stopped serving with the heart of a vocation, and become focussed on a career while not fulfilling the fundamental task of a chaplain, that being *hope influenced pastoral care*.

Chaplains are not unique in having their own difficulties wrestling with life decisions, belief systems, and personal problems. The same as a doctor not being immune from becoming sick on occasions, or a psychologist potentially dealing with a mental health concern; this is human nature at play. It does not mean we terminate all doctor positions or the important part they play in individual lives and their health care. It is the same with chaplaincy, while there are occasional issues with individual chaplains, this is not a reason to remove the chaplaincy effect as a whole. Chaplaincy is not some magical mystery tool that cannot be measured. ADF Chaplaincy requires all military chaplains using a reporting tool to track trends and the chaplaincy effect within the Military. Chaplaincy must maintain accountability for chaplaincy interactions. The transparency of how chaplaincy is fostered needs to be done out of the same model that chaplains employ that being; *hope influenced pastoral care model* based on their core belief system. Why? Because the model operates within the realm of authentic truth.

Reclaiming meaning of pastoral care

Pastoral care is an essential term for any explanation on what a chaplain provides. The term '*pastoral care*' is often used and claimed by many different groups to generically describe the care they offer. It is precisely because the term can become so vague and wide, that its authentic meaning must be established and maintained to understand the unique capability that chaplaincy provides. In an attempt to balance the role of chaplaincy with its diverse members, definitions attempt to cover the whole group.

The Australian Defence Glossary definition of pastoral care;

'... is a holistic person-centred approach to the care of another person.

The notes under this definition state;

*'its focus is upon healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling, and it may include religious and /or spiritual care. It is inclusive of physical, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing, and assists people to make appropriate decisions relating to themselves, their family and their significant others.'*⁶

This definition wrestles with the complexity of what is pastoral care. Within the Christian approach, pastoral care has been practiced since the formation of the Christian Church. The term however, is used to cover increasingly multi-faith chaplaincy and non-religious, humanist approaches to provide support and comfort. This means that pastoral care itself works under a broad framework to provide support to the inner world of individuals from many worldview models.⁷ Clearly this broad definition has a different aspect to *hope influenced pastoral care*, since it is inclusive of this but is immersed within its understanding of the Shepherd role.

Chaplain Care

Chaplains are often so focused on care for others they overlook themselves. They need to seek support beyond self to maintain a vocation of service. To do so means a willingness to be supported by hope influenced pastoral care when they may find themselves isolated or lost in their direction for ministry. Spiritual nourishment is also essential, because if a practitioner of *hope influenced pastoral care* does not link into that hope, they become ineffective. Hence why chaplains participate in annual retreats as a means of ensuring time is given to understanding the hope they serve. Chaplains need also to have genuine participation and interaction with their pastoral supervisor. This is a directed task for ADF full time chaplains to engage their pastoral supervisor six times a year. It is not enough to engage in a meeting. The chaplain must be open to the process and participate with the interactions. Other support networks such as spiritual direction and professional clinical counselling should also be embraced by a chaplain when needed. Often a

chaplain is good at referring others to particular support networks but could be reluctant to embrace those same agencies for their own support, including self-referral to mental health professionals. Professional care for others obviously comes with some necessary healthy boundaries. It can also be a challenge within chaplaincy that many find themselves in a position where they are only one deep. This can fuel the desire to do all things for all people, without seeking respite or firm recognition of limits to what a chaplain can provide, resulting in potential burn out or loss of vocation.

Chaplains are not the welfare officer, nor the social worker, or a psychologist, and definitely must leave physical healing to the doctor. However the role of a chaplain is essential in being the lynch-pin to the many important caring options on offer. Chaplaincy too needs to be linked in with these professional services for personal care⁸ and to build connections which will provide a capability advantage for the organisation and its members.

Conclusion

Findings from scoping reviews suggest there is little evidence that low religiosity among military personnel forms a significant barrier to utilizing chaplaincy services. To the contrary, the literature revealed that chaplains provide trusted, confidential, and holistic support for military personnel that if diminished or compromised would leave a substantial gap in member well-being services.⁹ Spirituality and health have been intertwined throughout cultures and societies over many centuries. Research has consistently demonstrated enhanced health and well-being outcomes when spiritual care is part of a holistic healthcare plan.¹⁰

Authentic and intentional chaplaincy is built and reinforced by the love, charisms, prayer, sacrifices, energy and the discipleship of those positioned to serve. In using *hope influenced pastoral care* it provides nourishment for personal growth and self-discovery. Chaplaincy is a force multiplier providing a capability that is distinct in its application, fit for purpose, focused on supporting all, bringing hope to those suffering, comfort to the sick, and honour to the dead. In conclusion if religious chaplains do not provide *hope influenced pastoral care* to members, defence would lose an element of support for holistic care, potentially undermining that which we commemorate as a Nation, the willingness to sacrifice in service *for others*.

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The gift of hope: A Theological reflection on the praxis of Spiritual Direction within Military chaplaincy

Chaplain Hayden Parsons

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Abstract

The pastoral practice of deep listening, reflection and response through Spiritual Direction; is one resource Military Chaplains deploy to discover hope in the everyday, as they bridge between the sacred and secular; ethics interacting with violent conflict and war.

Humanity is designed for noticing. It was Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC) who is credited with the traditional classification of the five sense organs: sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing,¹ in which human beings 'notice' what is happening within the environment. This 'noticing' is relevant within the environment of faith practice and is specifically relevant to military chaplaincy; not as a means to convert but to help individuals find meaning and purpose in life's journey; to overcome despair and find hope.

Like the awakening of missionaries of old, some Chaplains at first may have naively thought their role was to bring God to the people, in time many have come to truly 'notice' who God is through the lives of those whom they are called to serve. This 'noticing' of who they are provides a person with the ability to search beyond self for 'other'. Therefore one of the primary effects of Army Chaplaincy can be likened to a midwife, in that the chaplain assists people to birth a new awareness of who they are in relationship. All the while the Chaplain does not control the narrative, rather they are a guide for individuals to discover their own story and for both to mutually grow through the interaction, as companions on the journey. As God has remained vulnerable in relationship with humanity, so too must the Chaplain continue to be one who serves, and provides opportunities for individuals to find the sacred or spiritual meaning in their lives. According to author and pastoral inspiration, Eugene Petersen, '*spiritual direction is an act of giving attention to what God is doing in the person who happens to be before me at any given moment*'.² This theological reflection explored the pastoral praxis of Spiritual Direction as a gift of hope for the chaplain and who they minister, comparing the theological reflection method and model of J. D. Whitehead & E.E. Whitehead (Figure 1), with Patricia O. Killen & John De Beer's model of theological reflection for Ministry (Figure 2).

This Theological reflection commences with an exploration of a Theology of Spiritual Direction. Establishing a theology of Spiritual Direction is vital as the pastoral skill of Spiritual Direction is nested within pastoral & practical theology for the minister. In Luke's Gospel account, the relationship between Jesus' mother Mary and her cousin Elizabeth in the opening chapter add insight into the art pastoral practice of Spiritual Direction. At the Advent of the coming Christ, Mary proceeded to seek out her cousin Elizabeth to share her news of an Angelic visitation with Messianic its profound meaning. 'When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" (Luke 1:41-42 NIV). It was throughout this season of pregnancy that Elizabeth 'gave Mary the comfort and understanding she needed at the time'.³ It is within this close feminine relationship that Elizabeth 'recognizes the unique blessedness of Mary'.⁴

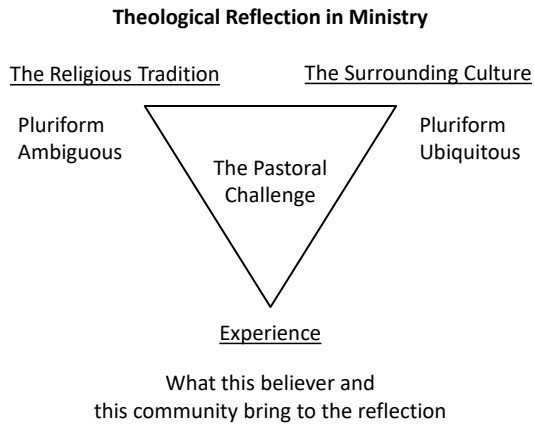


Figure 1. J. D. Whitehead & E. E. Whiteheads model of Theological Reflection for Ministry

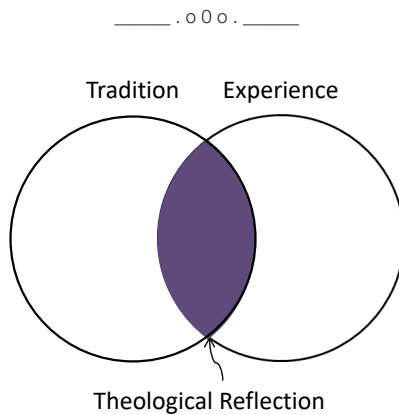


Figure 2. Patricia O. Killen & John DeBeer's Model of Theological Reflection for Ministry

Luke provides an open window into what spiritual companionship looks like. Within this relationship between Elizabeth and Mary we notice the follow points:

- Elizabeth's joy as a companion of Mary.
- Elizabeth comes alongside to comfort and support Mary during pregnancy, both physically and spiritual 'pregnancy' with God.
- Importantly, Elizabeth recognises Mary's divine purpose amidst her humanity and cultural situation.
- Words spoken by Elizabeth into Mary's life recorded in Luke 1:39-45 are found repeated by Mary (eg- verses 42 with verse 48) in her song, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-56).

The friendship between Elizabeth and Mary provide a sound theology and praxis of Spiritual Direction. It is in Elizabeth's companioning relationship with Mary speaks 'a total commitment to God, a total surrender to God's will.'⁵ Having this theology of Spiritual Direction founded in Luke's opening gospel reveals the wonder, mystery and release of hope found in Scripture. 'As one participates in the dynamism of the Scriptures in these and other ways, questions will arise that call for a more critical understanding than is available in the prayerful processes of participation'⁶ Therefore, the relationship between Elizabeth and Mary epitomises the pastoral praxis of Spiritual Direction available to deploy within the everyday complexity of military chaplaincy context.

Receiving and offering the pastoral practice of Spiritual Direction releases hope within the chaplain and the ministered. John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* is one example of life described as 'subsequent struggles, temptations, and triumphs'.⁷ When military life is described, heard, seen; one can discover deeper meaning of the context served in. Military chaplains and Maritime Spiritual Welfare Officers are immersed in the everyday lives of military personnel and their families; the struggling, tempted and triumphant. Through the lens of Whitehead & Whiteheads Theological Reflection model (Figure 1) and Patricia O'Connell Killen & John DeBeer model (Figure 2), can be likened to hearing Jesus shouting 'Let anyone with ears, listen!' (Matthew 11:15). Through the praxis of Spiritual Direction ministering persons can find hope, reinvigorated faith, and perspective on current personal and professional issues. Spiritual Direction can also involve engaging in the timeless Christian practice of *Lectio Divina*. This praxis of sacred reading of scripture is one example of hearing God speak afresh into people's lives, simply as 'reading and listening to a short passage of Scripture'.⁸ In reflection, many vocational ministering persons, including military chaplains, are living proof that 'certitude and self-assurance do not empower reflective, committed, compassionate lives.'⁹ The skill that is Spiritual Direction, rooted in theological reflection as the person brings their experiences of life and God to pondering, enables as a 'standpoint of exploration.'¹⁰ Within the framework of theological reflection, and or *Lectio Divina*; the ministering person can explore all things within the faith expression including prayerful responses including contextual issues experienced within the Armed Forces. This includes the premise of faith, hope and love. The pastoral practice of Spiritual Direction enables the Chaplain to engage in discernment of cultural voice through the tri-form model of experience, tradition, and culture.

A theological reflection on the pastoral skill of Spiritual Direction involves engaging the many voices of our culture (Figure 1). Culture within society can be ambiguous at best. This is no better experienced as a military chaplain 'loitering with intent' in the name of God's church. The chaplain often discovers the influence of post-modernity within their ministry context. The term Post-modernity was fathered by 'Fredrico de Onis in the 1930's but did not achieve prominence until it was used to describe reactive tendencies to modernism... has been labelled nihilism with a smile.'¹¹ How does a Military Chaplain engage with people working within this military context that involves potential violence, lethality, ethical decision making and Armed conflict? 'The voices of culture, then, speak, with both positive and negative force.'¹² As a positive, the chaplain engages in conversation of a deep existential and ontological nature involving ethical decision making, character development, Armed conflict and lethal force. The opening theological reflection is an invitation to the ministering person by God to companion, without bias or fear, another made in God's image just as Elizabeth befriended and companioned Mary through her pregnancy. The pastoral praxis of Spiritual Direction comes into its own as it provides the framework for people to explore the movements of the divine within their everyday experiences. In one sense, this is an attempt to shepherd the flock who are scattered and wounded. The light of Pastoral Theology shines brightest in the dark. 'God says," I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak" (Ezekiel 34:16). The pastoral skill of Spiritual Direction is a gentle means to engage in faith conversation, through noticing; within a contemplative community that spotlights damaging certitudes or self-assurances. However, within this framework of theological reflection there is the example of Elizabeth and Jesus who companioned people. Jesus engaged his culture.

Military Chaplains, are reminded that when engaging in conversations regarding culture, 'don't blame the dark for being dark. Blame the light for not shining on the dark.'¹³ Within the framework of theological reflection the minister is able to explore the benefits of the praxis of Spiritual Direction through the tri-form model of experience, tradition and culture. Theological reflection also involves attending, assertions, and pastoral response.

Theological reflection is the process by which 'a transformative path for ongoing conversion.'¹⁴ It is interesting to compare and contrast various methodologies, like the four movements of prayer of Lectio Divina. David Benner emphasises that 'the essence of Lectio divina has come to us from a rich history of Christian spirituality.'¹⁵ The Christian journey to explore prayer as a way of life, especially the life impacted by vocational pastoral ministry, as four movements:

- Lectio – prayer as attending
- Meditatio – prayer as pondering
- Oratio – prayer as responding, and
- Contemplatio – prayer as being.

In comparison, Killen & DeBeer's similar four-part movements are similar. They are:

- Experience
- Feelings – images that arise
- Considering – questioning the feelings and images, and
- Insight that leads to action.

Then there's Whitehead & Whitehead's complex tri-method of theological reflection encompassing:

- Attending
- Assertion, and
- Pastoral response.

As with all pastoral practice, what often emerges is 'the cycle of experience- exploration- reflection- action, offers a structure for thinking and a way of acting which take account of the insights of all the approaches to practical theology.'¹⁶ Each method invites the pilgrim, minister or faith community to delve into God's meaning for their lives through engaging in this transformative process.

The pastoral practice of Spiritual Direction releases hope with both the Army Chaplain and the personnel they minister. Throughout history of spiritual practice across all faith expressions, the transformative process of spiritual companioning- or Spiritual Direction- has benefited pilgrims through this transformative process. This theological reflection covered a theology of Spiritual Direction being necessary to understand God's relational and incarnation nature. Luke's account of Jesus' mother Mary and her cousin Elizabeth in the opening chapter of Luke's provides clarity to the essence of Spiritual Direction as a reflective, redemptive and the responsive nature this process can be for the Kingdom of God. This theological reflection on Spiritual Direction as a resource for pastoral practice for Army Chaplains covered at length the tri-form and integrated model of experience, tradition, and culture the minister finds themselves in. And this theological reflection has explored the experience of engaging in the accessible method of attending, pondering and actioning a new insightful pastoral response. It is Aristotle, a person given to the contemplation of human experience who surmises the value of deep worthwhile introspection as, 'The ultimate value of life depends upon awareness and the power of contemplation rather than upon mere survival.'¹⁷

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Aiming for Growth: Religious Coping Strategies for Defence Members

Chaplain Tim Baxter

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Abstract

Post-Traumatic Stress is a normal outcome of service in the ADF. However, the impact of this stress does not have to have a debilitating effect on all members, especially if efforts are in place to better train and prepare Defence members. Equipping members with good coping skills before trauma is experienced can help mitigate the impact of Post-Traumatic Stress and promote growth as an alternative outcome. This article provides an overview of current coping skills; particularly how positive religious coping skills offer valuable tools in assisting Post-Traumatic Growth. ADF Chaplaincy has an opportunity to teach/impart and contribute to the care of ADF members prior to and post operation.

Key Words: Trauma, Stress, Growth, Coping, Skills, Religious, Spiritual, Chaplaincy

Aiming for Growth

Si vis pacem, para bellum – If you want peace, prepare for war.

This Ancient Latin adage has mostly been used by nations/states to give reasons for enhancing military capability. However, it may be applied to the individual's ultimate desire for personal mental or psychological peace when about to embark on a period of warlike operational service. Due to the very nature of war, it is expected that ADF members will face some form of traumatic experience. It can also be expected that these members may also experience some form and degree of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS). Acknowledging the extensive studies and treatment on offer from medical and mental health practitioners, this paper will focus on providing insight into how Religious Coping Strategies can contribute to mitigating its affect. How? Informing members of PTS symptoms and preparing them with the necessary skills and tools to know what to do,¹ in the event of and when to seek help. The outcome sought is Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), in preparing our people for conflict/war, the better placed they are to experience mental, psychological, and spiritual peace.²

Post-Traumatic Stress

Post-traumatic stress will affect the lives of many ADF members, with the most prone expected to be those who have experienced traumatic circumstances on operational deployments. Trauma-related stress is mostly linked to the very real threat of death or serious injury for the individual or others witnessing those threats against others.

Symptoms include:

- repeated intrusive, distressing memories or dreams,
- poor sleep patterns,

- avoidance of reminders associated with the trauma,
- negative mood and thoughts following the event, as well as
- agitation and negative changes in behaviour.

These symptoms can occur immediately post exposure to the threat, or many years after the event.³ The experience of PTS does not mean a person will develop a disorder, noting that members who have been exposed to trauma continue to live fulfilling and meaningful lives, in their service within the ADF. Importantly the provision and availability of good mental health support from a variety of sources can and does play an important role. However, when the impact of post-traumatic stress develops into a long-term and incapacitating impact on a member's life, relationships or work environment it has become disordered (PTSD).⁴ Reassuringly with professional assistance PTSD is a treatable condition, and the goal of achieving a normal, fulfilling and satisfying life is possible for most.⁵

Concern has been raised about the difference between the hype and the evidence⁶ relating to the prevalence and outcome of PTSD for serving and ex-serving members. PTSD has seemingly become the expected dark cloud on the horizon of life post-deployment. This is not conclusively supported by either the statistical data or the lived experience of many veterans as per the research:

Research focused on Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel indicates that the 12-month estimated rate of PTSD among currently serving members is 8%, rising to 17.7% among ex-serving. The rate in the Australian population is estimated at 5.7% over a 12-month period.⁷

Furthermore, these figures do not support a current narrative, which normalises the debilitating impact of PTSD for the majority of veterans.

Highlighting only chronic illness amongst veterans, however, risks creating an unhelpful sense of expectancy that illness will follow service, particularly service that involves operational stress. This illness narrative does not align with the experiences of many veterans from both historic and contemporary operations, who have endured varying levels of trauma but grew from these experiences.⁸

The ADF recognises that there will always need to be recognition of, and treatment provided for those who suffer from PTSD.⁹ However, there have also been efforts made to tackle the impact of PTS proactively. With more informed preparation of members for combat, we can begin to change the ill-informed narrative that PTSD is a normal outcome of war-like service and shift the focus towards survival and growth. Indeed, Grossman argues that learning effective techniques to control your response to life-threatening situations opens up the possibility of mitigating or even eliminating the potential impact of PTSD.

To be at risk for PTSD you must be exposed to a traumatic incident in which two things occur: first, the incident must be a life-and-death event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury to you or to others. The second element that must occur is for you to respond to the exposure with intense fear, helplessness or horror.

You cannot do anything about the exposure to a life-threatening situation, as a warrior it is your job to go into danger. But you can do something about how you respond to it. This is critical because if you do not feel an intense fear, helplessness or horror, there is no PTSD.¹⁰

The question therefore is how can ADF Chaplains help to prepare people to respond to trauma in a way that produces better mental health and wellbeing outcomes?

Post-traumatic Growth

'..we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance; endurance produces character; and character produces hope.' (Rm 5:3-4)

There is a body of research that has focussed on an outcome from trauma that moves towards post-traumatic growth (PTG) rather than disorder. Tedeschi defined PTG as “positive psychological changes experienced as a result of the struggle with trauma or highly challenging situations”.¹¹ PTG may feature positive changes in self-perception, interpersonal relationships and philosophy of life, leading to increased self-awareness and self-confidence, a more open attitude towards others, a greater appreciation of life and the discovery of new possibilities.¹²

The goal of moving towards PTG is supported with preparation and exposure prior to the traumatic event, helping people to see the tools they have at their disposal and developing a resilient mindset in order to prepare stress involved with trauma. This requires greater focus on prevention rather than postvention. In reviewing the book “Stopping Military Suicides” Cronshaw notes that the authors suggest the main effort should be applied to preventative training that builds resilience and performance rather than “post-trauma clinical treatment of certain “broken” warriors.”¹³ Focussing on PTG does not eliminate the possibility of people experiencing PTSD but can provide members an advantage in mitigating the damage that can be suffered. Placing the emphasis on prior preparation can also have the benefit of helping people recognise the warning signs and symptoms of PTSD and encourage them to seek help earlier, preventing the chronic pathology of PTSD.¹⁴

How do we prepare our people?

There are a variety of tools, behaviours and mindsets that individuals can use to deal with the symptoms of PTS which can be taught and facilitated by organisations before, during and after deployment. However, as Caligari notes in his article on Combat Mindset training:

*A key outcome of Combat Mindset training is the 'pre-combat veteran'—a soldier who has the skills, deep understanding of warfare, and maturity of a combat veteran, but is yet to fire a shot in battle... This approach teaches the resiliency required of combatants—to not just survive traumatic or stressful events, but to grow and benefit from them and potentially mitigate, to some extent, associated long-term psychological effects.*¹⁵

Examples of this type of training are readily found in many different contexts, from the simple to the highly structured and coordinated, for example:

- Breathing techniques taught in Combat Shooting instruction
- The Battlesmart Program taught to Kapooka recruits
- The Human Performance Framework established in 2016 at 3rd Brigade, Townsville which includes as one stated outcome: “Aiming for post-traumatic growth.”¹⁶
- US Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program.¹⁷

In my own Chaplaincy context, the Army Character Development LMP taught to Initial Entry Trainees aims to build resilient military character and has a small but important space for the consideration of the impact of trauma and how the individual can be prepared for the stress that may result.

Focussing in on PTG there are a range of coping strategies that are commonly recognised:

- **Problem-focussed coping** – taking direct action to solve a problem (research, deconstruct, chunking, etc.)
- **Emotion focussed coping** – techniques to manage the emotional response (e.g. breathing and relaxation practices)
- **Social Support** – connecting and reaching out (mateship, community)
- **Meaning Making** – positively viewing situations (reframing, journalling)
- **Religious Coping** – meaning through spiritual journey and connection.¹⁸

These can be developed as a proactive or reactive resource to face traumatic and post-traumatic stress.

Positive Religious Coping

Of particular interest for this author is the recognised role and efficacy of ‘Positive Religious Coping Strategies’ to contribute to PTG. Studies have found that, among other coping strategies, religious coping was a strong predictor of post-traumatic growth.¹⁹ Common to these studies is to distinguish between positive and negative religious coping, where the positive looks for support and meaning while the negative expresses conflict and doubt. The research indicates that positive religious coping will serve to at least maintain mental health and wellbeing if not improve it, while negative religious coping will always lead to poorer mental health.²⁰

Dr Kenneth Pargament is an often-quoted researcher and writer in this domain. He has identified that religious coping performs five major functions:

1. discover meaning,
2. garner control,
3. acquire comfort by virtue of closeness to God,
4. achieve closeness with others and to transform life.²¹

In the context of the ADF, religious adherence may not be seen to be held as tightly as in civilian populations, but the importance of the role and input of Chaplains into the lives of members in the context of trauma in past conflicts has been significant.²² Anecdotal evidence from the experience of Chaplains at Combat Training Establishments and Rehabilitation Wards suggests that young men and women entering the ADF are not adverse to the benefit of religious belief and experience, even those from family backgrounds which eschewed this. This aligns with research into trends in both religion and spirituality in the broader Australian population.²³ Whilst one must not over state its acceptance or impact nor should one discount its value, as keenly expressed by an IET following a platoon field service, about to embark on a demanding culminating assessment exercise: “Padre I’m not religious at all but that really helped.” And isn’t that the point, it is all about empowering and helping people grow through suffering, trials, and hardships.

Whilst acknowledging that Religious Coping strategies should not be favoured at the expense of others, it is nonetheless important to ensure members have access to the full range of coping strategies, which will help provide a broad foundation for resilience. Other worldviews and philosophies may also appeal to different people and inform their mindset. Neither should a faith system be seen as simply a crutch to help someone through difficult times. The aim is to recognise how Religious Coping Strategies can be employed as an effective tool in enabling PTG.

There are a variety of positive religious coping strategies, which do not require conversion, rather to draw on the essence of what is offered, community support, love, and growth through adversity as listed in the following main categories:

Collaborative Style: seeking to work with God as a partner who can provide strength, support and guidance. The Apostle Paul expressed this very simply as he wrote to the Church in Philippi about discovering contentment whether in good times or tough times with the words “*I can do all this through him who gives me strength*” (Phil 4:13 NIV).

Benevolent Reappraisal: Redefining the stressor as a positive and potentially beneficial event.

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed... Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day (2 Cor 4: 8,9,16).

Likewise, James advised his readers:

Consider it pure joy ... whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything (James 1:2-4 NIV).

Seeking Spiritual Support: Finding connection through belonging to a supportive community/ family and receiving pastoral care that encourages taking active measures to deal with stressors.

Paul urged the Church in Corinth to become a community recognised by the active love it showed for the benefit of others:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Cor 13:4-7 NIV).

Religious coping strategies can act as stress moderators and stress deterrents.²⁴ In past conflicts, Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen have willingly participated in religious rituals (prayer, reading sacred writings, blessing, meditation, etc.) seeking peace of mind and connection with something greater, and often looking for answers to big questions about existence and meaning. Many have sought the forgiveness on offer to help reconcile what they have witnessed or done.

It is important that we address these Religious Coping Strategies pre-emptively. In “Sharpening the Warrior’s Edge” Siddle identifies important values and beliefs needed to develop a survival mindset, and lists these:

- confidence,
- the value of human life,
- belief in the mission, and faith systems.
- ‘promise of death’ needs to be dealt with prior to combat, the soldier needs to be at peace with their Deity and themselves in order to avoid distraction and reduce additional stress so they can focus attention on the threat.²⁵

There is a peace of mind resulting from a strong faith system... which lowers the heart rate, allowing for enhanced perceptual and mental processing, enhanced discretion and target selection, as well as the ability to complete more complex tasks. A strong faith system minimises the fear of dying.²⁶

Allowing ADF members to explore the peace on offer that can be gained through developing while they are training for battle can help build more resilient war fighters. This is reflected well in the words, the meaning, and the intention of the Soldier's Prayer, encouraging our members to seek God's help to grow a resilient military character through service.

The Australian Soldier's Prayer

*Almighty God, whose command is over all, and whose love never fails,
let me be aware of your presence and obedient to your will.
Help me to accept my share of responsibility with a strong heart and cheerful mind.
Make me considerate of those with whom I live and work,
and faithful to the duties my country has entrusted to me.
Let my uniform remind me daily of the traditions of the Service in which I serve.
When I am inclined to doubt, strengthen my faith.
When I am tempted to sin, help me to resist.
When I fail, give me the courage to try again.
Guide me with the light of your truth
and keep before me the life and example of Jesus
in whose name I pray. Amen.*

An Example of Post-traumatic growth

One Australian veteran of the Afghanistan conflict records his journey through debilitating and life-threatening PTSD and the growing understanding and direction in life he gained from entering into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.²⁷ In the face of impending doom about the state of his mind he found this Bible verse: "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, and of love and of sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7) and this changed his perspective and gave him hope for recovery. Later he would receive help from a psychologist who included a Christian focus in his therapy. Through such things as ritual, confession and meditation the veteran experienced a significant 'encounter with God', and in the process found a new perspective on his identity and the traumatic stress he had experienced. The transformative impact of these religious strategies allowed him to experience freedom from the disorder and eventually to live free of the medications he had been relying on. In 2017 he initiated PTSD Resurrected Inc., a support service for PTSD sufferers, providing programs and support based on Christian principles, yet accessible to all regardless of beliefs.

There is no suggestion from the author that veterans who are suffering from PTSD discontinue current medical and mental health support. Rather we need to be aware of how PTG may also contribute to their long-term health and well-being in coping with the effects of the disorder.

Chaplaincy's Role

Chaplains can be (as they have been) gainfully employed in preparing members of the ADF for the potentially traumatic experiences of deployment and combat. A greater awareness of Religious Coping Strategies and the benefits they provide can enhance the effectiveness of Chaplains in providing training pre-emptively to help support those experiencing traumatic stress.

As mentioned earlier, in the Army's Initial Entry Training program (Character Development LMP) an opportunity currently exists to address in general terms the need for preparation to mediate the impact of traumatic stress and allow for post-traumatic growth. The 'Spiritual Resilience' lesson explores the fact of death and dying as a reality of war and is a good opportunity to open up the concepts of trauma, PTS and Moral Injury. However, this 40-minute lesson is just a brief primer, and there is limited or no opportunity to develop in any depth the Coping Strategies that are aimed at producing PTG.

This raises a challenge and opportunity for ADF Chaplaincy. Chaplains are present in the lives of members at all stages along the training continuum. An authorised package of resources could provide Chaplaincy with an integral role in preparing members to face trauma in combat service. Such a package could include:

- Formal lessons structured along the training continuum
- 'Padre's Hour' resources, e.g. documentaries
- Chapel services or field services
- Rituals
- Pastoral Care resources for individual or group interactions
- Studies on Bible passages (or other sacred writings)
- Prayers and devotional materials.

If Chaplaincy is sourced to help serve the five major functions; discover meaning, garner control, acquire comfort by virtue of closeness to God, achieve closeness with others, and transform life – we can encourage ADF members to make full use of these functions to cope with challenges and stresses often associated with trauma and enhance the possibility of post-traumatic growth.

At all stages along the training continuum (Recruit – IET – Soldier), Chaplains can enhance the knowledge and behaviours of members in order to enable PTG.

Conclusion

Religious Coping Strategies (RCS) have much to offer in the battle to mitigate the impact of post-traumatic stress and allow for growth. As society has and continues to draw on the many Christian values as a guide to living in community, so too can ADF members benefit from incorporating the implied strengths found within the RCS. The aim is to make members more resilient to PTS, not to proselytise. It just so happens that RCS has the potential to can make a positive contribution by assisting the secular.

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The Chaplain in a Pluralist Military

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Keywords

Chaplaincy, pluralism, spiritual readiness, multi-faith, character training, key religious leader engagement

Abstract

Chaplaincy is a force multiplier in offering support to all, hope to those distressed, comfort to the sick and honour to the dead. Chaplains function in a world and military that is pluralist – where diversity including religions is celebrated and respected. Thus Chaplains offer support to and advocacy for all, albeit drawing on a Chaplain's tradition and on the vitality of spirituality, especially for the values and ethics that are important when dealing with matters of life and death. The distinctive contribution of Chaplains is spiritual care but in the context of a pastoral care or shepherding role that champions interest in a holistic bio-psycho-social-spiritual wellbeing. Chaplains offer this support to members and advice to Command while embedded within ships, units, and airbases – present wherever sailors, soldiers and aviators live, work and fight. Increasingly they are also called on to offer support to training, exercises and operations integrated across services and domains. The challenge is for chaplains to be positioned in order to support the moral component of fighting power, and to guard their own spiritual wellbeing and multi-faith teamwork in ways that will sustain that effort to keep people in the fight.



CHAP Haydn Parsons offers communion during Talisman Sabre 2023. Photo by CPL Jacob Joseph.

I am pleased I am not the only person interested in the wellbeing and spiritual care of members in my unit. Ultimately holistic member wellbeing is the Commanding Officer's responsibility. ADF Chaplaincy Policy [CHAPPOL] places chaplaincy support clearly in the context of supporting Unit Commanders who "are responsible for the spiritual, religious and pastoral care of their Defence members".² In units I have served I have been impressed by the calibre of commitment that everyone in the Chain of Command – from CO to holding platoon Corporals – demonstrate to member wellbeing and support. The difference of my role as Chaplain is that I get to focus on member support and bring a spiritual lens to that task. The CO and all other staff have a range of other tasks and responsibilities – my main effort is the privilege of supporting people on behalf of Command.

Chaplaincy support

Chaplaincy "support" is often expressed in a wide range of contexts – barracks, offices, field, cafes, homes – regarding the practical application of addressing a diversity of human needs.³ Sailors, soldiers, aviators and public servants across Defence are challenged with extraordinary demands, competing schedules, increasingly complex ethical dilemmas and potentially traumatic and/or morally injurious events. Our teams are navigating challenging tempos and organisational change, and subsequently needing to respond with agility to changing technology and a disrupted geo-political context. Plus, people still face other stresses on the domestic front: relational conflict, family strains, financial pressures, medical surprises, mental health problems, death and grief. Enter the chaplain at any of these points for a listening ear and wisdom in difficulties, for what is our foundational priority role and "primary focus of bringing support to all, hope to those in distress, comfort to the sick and honour to the dead."⁴



Royal Australian Navy Imam, Chaplain Majidh Essa, conducts Friday prayers for Muslim Afghanistan evacuees at the ADF's main operating base in the Middle East. Photo by LACW Jacqueline Forrester

Chaplaincy is a force multiplication role. CHAPPOL's first principle is being integral to capability and force multiplication: "Chaplaincy, regardless of location or operational circumstances, is integral to Defence capability and is a force multiplier because it promotes emotional, spiritual and mental wellbeing."⁵ The rationale is that "Chaplaincy is a capability enhancer because it directly supports the wellbeing of all Defence members and Defence civilians with their families, empowering them spiritually and morally to meet the unique demands of Service life."⁶

What though is the role of faith-based chaplaincy in a pluralist military?

Newbigin's Wisdom

To divert momentarily to a favourite theologian, I borrow the phrasing of the previous question from Lesslie Newbigin (1909-98). He had been a missionary in India, working in one of the most religiously plural contexts in the world. On retirement back to England, he realised the Western world was not primarily secular but a pagan context with various competing gods and ideologies. He wrote a book about how to engage as a Christian with cultural relativism and religious pluralism: *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*.⁷ He used the term pluralist to refer not just to plurality of cultures, lifestyles and religions but where that diversity is celebrated and where absolute value judgments are questioned – assuming that religion, beliefs and values are simply subjective and relative. He called Christians away from an "otherworldly" religion that quarantined faith to private domestic matters and urged reclaiming a place in proclaiming "public truth"; not in some attempt to return to Christendom or establishing a Christian political party, but in being confident about the relevance of Christian faith to public issues.

I adapted Newbigin's words once before, writing with Steve Taylor about the place and priority of the congregation in Christian ministry and witness: "The Congregation in a Pluralist Society".⁸ For my current context, I explore a new theme: what is the place of the Chaplain in a pluralist Australian society and specifically its military?

There are many who are agnostic and atheist in Defence, and many who are religious – Christians as well as Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus and others. This is a reflection of our multi-faith society. Defence continues to make great progress in more accurately reflecting the growing diversity of Australia back to itself. Chaplaincy has a lot to offer defence in meeting its recruiting, retention and transition goals, recognising that our sailors, soldiers and aviators come from a variety of communities across the nation. We have chaplains across Navy, Army and Air Force for all six of these religious groups, as well as Maritime Spiritual Welfare Officers (MSWOs) in Navy who work from a non-religious basis.

Chaplains of all denominations and faiths, and MSWOs, together have a role to support people of any or all faith, or non-faith. We recognise that geographic spread and tempo means we cannot represent every faith group in every location, hence we facilitate chaplaincy services for all members. Chaplains' comprehensive care philosophy has always been to "provide for their own, facilitate for others, care for all".⁹ There is evidence that military members, from diverse religious backgrounds and none, are just as or more likely to seek help from chaplains as other supports, and most are satisfied with long-standing chaplaincy services.¹⁰

As a Christian my Chaplaincy draws on my Christian values. Chaplains of other faiths draw deeply on their beliefs and values.¹¹ MSWOs also need to identify and draw on a worldview and set of values, perhaps usually secular-humanist or other framework. In Defence we are dealing with matters of life and death that are too important to risk accepting cultural relativism; why the latest Ethics doctrine excludes relativism and subjectivism as reliable ethical frameworks.¹²

My spirituality as a Christian is Jesus-centric and thus shapes me towards service and compassionate love for others. It fuels me for service. To return to Newbigin, in *The Good Shepherd* he bemoaned an imbalance of spirituality that might emphasise retreat as one spirituality option, or busy activism as another. Newbigin perceived that many Christians adopt a Pilgrim's Progress Model, reminiscent of the 1678 allegory by John Bunyan, that strives to flee from the threat of "the world" to be spiritually nourished. He was also concerned about what he called a Jonah Model of going into the world with busy activism, sometimes reluctantly, to boldly take God's message into despairing contexts, based on the biblical story of Jonah the reluctant missionary. Both caricatures are unbalanced. Newbigin urges Christians to adopt what is the heart of their faith as a model for spirituality – the Cross. He comments that the path of the cross means inwardly disengaging and radically separating from the pressures of the world, while still entering into the world and its needs with total identification.¹³

This resonates for me as a Chaplain with the dynamic of serving from a space that wears the uniform and fully identifies with being a Defence member, and yet having a unique place in the Chain of Command and positioning myself to not overly get caught up with its pressures. This is an engaged spirituality, or what might be termed an incarnational spirituality or ministry – embodying truth and ministry in the midst of the complexities and challenges of one's context.

CHAPPOL appropriately describes this as a "ministry of presence", making support accessible: "Through the consistent exercise of a ministry of presence, chaplains and MSWOs are directly accessible to all members of the ADF with their families, regardless of religious or philosophical belief (or none)."¹⁴ The ministry of presence I seek to bring is one of "non-anxious presence" – a concept coined by Jewish rabbi and family therapist Edwin Friedman who suggested any system threatened by chaos and crisis will break down unless there is a non-anxious presence offering calm.¹⁵ Being present is important across the range of sailor/soldier/aviator activity – PT, meals, sport and training in barracks and especially in the field for exercises and operations. This presence as a "dirty chaplain" is what helps build trust, and puts the chaplain in proximity with members to share the challenges of service and thence be available to offer support from alongside.

Vitality of Chaplaincy is its Spirituality

As well as spirituality shaping a Chaplain's vocation, spirituality is also a resource that the Chaplain in a pluralist military can share and foster in soldiers. Not all soldiers identify with or choose to adopt my Christian faith, or any faith. Not all see the need for spirituality. But that might sometimes reflect a misunderstanding of spirituality and its importance as a resource for meaning and resilience. ADF's Chaplaincy Policy begins with stating ADF "accepts that a person's religious and spiritual belief system is a significant factor in their overall wellbeing."¹⁶ This is why the new nine "Defence and DVA Aligned Wellbeing Factors" include the sphere of Meaning and Spirituality, or "a sense of inner peace, purpose, and connection to something greater than oneself".¹⁷

ADF adopted and slightly adapted Puchaleski et al's definition: "Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to *God*, to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred."¹⁸ Questions of meaning and purpose, and that which is transcendent or beyond us, are important human interests – though we may answer them in different ways and drawing on different resources.¹⁹ Spirituality does not have to be tied to religion but is significant for purpose and connection and thus also resilience. It synergises with the Chaplain's interest in spiritual care, as CHAPPOL describes: "Attending to the importance of spiritual and religious development and care amongst the ADF is vital to the human security framework provided within the ADF."²⁰

As a Chaplain I don't impose my spirituality on others, just as my Jewish, Muslim or other-faith Chaplain colleagues do not impose their faith on soldiers. But all of us eagerly encourage individuals to identify and foster that which gives them meaning and purpose. These are basic human matters, but particularly important for sailors, soldiers and aviators, dealing with matters of life and death, values and ethics, trauma and struggle and needing resources for wellbeing and resilience. CHAP Sarah Gibson explained how the Army Chaplaincy value proposition begins with delivering capability but is founded on pastoral care for people. This includes helping people adapt to life's messiness and fostering ethical decision-making and holistic wellbeing – ultimately about nourishing meaning and purpose.²¹

Director-General of Chaplaincy – Army PRINCHAP Kerry Larwill maintains “The vitality of chaplaincy is its spirituality”.²² This is at the core of the Royal Australian Army Chaplains Department (RAACHD) Strategic Plan: “A spiritually vital chaplaincy allows chaplains to assist with the development of the character and spiritual dimension of humanity. Chaplains have a well-developed worldview and spiritual lived experience that enables them to assist others in making sense of their own beliefs, values and behaviours. It also enables chaplains to support members to live in accordance with their view of the world and the place of their future hope.”²³ DGCHAP-A explains that we need meaning and purpose connections in order to fight wars. Spirituality is not just about how but about why? Soldiers are preparing to go into harm's way and need preparation with weapon drills but also with understanding the purpose for *why* they serve. We need soldiers who endure hardship and who can face death and dying. A drawback of societal expectations is that we are taught the most important person in the world is you. If that is the case, then you won't be the first person to come out of the trench because you will let the less important person next to you do that. Spirituality at its best will motivate us not to let our mates down. And it relates to what helps with survivability, as POWs have learned.²⁴

It was a POW context that inspired the title of history of Australian Army chaplains. Hugh Cunningham at the fall of Singapore was one of 34 Army Chaplains with 22,000 Australians who were taken captive. Cunningham was taken to a camp on the River Kwai. In the midst of the horrors of captivity he led church services, lifted spirits and boosted morale. His Japanese captors at first distrusted him but grew in respect and gave him an armband which he only later learned translated as: “Captain of the souls of men”.²⁵

Chaplaincy relevance

Where religion may be declining, some argue the spiritual care role of the chaplain is less relevant.²⁶ But is it true? Researchers Mark Layson, Lindsay Carey and Megan Best evaluated the contribution of faith-based chaplains providing spiritual and pastoral care in the military and other contexts.²⁷ They argue that Australians, especially younger generations, are still particularly interested in spirituality and that migrants are likely to make Australia more religious and more religiously diverse. Appropriately, Chaplains have provided for both the religious and non-religious for centuries. The strength of their contribution, these authors argue, is firstly providing holistic care, across a biomedical-psycho-social-spiritual (BPPS) framework. Faith-based chaplains function adaptively like the “Swiss army knife” for member care beyond professionalized clinical support, though they also function at their best when collaborating well with [other] allied health providers.²⁸ Secondly, chaplains have a positive role – but often unknown. When members learn the role of chaplains, and when Commanders experience them advising on member wellbeing or on enemy or host nation worldview, their contribution is welcomed. Thirdly, chaplains foster religious and spiritual well-being form an on-call basis with trusted confidentiality. Fourthly, chaplaincy can connect members to a diverse range of charity services and a rich heritage of moral lessons and just war theory. Finally, in an overwhelmingly religious world, chaplains connect with local religious leaders and help build bridges and calm tensions.²⁹

Lindsay Carey is a public health academic and Deputy Director of Research /Senior Research Chaplain with the newly formed ADF Mental Health and Wellbeing Branch. He helpfully explains that spiritual care is the chaplain’s distinctive contribution that most other professions do not focus upon or prioritise. Yet spirituality is always an important aspect of holistic care for wellbeing and mental health. However, spirituality and spiritual care is only one component of the holistic pastoral care bio-psycho-social-spiritual approach. We cannot leave the body or mind or relationships behind. Thus, the broader pastoral care model is based on another unique vitality that Chaplains bring through the “shepherding” role they provide – a term previously and frequently used in different codes of football to describe one player protecting and shielding another. This is a role chaplains adopt in their concern for the physical, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions of member wellbeing — not just the spiritual. Carey argues that this holistic pastoral care that has been a model of ministry for centuries is still vitally unique to chaplains.³⁰ This applies also in a pluralist military as chaplains advocate for and defend the rights of people of all faiths or none.

What does this mean for a ready and future ready force? I reflected on the future of chaplaincy, especially in an integrated space, for the 2023 Cove competition on the theme of Combined Arms in the Army of 2045.³¹ My reflections are expanded on in the next five sections, before fresh discussion of Combat Brigade support and chaplaincy teaming and collaborative learning.

Embedded *within* ships, units, and airbases

Chaplaincy has always been at its best in support of sailors, soldiers and aviators when posted with a local unit, ship or airbase. It has also functioned at its best when supporting a joint tri-service force. The Defence Strategic Review is pointing Defence from a joint to a more integrated postured Force structure.³² In essence Navy, Army and Air Force and the Australian Public Service need to synchronise and optimise for National Defence across maritime, land, air, space and cyber domains. This has huge implications for enhancing critical capabilities and force structure redesign



CHAP James McCarthy chats with soldiers at Lone Pine Barracks, Singleton. Photo by SGT Janine Fabre.

to enable Australia's strategy of denial to the north. But what does this mean for chaplaincy? In what ways will Defence expect chaplaincy to function in support of a more integrated force?

Chaplains embedded with sailors, soldiers and aviators provide accessible support to members and capability and advice to command. They function at their best when embedded within ships, units and airbases. Other specialist roles including medical, psychologist and education officers have been extracted from units and generally no longer parade with different units. They provide professional services from health centres or when invited in as specialists. Some Specialist Service Officers, particularly Education Officers, are now being posted back into units to make their subject matter expertise more accessible. But chaplains have always been and are still an asset of Command and available directly to unit members. CHAP Matthew Stuart comments, "Chaplains are fortunate in that they are the uniformed human care focused capability remaining in most units."³³

Another profession, employed outside Defence but increasingly embedded within units, are journalists. They have negotiated unprecedented freedom of access since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Paul Ballard borrowed from this language and discussed similar challenges of integrity and trust that embedded Chaplains navigate.³⁴ Margaret Whipp expanded on this and helpfully suggests that presence matters, citing Woody Allen who quipped 80% of life is showing up. It is not just about "loitering with intent", but it does involve being a consistent and constant, faithful and dependable presence. She uses the mantra "chaplains walk slowly" to remind her to be attentive and have time to listen deeply to people in the midst of frenetic busyness.³⁵ This underlines my desire to bring "non-anxious presence" as discussed above, and to even be an "unbusy Chaplain" inspired by Eugene Peterson.³⁶

Navy Chaplains and Maritime Spiritual Wellbeing Officers (MSWO) are posted to a ship. Sailors leave shore, deploy and sail – living, working, sleeping and eating – together for months at a time. The Chaplains sails too. That is embedded chaplaincy for a ship.



CHAP Franco Siani leads HMAS Rankin in prayer during a committal to sea ceremony. Photo by LSIS Richard Vordell.

Army chaplains are posted to a unit. The chaplain marches in with other staff, marches around with diggers, wears the same colour patch, does Physical Training, visits barracks, messes and homes, sets up a hoochie out field, sits in on Commander's Update Briefs, contributes to Unit Welfare Boards – showing up and being present. Yet the chaplain also drops what they are doing to support a member when needed. That is embedded chaplaincy for a unit.

Air Force chaplaincy is team-based across an airbase. This is partly because Air Force has smaller units and their personnel tend to have higher identity with their base as a collective enterprise rather than their unit. RAAF chaplains tend to do more pastoral work in their office as aviators and other personnel come to them, but only because there are certain areas chaplains are unable to go to mix with aviators, for example the flightline and other restricted areas. Yet RAAF members all identify with their team of chaplains, similar to Navy and Army members identifying with a ship or unit's chaplain. In the case of an emergency, such as when a plane crashed during Operation Bushfire Assist, it was an Air Force chaplain who could go in and best serve the members affected because they knew airfield emergency processes and had relationships with crew colleagues and plane company staff. That is embedded chaplaincy for an airbase team.

Chaplains across the three services however, function in many of the same ways – a listening ear and non-judgmental counsel is most of what sailors, soldiers and aviators need. But this comes in different ways for context and mission-specific reasons. All three services deliver capability from different platforms. Thus there are different cultures, processes and expectations between the services. RAAF chaplains are central in administering welfare loans. Navy Divisional Support officers play a greater role alongside chaplains in welfare. Army chaplains are cautious about financial welfare administration and tend to do less welfare legwork than Navy or Air Force chaplains. Members from different services have different expectations about welfare, discipline and physical training. Chaplains can help navigate these friction points for integrated tri-service contexts.



RAAF and Army Chaplains Robyn Kidd, Sarah Gibson & Christine Senini walk through Australia's main air operating base in the Middle East Region. Photo by CPL Niccei Freeman.

Sometimes members need a chaplain who understands their maritime, land or aviation context. But chaplains mostly offer trusted and non-judgmental pastoral support to Defence members no matter what colour their uniform. In my other article in this edition I discuss how my spirituality guides my listening to people in barracks or workplace or field, not as a “God botherer” starting with theological questions but being attentive to themes of purpose and spirituality.³⁷

In having one’s finger on the pulse, furthermore, chaplains are an asset for Command. Chaplaincy embedded in units also provide capability and advice to Command, albeit with clearly understood provisions and protections for privacy and confidentiality. Chaplains are not like psychologists who, though supporting members and Command, are usually only professionally available through Joint Health Command in health centres. Chaplains serve alongside the team of Principal Staff Officers (PSO) for the Commanding Officer (CO), although the Chaplain is much more separated from the administration burdens of PSOs in order to be free to focus on people. When the Chaplain and Command relationship is at its best, the Chaplain can tell the CO not just what staff think they want to hear but tell them the truth about the pulse and morale, challenges and friction points in the unit, ship or airbase – embedded as they are within it.

Chaplaincy is not an optional extra bolt-on capability, but integrated wherever chaplains are embedded. That will hopefully not change by 2025 or 2045. What will change is chaplains will increasingly need to expand their capacity for integrating – not just embedded within their ship, unit or airbase – but across services and domains.

Integrated across services and domains

Chaplains have traditionally served within their service and specialised in that domain. Like other members, we join a service but we deploy as a joint and now increasingly integrated Australian Defence Force, in turn integrated with other agencies and allies.³⁸ What does it mean for chaplains to be in the right place with the right tools for five domains? How do we help Command raise, train and sustain integrated forces that are resilient as well as agile and effective?

Former Chief of the Defence Force GEN Angus Campbell directed that ADF be “the same by default, separate by necessity and similar by exception” and that the ADF People System must reflect this to optimise people resources. By extension, what does it mean for Navy, Army and Air Force chaplains to be “same by default, separate by necessity and similar by exception”? What Chaplaincy policies and practices can be the same? Where do our domain’s unique characteristics demand we maintain difference? What interoperability can be enhanced by standardising structures and procedures?³⁹

Navy chaplains and MSWOs are subject-matter experts in maritime support. Army chaplains’ expertise is in supporting forces in the land battle. Air Force chaplains specialise in aviation support. Yet we all need to appreciate and understand one another’s domains, and indeed the other domains of Cyber and Space.

What will character and ethics training look like for members who are navigating ethical dilemmas in Cyber and Space? To what extent and how do Just War principles still apply in contemporary contexts and new domains?⁴⁰ Chaplaincy support for the Defence Intelligence workforce and Health is also increasingly integrated and has its own unique challenges. How does Army best support soldiers on Navy and soon Army ships? How will resilience be stretched for submariners whose isolation will be extended in Nuclear powered platforms? What ethical responsibilities does Australia, and ADF, and chaplains as prophetic advocates have for Pacific neighbours sinking under the seas from climate change’s rising sea levels? How do we shepherd countries that cannot afford or access emerging technologies such as drones, satellites and Cyber defence? What are the implications of new domains and DSR-prompted task forces for Chaplaincy? Chaplaincy will evolve to support members in new domains and in a more integrated Force.

From ADFA to operations

Training and postings are already sometimes tri-service at Training Establishments. At Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA), chaplaincy is delivered by a tri-service team to tri-service staff and tri-service officer cadets and midshipmen. Sometimes a service chaplain may support a cadet from their service with service-specific issues. Yet mostly the Navy, Army and RAAF chaplain each support their squadron and its staff and trainee officers – whatever the uniform. As well as aligning with the ADFA charter of building a joint-service and multinational cohort, this is good experience for chaplains and good modelling for Defence’s future officers.

Some cooperative chaplaincy coverage also happens in Brigades. Navy, Army and RAAF chaplaincy colleagues in Darwin, for example, call on each other to carry duty phones for one another. When Army chaplains sail on Navy ships with their units, Army and Navy chaplains and MSWOs can mutually support.

Amphibious Battalion 2RAR had lost its chaplaincy position but the CO told the COORD Chaplain they needed a chaplain again. With no Army chaplains available, the COORD found an available RAAF chaplain who served that Army unit and HMAS *Adelaide*. That was integrated chaplaincy – an Air Force chaplain serving Army personnel on a Navy platform.

When an RAAF chaplain handed over to a Navy chaplain for OP ACCORDION at AMAB, the Navy chaplain did airside awareness training and diligently visited the flying squadrons. They took a while to understand who this person was with a strange rank slide. But they commented to another RAAF chaplain that the Navy chaplain was a valuable and appreciated support. His (limited) knowledge of planes was not as important as his listening and pastoral skills. In fact, they could explain to him their aviation world since he came across as humble and curious.



CHAP James Hall leads prayer for Australian and Fijian personnel during OP TONGA ASSIST 2022. Photo by CPL Robert Whitmore.

The chaplaincy team on HMAS *Adelaide* during OP TONGA ASSIST comprised an Army chaplain focused on embarked Army personnel and HQ liaison (as J08), a Navy chaplain who focused on the ship's company from three services, and a Navy chaplain from Tonga who focused on Key Religious Leader Engagement K(Rel)LE. The synergy of that team functioned as each chaplain focused on their role and realised they were not the only chaplain who provided support. Two of them focused on member wellbeing for their integrated task group. This is especially important for a values-based organisation dealing with matters of life and death. Moreover, the K(Rel)LE assigned chaplain demonstrated another value of integrated chaplaincy in value-adding to the humanitarian aims of the mission by fostering networks with local religious leaders and faith communities. This is especially important in neighbouring countries for whom religion is such a dominant and important part of society.

Learning in integrated settings

It is important for chaplains to train to be ready to lean forward to support members in different uniform and on platforms they have not had as much experience with. This begins with how Defence initially trains chaplains. The Defence Force Chaplains College (DFCC) has been a tri-service context for two decades. It has senior instructors from three services and trains chaplains across the services. Recently it has also trained chaplains for Australian Federal Police and Australian Border Force. Military chaplains often work with Police and Emergency Service personnel on operations, so it is helpful if we have trained and been exposed to their chaplaincy services in training.

Through a chaplain's career, how do they learn to work in and across different domains and with members and chaplains from other services? The key is intentional and authentic relationships – the currency of chaplaincy in any context. This begins with open communication and expanding the context of our curiosity and openness to learn. It means being authentic and honest about what we do not know. It necessitates learning the ranks and idiosyncrasies of our sister services. And it



Army Chaplain Rabbi David Gutnick walks and talks with local residents as a civilian convoy prepares to leave Mallacoota, Victoria for Eden NSW as part of Operation Bushfire Assist 19-20 Photo by: Private (P) Michael Currie

means not joking about each other's service conditions unless perhaps banter in the context of a close relationship. Foundationally, a basic tenant of respect for team colleagues across services means we will value and generously affirm the contributions of all.

It can involve going out of our way to experience a different domain – through a course, site visit, coffee conversation or even inter-service or joint posting. I appreciated visiting an Airbase for my Chaplains' Initial Course. Navy and Air Force Chaplains may benefit from field visits. Army and Air Force chaplains would benefit from the exposure of sea trips. Moreover, it is not just about learning how chaplaincy operates across services, but also learning what interoperability means for the people and teams we serve. This begins with maintaining contact and sharing wisdom and resources with service colleagues in joint commands. We can develop insight through courses such as Introduction to Joint Warfighting (IJWE) and Gender Focal Point (GFP) training – valuable in itself but also for its overlap of procedures with K(Re)L engagement. This is the kind of development that all good officers – not just good chaplains – do in order to develop professional mastery.

DFSS' tri-service, multiple domain training

Training establishments are increasingly becoming integrated, such as the tri-service Defence Force School of Signals (DFSS) at Simpson Barracks and wings around the country. DFSS's mandate is to train members across the services as communicators, for the Land, Air, Maritime and Cyber domains. These are important roles to ensure Defence has a decisive information advantage in peace, crisis or conflict. Staff across the services lean on and learn from each other's specialisations and teach and administer across the services. The CO has been having Recalls at other Navy, Army and Air Force bases to broaden the Command Team's exposure.

Chaplaincy support at DFSS is embedded in the unit and integrated across services. I support Navy, Army and Air Force members. I have been privileged to work alongside exceptional Chaplains in Army but also Navy and Air Force. Another full-time Army Chaplain supports our wing at Borneo Barracks, and covers support for our Regional Training at Gallipoli Barracks. That Chaplain supports international students doing DFSS courses, thus facilitating relationships



CHAP Darren Cronshaw teaching Mental Health First Aid at DFSS. Photo by Ross Evans.

at another level of integration with allies. Back at Simpson Barracks, three RAAF chaplains have helped support RAAF member welfare. Most Navy learners are at our Maritime Communication Information Systems Wing (MC-ISW) at HMAS Cerberus, supported by Navy chaplains and Maritime Spiritual Welfare Officers (MSWOs). One of those Navy chaplains lives close to Simpson Barracks and supports us on Reserve days. Another Navy (Imam) chaplain visited us to teach on Islam for Instructors and Deployments, and while here was invited by an Army Royal Military College chaplain to travel further to visit their (Muslim) Officer Cadets at Puckapunyal for Friday prayers. Chaplaincy support, though anchored by me as an embedded unit chaplain, is tri-service reflecting our integrated cohort and mandate.

Character training is an important aspect of DFSS chaplaincy. This helps prepare communicators with character, resilience and ethical decision-making for dilemmas in traditional and Cyber domains. In previous Army units character training began with Good Soldiering.⁴¹ At DFSS we address the need for character and teaming that the Chief of Army's Good Soldiering initiative highlighted but expand the concept to incorporate Good Sailing and Good Aviating. We have borrowed from Army's term of Training Transformation but reframe that to the imperative of training that is transformational for character. Collaboration with HMAS Cerberus Chaplaincy has helped ADF values training evolve for both DFSS and Cerberus including selective use of movie snippets.⁴² Inter-service conversations about military ethics across the domains are critical for an integrated force.

This is a microcosm of how Chaplaincy is evolving. Chaplaincy at its best is embedded with ships, units or airbases. As the force becomes more integrated, Chaplains need postings, training, learning and ethical resources that support them providing integrated chaplaincy – across services and spanning domains. Chaplaincy will evolve to be increasingly purple as a capability in support of Combined Arms for an integrated force.

Chaplaincy for Exercises and Operations

Ultimately, chaplaincy postures at its best in support of operations and exercises designed to prepare troops for operations. Experienced Chaplains underline the operational imperative of the ministry of presence and non-anxious presence. This is where the most significant and valued



CHAP Andrew Downes assists in casualty treatment at EX RHINO RUN, Cultana Training Area. Photo by SGT Matthew Bickerton.

chaplains effect happens. Chaplains go field or deploy and sit with members through challenges and joys, offering encouragement and comfort. Chaplaincy has been at its best coming alongside soldiers in struggles and trenches.⁴³ It is not a clinical transactional relationship but a 24/7 availability with the no fail aspect of the mission being with soldiers and responsive and available for their support. Some support is similar to what is offered in the training and barracks environments. Much is unique to extra operational demands, tempo and tasks, including those that call for keeping soldiers on mission and trauma-sensitive care.

When chaplains served on OP SUMATRA ASSIST (2004/2005) for example, part of their role was helping sailors, soldiers and aviators process the experience of seeing up to 100 bodies a day, mostly children, being retrieved from water drainage areas. Besides the counselling, guidance and educational role of chaplains during this time, a memorial ceremony was held on the 16th of January when Navy, Army and Air Force personnel requested to take “time out” as part of the “National Day of Mourning” amidst the frenetic pace of over 2,000 people and 3.5 million pounds of cargo arriving and departing via RAAF Base Butterworth in Malaysia.⁴⁴

Supporting humanitarian operations is one thing, but the main effort to prepare for Defence and chaplaincy is war-fighting. The no-fail task is to support the moral component of fighting power – to source and resource the rigours of mind and spirit for the will to fight.⁴⁵ We don’t know all the challenges this will bring in the coming decade. Analysis of previous wars can give some indication of the critical role of chaplains in caring for the wounded, honouring the dead, and fostering hope to overcome despair.⁴⁶ One challenge of protracted large-scale urban combat is psychologically preparing soldiers especially snipers for near-constant killing.⁴⁷ Enter the chaplain to be alongside members preparing for and engaging in the challenges of combat. In contrast to much of chaplaincy in training or on bases, this is support offered in the field not barracks. If we as a Force are to train as we will fight, then chaplains especially for Army units will continue to prioritise being in the field, given the barracks is merely a kind of temporal staging ground for where the real work of Army is done.



CHAP Lindsay Carey: Leading National Day of Mourning Service, RAAF Butterworth, 16 Jan 2005. Royal Australian Air Force Annual Journal (2005), 82.

COORD CHAP Matthew Stuart at 3 Brigade has explored chaplaincy's evolving contribution to combat brigades. Stuart observes the chaplain's effective ministry of presence has historically been enabled by four principles: freedom of movement, accepting personal risk, adhering to international law, and recognising faith is important to soldiering. In a mobile combat brigade, chaplains can still be force multipliers following these principles. Yet he advises as Defence postures for dispersed mobile battle groups, chaplains need to ensure four other principles. Firstly, chaplains need to be focused with position; e.g., embedding with the Battlefield Clearance Team (BCT) to assure dead mates will be honoured, or with the RSM's vehicle, or with Combat Support Services (CSS) units to offer continuity of care. Secondly, chaplains may focus their presence with supportive function; (e.g., as a Combat First Aider, vehicle driver or Mortuary Affairs Officer). Thirdly, chaplaincy teams need relational trust by confidently knowing rear details and chaplains in other locations [and services] will be present with support and care. Fourthly, COORD Chaplains need to adopt technical responsibility for enabling liaison including K(Rel)LE and repatriation processes.⁴⁸ Chaplaincy needs to bring its best innovative thinking and field training to experimenting with this kind of refocusing. It is where chaplaincy most needs to be both embedded with units but also integrated across the Brigade and broader task force mission.

Teaming and Learning in a Pluralist Military

I remind new learners that they are not supplied with character with their kit at Cerberus, Kapooka or Wagga. I also say I cannot teach them character in the classroom, though they can reflect on what is needed for development. Similarly, I can't learn chaplaincy by writing about it, but I am seeking to identify a learning trajectory for professional practice and peer learning.

Chaplains I interviewed expressed the desire for more intentional peer supervision and learning communities in the context of investment in one another's development and selfless mutuality. In posting to a Combat Brigade I am looking forward to leaning into the Chaplain COORD and team to curiously learn from them about best practice.



Inaugural tri-service Western Region Chaplains Seminar 2019 at HMAS Stirling. Photo by LSIS Kylie Jagiello.

Teamwork and mutual learning is also critical across multi-cultural and multi-faith chaplaincy teams. CHAP Renton McRae suggests this will require a new leadership paradigm and cooperation based not on beliefs but respect for others – yet nevertheless serving with religious, spiritual and pastoral pillars.⁴⁹ This will be increasingly important as Chaplaincy develops its K(Rel)LE capability with its potential for bridge-building especially in the Indo-Pacific.⁵⁰ This can begin with our own enhanced cultural intelligence, study of religions and learning from other-faith chaplaincy colleagues. We cooperate in serving members of different faiths with a comprehensive care philosophy (providing for our own, facilitating for others, caring for all).⁵¹ We do what we can do together, and we separate when we must for reasons of conviction or not compromising beliefs. This is consistent with the broader injunction to be “same by default, separate by necessity and similar by exception” and to strengthen our “integration reflex”, specifically applied to inter-cultural human integration and with expertise focused on forward presence in the Indo-Pacific region.⁵²

When it comes to difference and frictions, we practice “generous orthodoxy” and prioritise relational teamwork.⁵³ But in a pluralist society, faith-based chaplains share much common ground. To use the language of a contemporary public theologian, Elaine Graham, we necessarily negotiate together between the apparently immovable “rock” of religious resurgence that presumes a privileged position and the irresistible “hard place” of secularism, institutional decline and suggesting that religion has no place in public life. As chaplains of different faiths, we maintain faithfulness to our tradition but remain open to diverse and critical conversations. And we are not primarily interested in winning arguments about propositional claims but appealing for living well and acting justly for society’s common good.⁵⁴

Wellbeing and resilience are effects chaplains aim to produce in members but are also needed for ourselves and our teams. This takes authenticity and vulnerability, as well as relational accountability. Lindsay Carey is a strong advocate for the bio-psycho-social-spiritual model. He suggests this is an ideal model for team wellbeing: together doing something physical, something psychologically/intellectually stimulating including staying sharp with empirical research, doing something social and doing something spiritual.⁵⁵ Spirituality is our wellspring and vitality and is a stretch to exercise ecumenically and multi-faith, but is worth the exercise.

Spiritual Readiness suggests:

“History has demonstrated that providing warriors with the most powerful munitions platforms, weapon systems, and technology is often not enough to win wars. They must also have the strength of spirit (and will power) to accomplish their duties with honor, which will help them not only succeed in these military endeavors but also avoid the devastating inner conflicts that might otherwise result.”⁵⁶

In a pluralist military, given the vitality of our chaplaincy is spirituality, it is appropriate for chaplains to model that together.

Endnotes

1. In preparing this article I appreciated interviews with Navy, Army and Air Force Chaplains Stephen Brooks, Matthew Campbell, Lindsay Carey, Andrew Downes, Karen Haynes, Kate Lord, Renton McRae, James Sutherland and Charles Vesely. This article expands on a previously published article in "Purple Chaplaincy: Supporting an Integrated Force Towards 2045", *The Cove* (09/07/2024). <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/purple-chaplaincy-supporting-integrated-force-towards-2045>
2. *ADF Chaplaincy Policy*, Edition 2 (2021), 4.
3. Chaplaincy support is a key intervention noted in World Health Organisation (WHO), "Spiritual Intervention Codings", International Classification of Diseases and Health Related Issues (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2017)
4. *ADF Chaplaincy Policy*, 1; "Chaplaincy Services in FORCOMD", Annex E to FORCOMD Order 24-25 (May 2024), E2.
5. *ADF Chaplaincy Policy*, 1.
6. *ADF Chaplaincy Policy*, 2.
7. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989)
8. Darren Cronshaw and Steve Taylor, "The Congregation in a Pluralist Society; Rereading Newbigin for Missional Churches Today", *Pacifica* 27:2 (2014), 206-228.
9. *ADF Chaplaincy Policy*, 4.
10. Megan C Best, Katie T Leach, Mark Layson and Lindsay B Carey, "Military Perspectives on the Provision of Spiritual Care in the Australian Defence Force: A Cross-Sectional Study", *Journal of Religion and Health* (Jan 2024), 289-308; see also Mark D Layson, Katie T Leach, Lindsay B Carey and Megan C Best, "Factors Influencing Military Personnel Utilizing Chaplains: A Literature Scoping Review", *Journal of Religion and Health* 61:2 (Apr 2022), 1155-1182.
11. A useful resource is Pastor Ralph Estherby, CSM, "RACS Responses to the Defence Values Religious", *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2021), 56-64; and videos "Practising Your Faith in the ADF", available at ADF Careers, <https://www.adfcareers.gov.au/life-in-the-adf/people-and-diversity>
12. *ADF P-0 Military Ethics*, Edition 1 (2021), 19.
13. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry in Today's World* (London: Mowbray, 1977), 96-99; discussed in *Dangerous Prayer: Discovering a Missional Spirituality in the Lord's Prayer* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster: 2017), 14.
14. *ADF Chaplaincy Policy*, 4.
15. Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process on Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford Press, 2011). My interest in the contribution of "non-anxious presence" and a broader grounding contemplative spirituality was part motivation for "The Contemplative Chaplain: Fit for Purpose Inspiration from Eugene Peterson", *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2023), 90 [85-96]; and "The Spiritual Chaplain: Hopeful Inspiration for a Despairing World from Eugene Peterson", *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2024).
16. *ADF Chaplaincy Policy*, 3.
17. Defence Mental Health and Wellbeing Branch, "Wellbeing Factors".
18. Christina Puchaleski, et al., "Improving the Quality of Spiritual Care as a Dimension of Palliative Care: The Report on the Consensus Conference", *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 12:10 (2009), 887 [884-904]; as cited in Lindsay B Carey, Harold G Koenig, Terrence Hill, T. et al. "Spirituality, Mental Health, and COVID-19", *Journal of Religious Health* 63 (2024), 2 [1-5]. See RAACHd Strategic Plan and Defence Mental Health and Wellbeing Branch "Wellbeing Factors", which includes the reference also "to God" which was added by the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services and now accepted by ADF.

19. The Cove offers a diverse range of “Body, Mind & Soul” podcasts, <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/body-mind-soul-series-3-soul/>; although the soul theme is noticeable by its absence in the more recent “Mind-Body ADF” <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/mind-body-adf>
20. ADF *Chaplaincy Policy*, 4.
21. Chaplain Sarah Gibson, “Of Army Chaplaincy: Value Proposition – Explanatory Notes”, *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2019), 52-61.
22. RAACHD Strategic Plan 2023-2025. Released Sep 2023.
23. RAACHD Strategic Plan.
24. DGCHAP-A Kerry Larwill, RAACHD Regional Chaplaincy Seminar, Melbourne (17 July 2024). Regarding POW lessons, see James Stockdale, *The Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot* (Stanford, CA: Hoover, 1995)
25. Michael Gladwin, *Captains of the Soul: A history of Australian Army chaplains* (Newport: Big Sky, 2013), xi-xiv.
26. Colonel Philip Hoglin, “Secularism and Pastoral Care in the Australian Defence Force”, *Australian Army Journal*, 17:1 (2021), 98-111.
27. Mark D Layson, Lindsay B Carey and Megan C Best, “The Impact of Faith-based Pastoral Care in Decreasingly Religious Contexts: The Australian Chaplaincy Advantage in Critical Environments”, *Journal of Religion and Health* (2023) 62: 1491-1512; see also Mark D Layson, Katie T Leach, Lindsay B Carey and Megan C Best, “Factors Influencing Military Personnel Utilizing Chaplains: A Literature Scoping Review”, *Journal of Religion and Health* 61:2 (April 2022), 1155-1182.
28. Collaboration and referrals are needed in both directions between allied health practitioners and chaplains for person-centred holistic care that encompasses support of spirituality/ religiosity including moral injury, as argued elsewhere in Lindsay B Carey, John Swinton and Daniel H Grossoehme, “Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care”, in *Spiritual Care for Allied Health Practice: A Person-Centred Approach*, eds. Lindsay B Carey and Bernice A Mathison (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2018), 230, 243-45 [229-257].
29. Layson et al., “Impact of Faith-based Pastoral Care”.
30. Lindsay Carey, Email to author (24 Jul 2024); also Carey, Koenig, Hill, et al. “Spirituality, Mental Health, and COVID-19”, 2; Mark Layson, Lindsay B Carey, Megan C Best, “Now More Than Ever: ‘Fit for Purpose’”, *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2023), 12-13 [11-23].
31. Cronshaw, “Purple Chaplaincy”.
32. National Defence: Defence Strategic Review (2023), 54.
<https://www.defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review>
33. Chaplain Matthew Stuart, “Can Chaplaincy have a Focused and Integrated Purpose Supporting Warfighting?”, *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2023), 71 [69-75].
34. Paul Ballard, “Locating Chaplaincy: A Theological Note”, *Crucible* (Jul-Sep 2009), 18-24; cited in Margaret Whipp, “Embedding Chaplaincy: Integrity and Presence”, in *A Christian Theology of Chaplaincy*, eds. John Caperon, Andrew Todd and James Walters (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2018), 103-105 [101-117].
35. Whipp, “Embedding Chaplaincy”, 103-110.
36. Cronshaw, “The Contemplative Chaplain”, 90.
37. Cronshaw, “The Spiritual Chaplain”.
38. ADF Capstone Concept, Concept APEX: *Integrated Campaigning for Deterrence*, Edition 2, AL1 (2024), 11.
39. CDF Directive (16/2022) – The ADF People System; ADF, *Concept APEX*, 13.

40. I explore questions of military ethics including Cyber and Space in *The Cove* <https://cove.army.gov.au/bio/darren-cronshaw> and *Grounded Curiosity* <https://groundedcuriosity.com/author/darren-cronshaw/>
41. Darren Cronshaw, "Good Soldiering and Re-virtuing Military Ethics Training", *International Journal of Public Theology*, 16:3 (2022), 337-358.
42. Darren Cronshaw, "'Training Transformation' and ADF Values: Helping Trainees Identify their Line in the Sand", *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2022), 54-62; see also Training Transformation and ADF values articles in *The Cove*, <https://cove.army.gov.au/bio/darren-cronshaw>
43. As underlined and expanded in Chaplain Matthew Stuart, "Presence of Hope in the Despair of Dying, Waiting and Surviving", *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2024).
44. Stephen Laredo, "324 Combat Support Squadron and Asian Tsunami", *Royal Australian Air Force Annual Journal* (2005), 81-83.
45. Matthew Stuart, "Developing the Quiet Voice of Fighting Power", *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2020), 98-100 [98-108].
46. Stuart, "Presence of Hope".
47. James Lewis, "The Battle of Marawi: Small Team Lessons Learned for the Close Fight", *The Cove* (27/11/2018), <https://cove.army.gov.au/article/battle-marawi-small-team-lessons-learned-close-fight>
48. Stuart, "Can Chaplaincy have a Focused and Integrated Purpose Supporting Warfighting?", 69, 71-73.
49. Chaplain Renton McRae, "Who Is My Neighbour?: A Reflection on the Changing Nature of Religion and Spirituality within the Australian Defence Force", *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2023), 42 [39-43].
50. "Book Review – Military Chaplains as Agents of Peace", *Grounded Curiosity* (Dec 2, 2021), <https://groundedcuriosity.com/book-review-military-chaplains-as-agents-of-peace-religious-leader-engagement-in-conflict-and-post-conflict-environments-by-s-k-moore/>; Chaplain John Saunders, "Recent ADF Developments in Key Religious Leader and Religious Community Engagement", *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2023), 76-84.
51. ADF Chaplaincy Policy, 4.
52. ADF, Concept APEX, 16, 20; ADF Functional Concepts, Concept AFFINITY: *Integrated International Engagement*, Edition 1 (2023).
53. Rowan Williams, "'All Faiths and None?': Theological Issues in Multi-Faith Chaplaincy", in *A Christian Theology of Chaplaincy*, eds. John Caperon, Andrew Todd and James Walters (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2018), 66, 73-74 [59-78].
54. Elaine Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age* (London: SCM, 2013)
55. Carey, Email.
56. Harold G Koenig, Lindsay B Carey and Faten Al Zaben, *Spiritual Readiness: Essentials for Military Leaders and Chaplains* (New York. Amazon Books, 2022), 231.

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I Think Army Needs our Padres

Warrant Officer Dave Ashley, AM

9th Regimental Sergeant Major - Army

I was recently on an exercise in Rockhampton with Padre Stephen Brooks, a man I have known for years and who I have worked with several times before. Padre Brooks is a man I trust and respect. We were both involved in mentoring and coaching roles with the Combat Training Centre supporting HQ 1 (AS) Division and 7 Bde. In some downtime we got talking, as soldiers do, he about RSMs and me about Padres. We reminisced about the good and the bad and had a few laughs along the way. But it was mainly about the good. I realised during our conversation that Padres and RSMs are in the same business, but perhaps our soldiers may not think so. In different ways we are both about the human dimension of capability – the care and development of our people. Our people are our only real capability for without people equipment and facilities are just useless objects. But we might go about our tasks in slightly different ways.

Anyway, Padre Brooks asked me to put my thoughts down on paper for potential inclusion in the Padres' Journal. This is not meant to be a formal paper (I didn't go to Staff College – thank my lucky stars), but rather just an extension of our conversation on paper. I think it was a good conversation, but we didn't agree on everything and that's OK and I am sure many readers, if anyone reads this, will also disagree with me.

As I write these words I realise that Padres have helped mould me into the man and soldier I am today, and this realisation comes in my 46th year of service. I'm not a religious man (but I might be because I believe that a God must live in all of us – we must do good by other people) but the very best Padres are people who do good for all, regardless of faith or lack of it. I remember the results of the last national census – more people identify as other than Christian in our nation. And I am taken by the makeup of the unit I supported during the exercise. It was a truly multicultural organisation. People of all genders, skin colour and backgrounds. Four of them started their lives in Australia as refugees and each had a similar reason for joining – to pay back Australia for the willing generosity in allowing them and their families a new start in life.

We have come a long way since I enlisted in 1979. And it's for the better – much better. So here is my first story. And it's about the only time a Padre has ever offended me. I was no less than the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Army at the time and I was with the Chief at a military funeral. Afterwards the officiating Chaplain approached the Chief and stated "*General, thank you for keeping our Army a Christian Army*". I was flabbergasted and stewing on it afterwards. I was also offended. Here I was, a non-Christian, and the most senior enlisted member in our Army and this chaplain had stated that I was an outsider to the Army I had served at that time for over 35 years. It must have been obvious because the Chief, as we drove to the airport, looked at me and asked me what was the matter. I told him and he replied "*don't worry we are more your Army than his*". We are not just a Christian Army – we are an Australian Army, reflected in the total faces, faiths and beliefs in all of our people. Padres must be for all of us without exception.

The first time I met a Padre was at basic training at Kapooka. For me it was a time of yelling, 'one two three – one' as we learnt drill movements and seemingly unfriendly recruit instructors. On our first Sunday we were sent to Church Parade (whether we liked it or not). I remember the kind

old man, he was probably only 40 but I was just a kid, who offered us tea and biscuits. I don't remember a single prayer, just a calm and serene place in the middle of the seeming mayhem outside and in the barrack blocks and the Parade Grounds. I felt rejuvenated and somewhat happy in that chapel and with that Padre. It was a place of safe harbour for me and every Sunday I looked forward to Church Parade. When a soldier visits a Padre he or she should feel that 'safe harbour' because he or she may feel they can find it nowhere else and may have nowhere else to go.

My next recollection was when I was an instructor at the School of Infantry in about 1985. I was new to the School and the Duty CPL for Depot Coy. I was walking my rounds one evening. I came across the Padre's office which was in an old Nissan Hut. The place was an absolute mess; it looked like a Claymore mine had been detonated inside. There were empty pizza packets and overflowing bins. *"Hello corporal"* came a voice inside, *"come in, come in"* a somewhat rotund Padre appeared and we sat down for an excellent 20-minute conversation. *"Bit messy (an understatement) but I'm clearly not in the Chain of Command"*. I had a great relationship with that Padre (and the other Padres posted there). I remember marching my platoon down for 'character guidance', which was Depot Coy's Kapooka Church Parade equivalent. Afterwards when the Platoon formed up I saw the Padre standing in the door and I yelled (probably somewhat irresponsibly) *"now the Padre has taught you how to love your fellow man, we are going to teach you how to bayonet him!"* The Padre burst out laughing – he was a friend to all and no one could be more approachable. He wore captain's rank but he was not an officer – he was a friend, a counsellor and a confidant – he was a man anyone could turn to. There was a story going around about him. On Christmas Day he drove around to the married quarter patch on base and accidentally ran over the kids Christmas presents! But he was instantly forgiven.

I fear many of you won't agree with me, but I think that Padres hold no rank. In a way they hold every rank. They should be an equal member of the Officers' Mess, the Sergeants' Mess and the Soldiers' Club. They should have access everywhere. I don't think they should wear the accoutrements of commissioned officers but devices of various positions and roles. They attract no salutes and they are not any soldier's superior officer. They should be a place of safety and support. I know of one particular Padre who 'bollocked' soldiers for not saluting him. Who would go to him for help?

RSMs are not part of the Chain of Command, they are lower in rank than the most junior officers, but good ones are important members of the Command Team. The same applies to Padres. In one of my RSM appointments, a new and incoming Padre (he was kind of a 'locum' in the absence of the unit Padre) came to my office and told me that he had informed a soldier that had a Negligent Discharge that he was not going to be charged. After my heart rate had subsided I quietly informed that Padre that as sure as night follows day the soldier would be charged, consistent with all others in our Battalion. *"This is a leadership decision. You can appear on his behalf but he is going to be charged and you shouldn't have made that commitment without speaking to me first"*. The soldier was charged, pleaded guilty and was duly punished. He went on to fulfil his career, just like I did after my own Negligent Discharge when wearing the rank of sergeant. Padres must never breach or compromise the Chain of Command or they may find themselves compromised and sidelined. I work in one of my roles with a Major General. He often states that there were three people he could always rely on for frank and fearless advice – his medical officer, his RSM and his Padre. This won't be the case if the Padre (or the RSM for that matter) compromises the Chain of Command.

When I was the RSM of the 6th Battalion in 2000 our padre was a Catholic Deacon. His name was Mick Lapin, a former RAEME other rank soldier. Padre Lapin was one of the finest men and soldiers I have ever met. I'd like to recount three stories about him and why, less our Commanding Officer, he was the most valuable member of our Battalion.

We built our Battalion virtually from scratch for deployment to East Timor as INTERFET transitioned to a UN operation. We left Brisbane on a civilian flight from the Domestic Airport bound for Darwin, then onwards to East Timor. At the Airport, families, Mums, Wives, Dads and loved ones were holding back, just, tears. Including my own family. "Would you call them all in for a prayer?" suggested Mick. *"Not a chance Padre – we'll have a tsunami wave of tears"*, replied I, the RSM. *"Trust me on this one Tara (an old nickname for the RSM)"*. I did, and while we got that Tsunami Wave of tears it was good for the officers and soldiers, but particularly their loved ones. Tough soldiers can still show emotion.

East Timor, after a quarter century of war, was an armed place. There were guns and ammo everywhere and everyone seemed to have a grenade hidden somewhere. We needed to get those weapons off the populace to keep folks safe and to prevent the unchecked outbreak of violence. Despite our best efforts we had little success – people feared too much to hand in their weapons. East Timor was, and Timor Leste remains, a bastion of dedicated, practicing Catholics. Mick had made relationships with the Priests across the churches in our AO and he got the weapons through them. In half a week, our Padre got more weapons than the rest of us got in a month and made our area and the people who lived in it safer. Now that's a significant contribution to mission success.

During our tour we suffered the tragic death of CPL Stuart 'Monsta' Jones who died as the result of an accidental gunshot wound to the chest. I will never forget that day, not even a minute of it, for the rest of my life. After the frenzy of the things an RSM must do as a result of such an incident, I shared a brew with Padre Mick. It was a great salve for me. He sat down with Monsta's mates and gave them care and he conducted the most magnificent commemoration service on a hill overlooking a giant orange Asian setting sun. It was as if Monsta was saying goodbye to his mates. And we worked together on Monsta's Ramp Ceremony in Dili. I remember briefing our National Commander, a full Colonel, on the details and being told that I couldn't drape his casket with our National Flag. I was told that we were on a United Nations mission and that the UN flag was to be used. After the Colonel had departed I turned to Padre Mick and said *"!@#\$ that"! I'll obey but he didn't say I couldn't put the ANF on top of the UN flag!* The Padre looked at me and said *"I'm sure God will forgive you RSM"*. We got away with it and we farewelled Monsta home the right way.

On another occasion this great Padre turned to me and said *"If I were you I would visit (a certain sub-unit)"*. You ignore your Padres at your peril. I took his advice and we narrowly avoided serious trouble. Good Padres, like a good RSM, are gifted and enthusiastic in 'taking the pulse' of the unit they support (and to do this you must get out of your office and among the troops) – and Padre Mick was obviously doing a better job than me.

Our Battalion included many reserve members on a limited 'contract'. After we returned home we conducted a formal parade on Duncan Oval at Enoggera to farewell our departing members. In East Timor Padre Lapin carried a shepherd's crook, kind of like an RSM's pacestick (although I obviously carried a rifle). On Parade he looked kind of out of place without his crook. *"Why don't you carry your crook onto Parade Padre?"* *"Am I allowed?"* he replied. *"Yep – but you need to make up very snazzy drill movements"*. He did and it was a great parade even though the then RSM-A gave me an admonishment. But he carried onto parade what the soldiers expected and it was their parade. When we marched back to 6 RAR and I halted the Battalion and advanced them, in my very best parade ground command I gave the order *"three cheers for Padre Mick"*. The response from the soldiers was deafening, such was the esteem he was held in. Padre Mick Lapin found many ways to be loved by 6 RAR and our families, and he carried very beneficial actions on that love. Every Padre, obviously in their own ways as Padres must be authentic, should try to emulate Mick Lapin.

Shortly after we returned home, Mick Lapin passed away as a result of complications from surgery. I cried on that day.

In one of my roles it was suggested by a Navy officer that given the changing face of our nation, Padres were becoming an anachronism (his exact words). He suggested that Padres be replaced by ethicists. To me this doesn't sound very much like Padre Lapin or many other Padres I have met and worked with over decades of service.

I think we should keep our Padres.

A Perspective of Faith

LTCOL Adam Sparkes, CSM

LTCOL Adam Sparkes currently serves as Liaison Officer to Counter-Terrorism Information Facility (CTIF) Singapore.

By joining the profession of arms, we volunteer to risk all for the security of our nation, whether that be in fields afar, or our own backyards. The Service that we provide demands our preparedness to deploy to the toughest environments – for as long as it takes – often to be witness to the greatest heartbreak and misery that can befall our fellow human beings. For those of us who serve, the tragedy of conflict and disaster are never far from our minds; as we are the first to go, and sometimes the last to leave. We do this in the Spirit of ANZAC, content in the knowledge that we walk in the footsteps of giants when we do our jobs for real. But when that reality hits home - in the quiet times when we are alone with our thoughts – that legend may not be enough for us to reset and steel ourselves for the next challenge. Without self-care, we too can suffer from that to which we bear witness.

There are many ways that a soul can heal following exposure to the horrors of war or catastrophe. Each sailor, soldier and aviator should develop their own strategies that work for them to unload the burden of operations and the hard and tough training that must be done to keep us ready. I myself value time in the gym, as I am in a very select group of soldiers who detest running – and lycra – in all of its forms. For me, throwing ‘pig iron’ around is a fantastic salve to the frustrations and inequities of what military service sometimes entails. It resets me physically and mentally, and the best thing is, when I lift hard – I don’t have to run or ponce about on a bike! But it isn’t enough. Physical and mental care form only two sides of my resilience triangle: spiritual healing is the third. To heal spiritually is the trifecta for me, and I can’t achieve that in the gym. I personally achieve that through my Faith.

Faith is a wonderful thing. It provides comfort in hardship, solace to pain and succour to the world-weary soul. Faith to me is ingrained, and I don’t have to wait for the squat rack to be free to get it. My Faith means that I absolutely trust that Jesus has my back – in whatever situation I find myself in. My relationship with God is very personal, mostly non-traditional, but it works for me. They key is, I have Faith, and I draw upon it whenever I face the hardships that come with my Service.

For some, it may be hard to balance military Service with Christian Faith. After all, we can be formally empowered and then compelled to employ state – sponsored violence – of the very highest order – to achieve the political objectives of our government. So how does a Christian – who believes in the Gospel of Love – reconcile this seemingly irreconcilable tension?

Service, Courage, Respect, Integrity, Excellence

It isn’t hard.

I was really relieved when all corners of the Department of Defence adopted the same values. Such a simple act that delivered so many synergies for us as a team of teams. With these values, I find that I don’t have to do too much thinking to be a Christian and a military officer at the same time. In barracks, I treat everyone the way I want to be treated, regardless of which part of the Department that they serve within, or what rank they wear. We are all human beings, and every one of us brings distinctive talents to our profession. My rank and experience doesn’t make me special – or better

– than anyone else, and I'm alive to that fact. I never waste an opportunity to properly engage with people; to understand what it is that they do and to learn from them. You would be surprised at what this approach can unlock – and it makes the workplace so much more pleasant to be a part of! Very different to the Army that I 'grew up' in, during the late 1990s! To let my rank or position cloud that would be a shame and a wasted opportunity.

When I have been deployed, there have been times that have tested me. Those stories don't belong on these pages, but through the challenges of violence and grief and fatigue and uncertainty, I have always drawn strength and solace from my Faith. My Bible has deployed all around the world with me, and in the quiet times when I am doubting, I actually read it. There has been nothing that has happened to me so far that has been able to shake my Faith, but it has taken personal effort to sustain because sometimes life just isn't fair. But then neither is God. I don't deserve the many blessings that I have received in my life, just as others certainly don't deserve the pain and suffering that unfairly befalls them. But I don't hand those blessings back, I give thanks for them. I then acknowledge the disparity of circumstance and try to exploit my good fortune to improve the journey of others who, usually through no fault of their own, are less fortunate. Sounds like 'soldiering' is the right profession for me! I expect to be challenged again in my life and when that happens, I will not become a victim of circumstance. I will do what I have always done and put effort in to mitigate the effects of violence, grief, fatigue and uncertainty. And the Grace of God will never let me down. It's as simple as that.

'The Little Miracles'

As I have grown older and wiser (?), I have learnt to recognise when God is talking to me. At first, I used to think that coincidences – like thinking of someone a few minutes before they actually rang me; or bumping into an old friend who I hadn't seen for ages who really, really needed my help – were strange incidents that just 'happened.' But they happen a lot to me – and many of them are just too special to be put down to the chance of the universe. Several years ago, I started paying attention and 'listening out' for them. They are 'The Little Miracles' and I believe that they occur when God is guiding me towards some action that He needs me to do.

Now, I am not suggesting that I am an instrument of God or that He gives me any special powers to resolve every situation perfectly. I have buckets of the very real human super-power of being able to stuff something up royally when given half the chance, but I do have confidence that He is walking beside me and guiding my passage through this life when 'The Little Miracles' happen. It's how this article came about actually. Again – one of those strange feelings that I needed to contact someone that I hadn't seen for a long time, who was having the same feelings about contacting me. I keep my senses open to them and feel absolutely blessed when they occur. For me, 'The Little Miracles' are living proof of the existence of God and my very small part in His plan. These 'Little Miracles' sustain and invigorate my Faith.

So What's it all mean?

For me, my spirituality is at least as important as my physical and mental health. Together, all three elements synergise to provide me an armour of resilience that enables me to face any problems and surmount any experience with my good health intact. For the almost 30 years that I have been in uniform, this has worked. My Faith isn't traditional, in that I do not often go to Church or observe the rituals that are central to many denominations. But I do work at it – just like I work when I hit the gym. It isn't a flippant spirituality. I make an effort to strengthen my Faith by adhering to my personal and professional ethics, and really listening for the times that God is speaking to me. This helps me to know that I matter, that my profession matters, and that I have a very small but important part in his plan.

I do hope that some of these words have been useful. They are personal, and certainly not congruent with most people's vision of what being a Christian is all about. This approach works for me though and I intend to keep going on my Faith journey for the rest of my life. I'm looking forward to continuing my walk with God.

I just want to say that if this article misses the mark or offends – it is not intentional. It's just how I see things. If my words are clumsy, please just refer back to my super-power...

Selected Poetry pertaining to Army Chaplaincy

Chaplain Haydn Parsons

Chaplain Haydn Parsons is a Minister with the Churches of Christ, and currently Coordinating Chaplain at Land Combat College Puckapunyal, Victoria. Chaplain Parsons has independently published books on topics such as poetry and Christian reflection.

Poem: 'Recall'

Recall

your once-broken heart.
Bleeding with overwhelming pain
where life's hard lessons oft taught—
Feeling soaked in heavy rain.

Recall

learning to love, faith to find
leaping from your prison cell
leaving your many masks behind—
Drinking deeply from a different well.

Recall

nimble and cumbersome, friends are
breathing new life with generous grace
on their shoulders to reach your star—
Clear the soul's ruins, for open space.

Recall

companions along life's road
present through trials and test
helping the soul find abode—
Refuge for all to rest.

Recall

that moment of falling in love
the One, who captured your heart
let peace arrive, like a dove—
It is your gift to impart.

Poem: 'Call-sign Shepherd.'

The companion to the soldier, a weighty kind-a role;

Call-sign Shepherd
prays for their Troop, out on patrol.
A timely blessing,
a desperate prayer,
protection for today,
this the one called 'padre';
present,
come what may.

Hurried by the chaos, of life's grit and grime,
the Chaplain in the Services, asks God for more time.
Soldiers, sailors, airman; veterans and relatives and-all,
meet the One called Chaplain, the encourager of all.

They're found in the bush-chapel, or a gun-pit, or the
Q-store,
they're the God-botherer, oh the nicknames –so many
more.

In peacetime or war, they are there to console,
those who serve our country, our safety is their goal.

The chaplain to the soldier,
goes about their priestly role,
with the wounded, ill and injured;
for whom life has taken its toll.
Life for the padre is never easy,
The Lord never promised it would be,
this man is grateful to serve,
those who selflessly serve me.

The Spiritual Chaplain: Hopeful Inspiration for a Despairing World from Eugene Peterson

Chaplain Darren Cronshaw

CHAP Cronshaw is a Baptist pastor currently serving at Defence Force School of Signals. He is also a Professor of Practical and Intercultural Theology with Australian College of Ministries (Sydney College of Divinity).

Keywords

Spiritual theology, Eugene Peterson, prayer, Bible reading, spiritual formation

Abstract

Eugene Peterson is a pastor and scholar who writes on contemplative spirituality and pastoral ministry. He wrote a beautifully crafted Spiritual Theology series of 5 books 2005-2010 which I have gleaned wisdom from for pastoral ministry and for Defence chaplaincy. *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (2008) maintains Christ is integrally involved in all of our living and invites us to be attentive to and join in with what Christ is doing in the world. *Eat This Word: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (2009) delightfully invites us to digest thoroughly what God addresses to us in Scripture – reading it on its own terms. *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way* (2007) invites a rereading of the gospels and self-examination of whether we are doing things in Jesus' way, or according to our own or Western culture's agenda of how to get ahead. *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (2008) focuses on the way Jesus artfully used language, and urges being attentive to people where they are at. *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ* (2010) urges embracing life and community non-violently and subversively in a world characterised by death and despair. There are rich wisdom sources and fruitful models for chaplaincy woven throughout the books.

Earthly good?

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. suggested, "Some people are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good." Jonny Cash riffed off this comment with his song lyrics:

"You're shinin' your light, and shine it you should,
But you're so heavenly minded you're no earthly good".¹

This is an appropriate critique of disengaged spirituality. But at its best spirituality is deeply engaged with bringing hope to a despairing world. Moreover, authentic spirituality keeps us motivated and fuelled for that journey. Being heavenly minded – in the sense of having a vision of what God planned and longs for this world – helps us to be of maximum earthly good. What is the foundation of a chaplain's ministry if not this kind of grounded spirituality that longs for a better world for the people we serve yet engages deeply with the realities of the world as it is?

Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998) critiqued what he called a Pilgrim's Progress model of spirituality that retreats from the threat of "the world" seeking to be spiritually nourished. He was also concerned about what he called a Jonah model of going into the world with busy activism, sometimes reluctantly, to boldly take God's message into despairing contexts. Newbigin urged a balanced missional spirituality with what he said was at the heart of Christian faith – the Cross model, meaning inwardly disengaging with radical separation from the world's pressures, while still entering the world with total identification.² Newbigin's Cross model is thus helpful for the spiritual chaplain.

Moreover, for inspiration of a spirituality that offers hope for a despairing world, I have long turned to the writing of Eugene H. Peterson (1932-2018). He was an American Presbyterian pastor-scholar serving for three decades at Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Maryland (1962-1991) and then as James M. Houston Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College in Vancouver (1992-1998). He authored over 30 books, including the Bible paraphrase *The Message* and his memoir, *The Pastor*.³ I was introduced to his writing in theological college in the mid 1990s, and then returned to reading as many of his works as I could find in 2010 when I started ministry at Auburn Baptist Church. I was inspired by Peterson's commitments to geographic stability, depth in teaching, Scripture, people focus and contemplative spirituality.

Eugene Peterson's pastoral theology

Last year I revisited the Pastoral Theology series of four books that Peterson published over a dozen years 1980-1992, and reflections I had journaled in 2010. This formed the basis of "The Contemplative Chaplain: Fit for Purpose Inspiration from Eugene Peterson" in last year's journal.⁴

Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work (1980) reminded me of the richness of Hebrew Scripture for pastoral work – being with people in their ordinary lives and listening to their stories and pain.⁵

Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity (1987) urged me as pastor and chaplain to recalibrate and focus on God and what God is doing through prayer, Scripture and spiritual direction.⁶

The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction (1989) urged stability, which I reframe as stability of focus on Defence as a community, and bringing the gift of "unbusy" non-anxious presence and "subversive" questioning of the status quo.⁷

Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness (1992) is a favourite book of mine on vocation, narrating how Peterson and Jonah navigated crises in their calling to be freshly attentive to God and refocus on people with profound dignity.⁸

Chaplaincy is not congregational focused nor focused only on people of faith. Thus I found Peterson's appeal in his Pastoral Theology series to engage with people in their everyday lives and struggles, and their growth in character and meaning-making, was especially appropriate for chaplaincy. Part of my conclusion was: "That is part of how chaplaincy is uniquely fit for purpose for Defence – not because the religious worldview of chaplains is the same as all our people, but because our pastoral theology is an asset to help bring out the best values-based engagement from all our members."⁹

Eugene Peterson's spiritual theology

This year I am revisiting the follow-up Spiritual Theology series Peterson published over 5 years 2005-2010. My reading is again to glean wisdom for chaplaincy. Among these classics are my favourite books on everyday spirituality and Bible reading and books that offer a profound recalibration for life and ministry around the ways of Jesus:

- *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (2005)
- *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* (2006)
- *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way* (2007)
- *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (2008)
- *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ* (2010).

This article offers reflections on these five volumes, drawing on what I journaled when I first read them, distilling wisdom that was most valuable for pastoring, and offering commentary of the most significant lessons for chaplaincy that I want to sustain.

Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology (2008)¹⁰

Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places is the start of Eugene Peterson's spiritual theology. He describes Spiritual theology as holding together what we know of God with how we live life. It is not just information about God nor anyone's own imagining of God, but an invitation to get involved with what Christ is doing. Peterson maintains Christ is integrally involved in all of our living, and invites us to join in the playfulness, to accept the mystery of what we cannot control, to join in the *perichoresis* or dance of God. This is a rich Trinitarian picture of God as personal and relational and joy-giving, who invites people to enter into God's communal love; "we do not know God by defining him but by being loved by him and loving in return" (p.7).

Peterson is deeply appreciative of rich language and borrows a metaphor from poet Gerard Manley Hopkins about Christ spontaneously and exuberantly expressing himself in all of life:

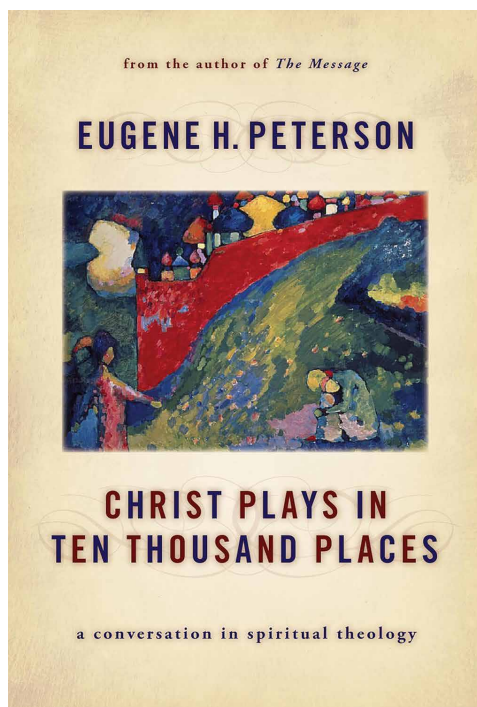
*"... for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces."*

Peterson invites us as readers to celebrate – by virtue of being alive and being baptised – that we can engage with what Christ is doing in the world. Our engagement of Christ's playfulness and agenda is enhanced if we are attentive and open to it.

To begin with, Peterson clears the playing field by defining a biblical view of spirituality. Our era is an era of diverse views of spirituality, and Defence members represent the whole range of perspectives. Peterson, however, asserts a biblical perspective that spirituality is not secretive, not about temperament, and not just empty silence, but about God. This Christian perspective may be shared by people of other faiths. But what the Christian Bible teaches is that God is the God of life – God breathes life into Creation in Genesis, into Jesus at his baptism, and into the church at Pentecost.

Biblical spirituality is about God inviting people to acknowledge God's aliveness and presence and activity. To live life "in the fear of the Lord" is to live responsively to God. This may not be directly relevant to those who do not believe in Jesus, but it is foundationally relevant to how Christian chaplains sustain their spirituality.

Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places is a narrative of how "Christ plays". It invites us to join God in creation (the world where we live), history (everything that happens around us) and community (how we live with others in our neighbourhood). Peterson profoundly invites attentiveness to this "there-ness" of creation, the "here-ness" of history and the "us-ness" of community.



Firstly, God is intimately involved in creation, expressed most fully in the world's creation and Jesus' conception and birth. These narratives of beginnings in Genesis and the gospels earth us in God bringing and sharing life. Our diary weeks reflect this as we enjoy Creation through work and Sabbath. Creation beautifully and generously includes these rhythms of time and this gift of place: "God's great gift of love and purposes for us are all worked out in messes in our kitchens and backyards, in storms and sins, blue skies, the daily work and dreams of our common loves." (p.75) Peterson urges us to be curious to look for what God is up to. Sabbath helps with that by setting aside restful and recuperative time and space. But work helps too when we are attentive. Wonder helps as well.

Secondly, the Bible illustrates how God is interested also in history – names and places, events and stories. God exercises acts of saving in history, through exodus and through Jesus' death. God's people celebrate these events of God acting in history with meals. Similar to how Sabbath and wonder help us cultivate the fear of the Lord in creation, Eucharist and hospitality help cultivate a fear of the Lord in history. Israel deeply felt God had forgotten them in Egypt; psalmists expressed feeling abandoned by God; in the aftermath of the twentieth century we might wonder where God has been; but nevertheless Christ plays in history.

Thirdly, Christ plays in community. I am grateful I do not just to follow Jesus as an individual but in community. Peterson warns against seductions of individualism and narcissism that draw away from community. Prayer helps connect us to the life of Jesus and the life of Jesus' community, which is why Luke unsurprisingly often brings his readers to prayer. Luke also emphasises hospitality and social inclusion as defining characteristics of Christian community.

Peterson inspires me by his integration of pastoral and academic vocation. He draws on academic studies and pastoral dilemmas, his classroom teaching and his outdoors enjoyment of the world's beauty. This is reflected in his language of spiritual theology, "that comes at one time right out of the library and at another from a conversation over coffee in a diner, that on one page is derived from questions raised in a lecture and on another from insights accumulated while kayaking on a river" (p.xii). Peterson's respect for people's vocations, his sensitivity to their pain and struggles, and his encouragement of their prayer and spirits helps bring out my best as a pastor and academic, as a nature-lover and pray-er, and as a chaplain attentive to God and people.

As I reread my journals over a period of years, I realise I have a long history of being prone to not being attentive. I acknowledge I regularly start praying and want to send off emails. I often sit to listen over a coffee but am prone to think about the project I started earlier. I profess a gospel of grace but am drawn to drivenness. I celebrate communion but meditate on competitiveness. I am called to build community but am tempted to give priority to career. I am compromised. Peterson calls me to repent and helpfully points in more healthy directions.

As a chaplain most of the people I support are not Christian nor even religious. Yet my worldview that God is intricately involved in creation, history and community informs how I support people. I am conscious of the wonder of how people are different in what drives them and how they are gifted to make their best contributions to make the world a better place. Moreover, even for those who are not people of faith, most are open to enjoying and learning from nature, are conscious of history, and acknowledge their need for the community of their families and teams.

This is part of why chaplaincy is "fit for purpose" as I alluded to in my reflections on Peterson's Pastoral theology last year.¹¹ It is also part of why chaplains bring and facilitate hope in the midst of despairing situations. Chaplains of Christian faith, or any faith, do not bring hope to ADF members because we share the same religious worldview. Nevertheless, our spiritual theology is an asset that helps bring out the best values-based engagement with the world, history and community of the ADF members we are privileged to serve.

Eat This Word: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading (2009)¹²

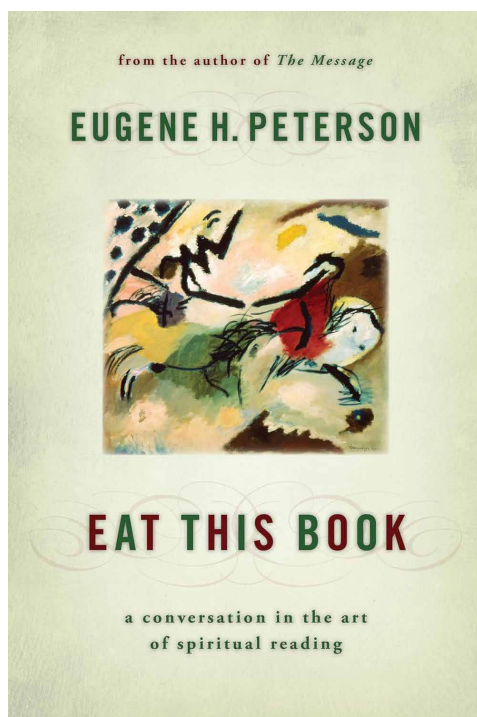
Peterson has a delightful way of elevating the art and craft of biblical leadership and its foundational skills – focusing our eyes on Jesus, celebrating everyday spirituality, listening to people in pastoral conversations, and listening to God in prayer and the Bible. *Eat This Book* invites us to digest thoroughly what God addresses to us in Scripture. The challenge is not merely to mine the Scriptures for nuggets of inspiration or historical information, but to read them on their own terms, and to live them as we read them. As an early Rabbi suggested, we take in the Bible not primarily with our ears but with our feet – that is we learn best by following.

Peterson calls his readers towards a more attentive and awe-inspiring reading of Scripture. He quotes Kafka: “If the book we are reading does not wake us, as with a fist hammering on our skull, why then do we read it? ... A book must be like an ice-axe to break the frozen sea within us.” (p.8) Like a dog at a bone, or like St John was invited to “eat it, eat this book” (Rev 10:9), Peterson invites his readers to engage the Bible with “spiritual reading ... reading that enters our souls as food enters the stomachs, spreads through our blood, and becomes holiness and love and wisdom” (p.4). This discipline is called *lectio divina* or divine reading – reading, meditating, praying and living the text to ultimately hear it as spoken and revealed by God.

One of Peterson’s critiques is of self-referential authority where experience is elevated above Scripture. He challenges what he labels as the new highly personalised Trinity – my Holy wants, my Holy needs and my Holy feelings. Moreover, he elevates exegesis not just as a tool for preaching preparation but as guidance for direction in following Jesus. Exegesis, at its best, loves the speaker of the words enough to commit to get the meaning of the words correct: “nothing more than a careful and loving reading of the text” (p.55). This careful and diligent task can never be replaced by online sermon resources or televised inspiration from Christian superstars.

Peterson also elevates liturgy as a framework for our Bible reading. Liturgy pulls everything in our lives before God and does so with an expansive community of others throughout the world and throughout history. Liturgy draws us into a hermeneutics of adoration – seeing how splendid God. It then sends us out into a life of continued worship – living out our obedience in the light of God as revealed in Scripture.

I was fascinated to read of Peterson’s reflection as the bible translator or paraphraser of the popular Message version. He describes a translator’s task to engage people’s hearts and souls and not just minds: “This is the intended end of true translation, to bring about the kind of understanding that involves the whole person in tears and laughter, heart and soul, in what is written, what is said” (p.125). Peterson said he translated the Bible as one of “God’s secretaries” into a new accessible paraphrased Bible version. Yet translation is also what he had been doing for thirty-five years as



a pastor – helping make the message neighbourhood-specific. The Word should never sound pompous or distant. Peterson's *The Message* was his attempt to show the Bible is best spoken in common speech that we use with friends and children and best read imaginatively and prayerfully.

Hearing the Bible as what God is saying and allowing it to transform our communities is a task that captures my imagination also as a chaplain. I use the Bible with the people I serve less regularly as a chaplain than as a church pastor. Yet Peterson reminds me again that Scripture forms an angle to shape my soul and ministry, so that I can better help others awaken to hope and beauty and meaning in the midst of their work and everyday lives. This is especially needed when people face contexts of despairing and apparently hopeless situations.

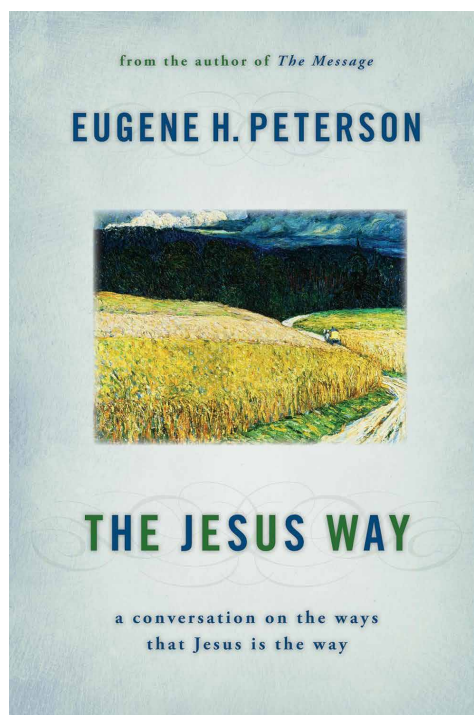
***The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way (2007)*¹³**

The Jesus Way invites readers to a self-examination of discipleship and ministry about whether we are doing things in Jesus' way, or according to our own or Western culture's agenda of how to get ahead. Jesus describes himself in terms of not just being the truth but the way. He points not just where for us to go but how to get there. His way is a local and not just universal, and closely personal rather than impersonal approach with people and with God.

Learning "the Jesus way" comes from reading and engaging the gospels, but also having our imaginations grabbed by the narrative the gospel-writers drew on. Peterson comments:

"If we want to get the full impact of the story of Jesus and the way of Jesus, there is no substitute for taking a long, slow, leisurely pilgrimage through the pages of Genesis to Malachi, getting that river of narrative flowing through our bloodstream, observing the enormous attention given to place and person, so that this story is rooted in the immediate and the local, in named people in our neighbourhood." (p.39)

Typical of Peterson's style, he invites us to indwell Scripture. He narrates the stories of Abraham and his faith, Moses and his way with language, David and his imperfection and vulnerable prayers, Elijah's marginality, and Isaiah of the Exile and beauty all in order to find road-marks for following Jesus. There are danger signs to watch out for too – the political ways of Herod (contrasted with Mary's prayers), the religious ways of Caiaphas (contrasted with praying on the Way with Thomas), and the celebrity ways of Josephus (contrasted with the prayers of the Resurrection Christians). Peterson warns against both consumerism and domination. He bemoans condescending attitudes towards the laity or allowing pride in religious professionals. And he leads us in new directions of praying "Teach us to Pray", "Thy Kingdom Come" and "Lead us Not into Temptation".



The Lord's Prayer is a formative model for a Jesus-shaped spirituality. I have prayed it regularly, taught it through, wrote on it and humbly sought to embody it.¹⁴ One of its sharpest challenges is to be available to cooperate with God to be part of the answer to our prayers. I pray "Give us each day our daily bread" for provision for myself but also for those who lack daily necessities. I expand that prayer not just for food, but also necessarily for basics of clean water, safe neighbourhoods and peace-filled countries. That then informs my actions and work in the world – including my Defence work that I trust contributes not to making war but to ensuring peace and fostering a just world. Reflecting on *The Jesus Way* of doing this significantly shapes the ethics and spirit that I bring to the task as an authentically spiritual chaplain. Like Israel in the midst of competing empires, and like the church in the midst of diverse religious options, as chaplains we may adopt and stay faithful to different ends, ways and means in how we carry out our work.

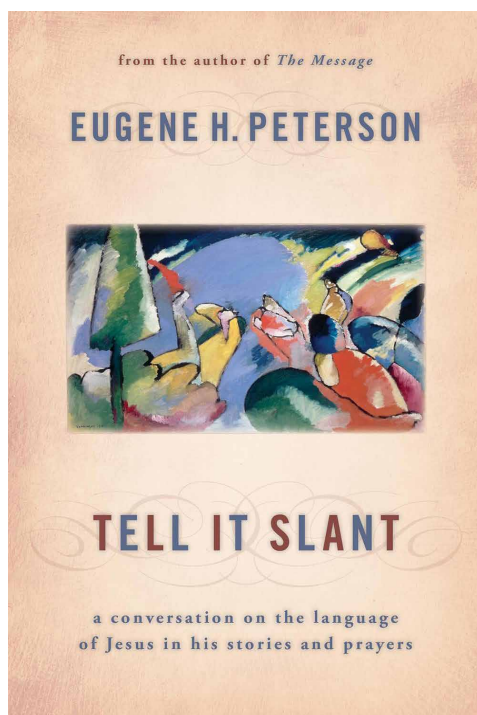
Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers (2008)¹⁵

Tell it Slant focuses on the way Jesus artfully used language – in his parables and prayers.

Luke's Travel Narratives shows Jesus relating and sharing stories over meals and walks, in relaxed and spontaneous incidents "on the way" through Samaria. The travel narrative is a metaphor for how he uses language between Sundays. The Samaritans were indifferent or averse to God-language, at least that used by religious people. They had their own ideas of God and how to run their lives. So Jesus encircles around defences with parables, dismantles their stereotypes, blocks their prejudicial assumptions, comes on slant to then speak the unsuspected word: God. Jesus was attentive to people where they were at, was never impatient to get his message out and depersonalize it with rote phrases without regard for the person. Jesus was not just someone to show up on Sundays to teach us about God and staying away from trouble. Jesus' speaking is thus a metaphor for how uses language with people who have minimal readiness to listen to God's revelation.

It's a model for how chaplains might speak with people in kitchens and boardrooms, over coffee or intense conversations when people are not interested in "God botherers" starting with theological questions. Peterson urges us to be personal and attentive to those we are talking

with and potentially to discern God's voice in conversations not about God and yet – in realizations of grace, in awareness of beauty, in a sense of presence – God is there. The chaplain can thus function as a "spiritual director", a model of ministry some are trained in but all of us can adopt as a mode of listening for what God is saying and noticing where life and hope is emerging even in the midst of despair.



Jesus' language of prayer is similarly accessible as well as subversive. Peterson discusses how Jesus' language rescues our prayers from being bound by the limits of our psyche or culture. Jesus models an authenticity: "Prayer is anaemic if the language dissipates into mist, into a pious fog of sentimentalities thinned out to pious clichés. When we keep company with Jesus in his prayers, that doesn't happen." He also demonstrates faith, without prayer being subject to results: "When we pray we willingly participate in what God is doing, without knowing precisely what God is doing, how God is doing it, or when we will know what is going on – if ever."

Peterson's commentary on Jesus' prayer for unity (John 17) spoke to me of the importance of guarding ecumenical respect among chaplains. We are all interconnected and suffer for each other. Peterson invites us to stay in the room as Jesus prays that we will readily embrace all baptised as sisters and brothers.

My favourite chapter was on Jesus' prayers on the cross. Jesus' first prayer was to ask "why?" – as many of us ask when faced with death or mini-deaths such as dead ends, rejections, snubs, unanswered questions. In asking this question in the face of despair people are in the company of Jesus and typical human experience. Peterson comments:

"One of the surprises that inevitably come to Christians ... is the vast number of people, both living and dead, who experience and cry out their despair at being abandoned, whether by God or spouse or child or friend, asking "Why?" We hear Jesus;' cry of dereliction repeated, echoing down through the corridors of the centuries, ricocheting off the walls of our churches and homes."

Without an answer to "Why?", Jesus keeps praying – for forgiveness for others, for remaining family and friends, to commit his spirit to God.

These and other prayers of Jesus demonstrate what it means to pray "in Jesus' name", not necessarily to be limited by particular words but to catch the spirit and to catalyse accessible and authentic prayer for our contexts: "Jesus' prayers do not contain all prayer. They are acorns from which a praying life grows in us, becoming deep-rooted, heaven-reaching oak trees."

***Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ (2010)*¹⁶**

Practice Resurrection is the concluding volume of Peterson's Spiritual Theology. It focuses on the process and means of Christian formation or growing up into Christ.

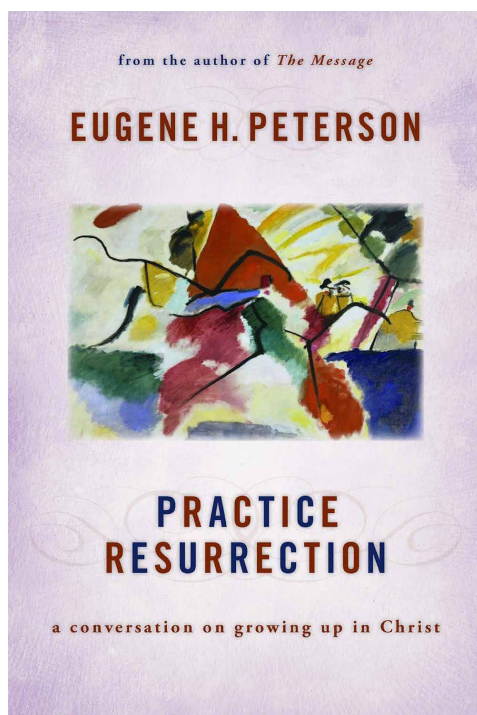
Peterson quotes Wendell Berry twice to underline the nature of growth. Firstly he borrows "practice resurrection" from Berry by which he means to keep company with Jesus and practice a life of resurrection in a world characterised by death – death of nations and relationships, death by murder, accident and war. To practice resurrection is not firstly to attack death but to embrace life non-violently and subversively in the context of death. Death is the ultimate despairing situation, and where hope a Chaplain can bring is most critical.

Secondly, Peterson quotes Berry to focus and prioritise growth on character and not just education in all manner of other topics: "We think it ordinary to spend twelve or sixteen or twenty years of a person's life and many thousands of public dollars on 'education' – and not one dime or a thought on character." Peterson applies this to Christian formation, relevant to those of us chaplains who are Christian and to those we support who adopt Christian faith. But it is a relevant concept also for character training for soldiers – it is not enough to enlist and grow in combat behaviour skills independent of growing also in character.

The volume is inspired by Paul's biblical letter to the Ephesians and emphasises the important role of church in Christian growth. Ephesians offers a vision of what is involved as we "grow up healthy in God, robust in love" (Eph 4:16 *The Message*). Peterson urges embracing the church, warts and all. He acknowledges it may be inadequate and distorted, and has been in bed with consumerism, politics and the military. We have been through the bloodiest and most violent century and the 21st Century is potentially surpassing the last, so it is easy to wonder how the church is going in eliminating what's wrong and making it all right? Nevertheless, Peterson espouses a high view of church for Christians. It is where followers of Jesus learn all-embracing and authentically personal praying over against a secularized or consumerist view of spirituality. Western culture smothers us with celebrities, consumerism and violence to keep us in a state of adolescence – church helps us grow up. Again, this is a theme relevant to Christian chaplains and Christians in ADF who we support – as an appropriate reminder and framing of the importance of participating pro-actively in church community and worship.

This is also a relevant theme that all soldiers need a community and teams to grow in values and meaning. Individualism is a soul-debilitating impediment to growth for people of any faith or none. Community and teams help us relate and grow and become all we can be in relationships as "I and Thou" (drawing on Buber). Peterson warns against getting caught up on ideas and causes, even for justice and peace, and forgetting the dignity of people involved – this is a lesson Christians can learn as they grow in faith through church. But it is also a soft skill that others can learn through community relationships in their household or workplace. I sometimes tell new ADF members a story of a Christian monastic community learning to treat each other as Jesus, along the lines of the Benedictine approach "Receive each guest as Christ himself". All of us can learn the transformative power of respecting the dignity and value of the other – whether colleague or adversary.

Another emphasis of Ephesians that Peterson underlines is the transforming influence of grace and viewing work as our calling for good works: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph 2:8-10 NIV) Grace is powerfully transformative. Like the ocean for a relaxed swimmer, grace holds us up and lets us relax as we progress on our journey. As Peterson articulates it has soul-transforming implications: "a comprehensive, foundational reorientation from living anxiously by my wits and muscle to living effortlessly in the world of God's active presence".



We work and do good works, then, not in an effort to please God or achieve any salvation, but because of the grace-filled calling we've received. Our good works, at their best, are not about we strive to do but what God does in and through us; how we join God in dreaming and doing good. As chaplains we work primarily not for ADF but for God – we are God's work and we do God's work: "He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing." (Eph 2:10, The Message) This applies not just for chaplains wearing a Corps cross, but for all those who identify as Christ followers. For all Christians all our work is participation in God's work. Although, as Peterson would likely believe though did not discuss, this does not mean that we can assume God is on our side and against an adversary. Peterson indicates there is an alarming use of war language everywhere – we fight cancer and fight for freedom, and politicians launch wars on drugs and on poverty, and call for wars for peace. I would have liked to have asked Peterson whether he could see it as valuable to conceptualise the work of soldiers as hopefully synonymous with a peace-making and justice-promoting cause.

Paul also wrote: "I ... beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Eph 4:1). This calling is something for all Christians not just for chaplains or religious professionals. "Good works" is not to be spiritualised as if the only "good work" is church work as Peterson comments. Neither by extension is chaplaincy the only "good work" in Defence. Our vocation or calling is what we are made for. It is not doing more for God but God doing more in and through us. What does this mean for chaplains? What does it mean for soldiers?

Part of our role as Christian chaplains is to help Christian soldiers reflect on what their calling and vocation is, in their soldiering work. But for all Australian diggers – of any faith or none – we may well fruitfully ask together what are "good works" (borrowing from Paul), as well as what is "good soldiering" (borrowing from CDF GEN Angus Campbell)? Peterson thus offers helpful spiritual theology for the art and craft of chaplaincy, but also a vision and framework for growth in character and good works relevant for soldiers who are also Christians, as well as those with another faith or who draw their values from non-theistic foundations. As Peterson warns, we can easily dream up big goals, hit home runs, acquire degrees, make money, win wars – but this can be done without love, compassion and humility – i.e., apart from maturity. It is timely to reflect what is our growth in Christ, and/or in character?

Endnotes

1. Jonny Cash, "No Earthly Good," in *The Rambler*, 1977; both cited in "Got questions", <https://www.gotquestions.org/heavenly-minded-earthly-good.html>
2. Lesslie Newbiggin, *The Good Shepherd: Meditations on Christian Ministry in Today's World* (London: Mowbray, 1977), 96-99; discussed previously in Darren Cronshaw, "Editorial – Mission and Spirituality," *Australian Journal of Mission Studies* 2, no. 2 (2008): 1-3; Darren Cronshaw, *Dangerous Prayer: Discovering a Missional Spirituality in the Lord's Prayer* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2017), 14.
3. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002); *The Pastor: A Memoir* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011).
4. Darren Cronshaw, 'The Contemplative Chaplain: Fit for Purpose Inspiration from Eugene Peterson', *Australian Army Chaplaincy Journal* (2023), 85-96.
5. Eugene H Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1992 [previously John Knox 1980])
6. Eugene H Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1993; previously 1987)
7. Eugene H Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1993; previously The Leadership Library, vol. 17. Christianity Today/Word, 1989)
8. Eugene H Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1992)
9. Cronshaw, "Contemplative Chaplain", 94.
10. Eugene H Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*, Book 1 in the Spiritual Theology series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 2008); drawing on and utilising review originally published in John Mark Ministries website (Sep 16, 2010), <https://www.jmm.org.au/articles/24945.htm>; and Evangelical Alliance, *Faith and Life* (November 2010).
11. Cronshaw, "The Contemplative Chaplain", 94.
12. Eugene H Peterson, *Eat This Word: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*, Book 2 in the Spiritual Theology series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 2009); drawing on and utilising review published in *The Witness: The Voice of Victorian Baptists* (June 2010) and Evangelical Alliance, *Faith and Life*.
13. Eugene H Peterson, *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways That Jesus Is the Way*, Book 3 in the Spiritual Theology series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 2007)
14. Expanded on in Cronshaw, *Dangerous Prayer*.
15. Eugene H Peterson, *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers*, Book 4 in the Spiritual Theology series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 2008)
16. Eugene H Peterson, *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ*, Book 5 in the Spiritual Theology series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 2010)

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Book Review: Darkest Before Dawn: Australian Veterans Accounts of Moral Injury

Author: Nikki Jamieson

Canberra: Amazon Books Australia, 2023.

ISBN-13: 978-1962464482

142 pages

Reviewed by Dr. Melissa Bakhurst and Chaplain Lindsay B. Carey

Directorate of Spiritual Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health and Wellbeing Branch, Canberra, Australia.

Dr Nikki Jamieson's *"Darkest before Dawn: Australian Veterans' Accounts of Moral Injury"* seeks to give a voice to veterans whose experiences in the Australian Defence Force became a far cry from the meaningful career for which they had hoped.

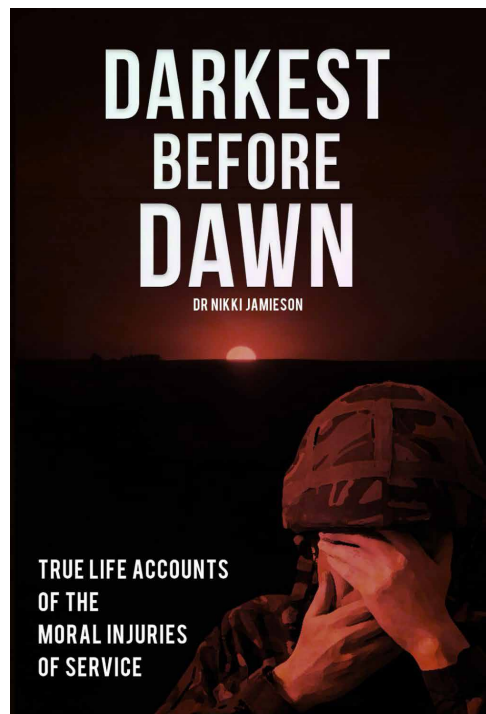
Jamieson's text was initially presented on the 22nd February 2024 at a private gathering of the Commissioners tasked with the Royal Commission into Veteran and Defence Suicide. This was the same day as the unveiling of Alex Sexton's sculpture — *"For every drop shed in anguish"* — which is on display in the Sculptor Garden at the Australian War Memorial to recognise and commemorate the suffering caused by war and military service.

It is highly admirable that, subsequently, the former Assistant Minister for Veteran's Affairs, the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP, spoke at the book launch of Jamieson's text at Australian Parliament House on the 16th May 2024. He commended Jamieson's book to a much wider audience.

Moral Injury

Jamieson's 14-chapter book begins with the story of her son, Daniel, whose alleged mistreatment in the military ended in his death by suicide. Jamieson felt powerless to help Daniel or to intervene in a rigid and hierarchical military process – though she repeatedly did try. Daniel's story thus sets the scene for the book and provides an introductory understanding of what 'moral injury' is at its core: when our lived reality is misaligned with our identity, morals, values, and expectations.

The definition of moral injury is a keenly debated topic, with many experts in the field providing slightly different appraisals (see for example the definitional review by Hodgson & Carey, 2017 or Griffin et al, 2019; ADF, 2021). Jamieson believes moral injury as the outcome when we "do not have the authority



or the tools to act in alignment with [our] moral values” (p.23). In other words, when what we believe does not actually align with what we do (or don't do) and consequently our value system is violated, then behaviours such as anger, withdrawal, shame, and tragically, suicidality, are the result.

Jamieson presents perhaps one of the best explanations of the difference between moral injury and posttraumatic stress. While posttraumatic stress is related to fear and anxiety over what might happen in the future, moral injury relates to our current sense of identity and how this has changed following a morally injurious event. She suggests that moral injury may be the missing link when treatments for PTSD are ineffective.

Lived experience narratives

The lived experience narratives in the book come from interviews conducted with ex-serving ADF members completed as part of Jamieson's doctoral research. The book weaves effortlessly between the voices of veterans and Jamieson's explanations of military life and the systems and processes that often contribute to feelings of helplessness, moral injury and suicidal distress. The initial stories speak to less extreme circumstances, but those which nonetheless can have a sizeable impact on one's sense of identity, often with catastrophic consequences. For example, Shannon was a career soldier who had only ever known life in the military. His medical discharge and the subsequent loss of identity and community led to his death by suicide less than a year later. The importance of community is a repeated theme throughout the book, and Jamieson reiterates the role of relationships in both the prevention and recovery from moral injury.

Subsequent stories become more distressing, and readers are cautioned to protect their own mental health and to seek help if needed. There are stories of bullying, sexual trauma, and orders that go against basic human intuition. The story of Sally is particularly distressing as she is raped and in her pleas for him to stop, still addresses him as “Sir”. She is later discharged upon reporting the assault, and her senior officer protects the perpetrator from career-limiting sanctions. Similarly, James's story of being forced to conduct weapons drills with an injured hand, causing permanent and irreparable damage that resulted in a prescription pill addiction, alcoholism, and his inevitable medical discharge.

Jamieson's account is scathing in parts, of both the role and systems of the Australian Department of Defence and the Department of Veteran Affairs in contributing (or failing to prevent) moral injury and suicides in the ADF community. She describes “...a system that perpetuated an unconscionable level of incompetence, ill-preparedness, and obfuscation” (p. 80).

Moral Injury Recovery

The focus on recovery from moral injury commences at Chapter 10, in particular the process of validation, acceptance, and reconciliation. Again, Jamieson emphasises the importance of connection and community, particularly with others who share similar experiences, language and understanding. Jamieson is quick to state that acceptance and reconciliation do not always equate to healing; like many mental health syndromes, moral injury may be something you learn to live with and manage, rather than something from which you heal. Recovery instead pertains to rediscovering purpose, growth, transformation, and moving forward with life, rather than allowing the past to consume you. Given the complexity of MI, a multidisciplinary holistic approach is best, utilising a bio-psycho-social-spiritual paradigm and the combined effort of medical, allied health and chaplaincy professions.

Those who shared their stories continue their service now by helping others to walk forward through their experiences. Jamieson includes herself in this sentiment, stating that while this book has been extremely personal and taken a large mental toll, it provided her with purpose following the death of her son and drove her to enhance knowledge and awareness in this space.

One criticism to note is that while the book alludes to the path forward from moral injury and on the prevention of moral injury, few details are provided. Evidently this work is yet to be done, and Jamieson rightly calls for more support and research into moral injury. However, she states, “we then explored how so many individuals, our everyday heroes, have taken their experiences and turned them into something extraordinary” (p. 118), yet only very briefly at the end of the book do we hear about those who shared their stories moving forward with their lives. More focus here might be warranted, particularly for those who might be struggling themselves and in need of hope and motivation to keep going.

Future Considerations

Clearly this first text by Jamieson sets the stage for a second book by Jamieson to further address the above issues. Given the increasing recognition of the link between moral injury and suicide (Bryan et al., 2018; Jamieson et al 2023; Kahn et al, 2023; Schafer, et al, 2024) and the fact that the ADF has now commenced to address moral injury through its chaplaincy ‘moral injury skills training’ (MIST; see Hodgson & Carey, 2024; Carey et al, 2023), we very much look forward to a second text by Jamieson exploring the longer term outcomes of those she has interviewed and the resources they have engaged to assist with their moral injury.

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Book Review: The Wounds of Jesus A Meditation on the Crucified Saviour

Author: Canon Dr. Christina Baxter
Canberra: Amazon Books Australia, 2023.
ISBN-13: 978-1962464482
142 pages

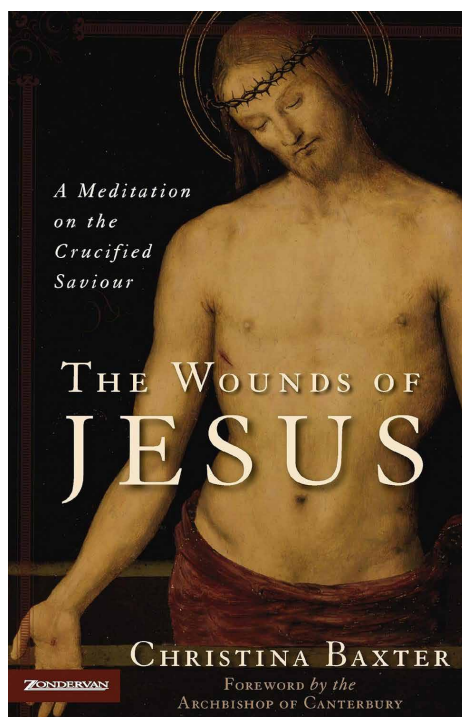
Reviewed by Chaplain Akhil Gardner

Chaplain Akhil Gardner is a Minister of the Anglican Church of Australia and serves as a full time Army Chaplain. He is currently posted to the ADF School of Health as Support Chaplain.

In the long-standing traditions of contemplative, mystical and evangelical Christian spiritual writings and reflections on the suffering of Christ, Canon Dr. Christina Baxter presents a contemporary offering of meditations on the wounds of Jesus. Dr Baxter is a British theologian and an active member of the Church of England. Her work and ministry in Anglican – Catholic dialogue, as well as research papers into Anglican Catholicity and Evangelical Unity come through in this writing as well, combining the best of multiple theological traditions in work that is easy-to-read, personal, has depth, pastoral insight and application. This is a book suited to the home, the church, the academy or the barracks. Of particular interest to our readership and context is the use of substitution and exemplars in narratives of redemptive suffering and its direct application to enduring hardship, loss, pain and suffering while making meaning and maintaining hope.

Baxter wants her readers not to merely reflect on the narrative of Christ's suffering from afar but to enter into the narrative so as both to "deepen our understanding of the meaning of His suffering and the cross" (p.11) and "to explore what it might mean for us to live lives which are also marked by the cross" (p.17). Baxter affirms that theological or spiritual wisdom and insight, though valid on their own, see their true flourishing when assimilated and practised by the individual and community. The unique contribution in this writing is the detail in which Baxter treats the wounding of each individual part of Christ's suffering body – Back, Feet, Hands, Side, Head, Heart – and how this applies to spiritual encouragement of the reader – particularly in the face of their own suffering or adversity.

Each chapter follows a clearly outlined structure – meditation on each body-part and what it represents, the wounding received, relation to major episodes or themes of Jesus's life, implications for the community of faith, personal implications, conclusion and group or individual questions.



Amidst the part-by-part, wound-by-wound reflections, key themes and assertions emerge that are of relevance to our particular readership and context.

Key Themes

Helplessness, Help and Christ as Suffering-Substitute

One of the recurrent ideas explored is that the Christian message is first not one of imitation or inspiration but one of substitution. It is not that entering into a grand-narrative of the suffering of another somehow purely and only enables one to likewise suffer within a grand-framework of higher meaning and purpose, but firstly, our helplessness is met by Divine help. “Standing by the cross is immensely hard work. When we suffer we prefer to do something about it, which is why it is so hard to accompany the suffering of the long-term sick or dying as we feel utterly helpless. But feeling utterly helpless is exactly where we need to be when we stand by the cross of Jesus.... On the cross Jesus does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.” (pp.19-20). Baxter states that meditating on the wounds of Christ is “not a kind of voyeurism, nor is it wanton wallowing in suffering. It is a realistic attempt to understand the extent of Jesus’s love for us as he has substituted himself and acted on our behalf” (p.48).

Vulnerability and Exemplar

Much of the content returns to the wrestle themes of “the self-limiting of God”, of power and knowledge in the incarnation of Christ, giving the reader much to consider about the humanity of Christ while holding-fast the divinity of Christ. Baxter does not reject Christ as an inspiration or exemplar in suffering, but rather affirms the idea, though as logically subsequent to Christ as substitute. It is in reflecting on Christ’s physical back that Baxter draws the reader in to notice that “in his vulnerability, Jesus offered his disciples the chance to be disciples – to see how to discern the will of the Father, how to pray honestly, how to endure suffering, how to encourage others while facing the gravest trial yourself” (p.25) Baxter expands on this theme:

“Christ’s silent, innocent suffering can release us from the spiral of violence which renders evil for evil, since we can be so inspired by what he has done that we seek the help of the same God who strengthened him. But example by itself does not always mean that people can imitate what they see ... In Jesus we now have a human example of how to live in God’s way, and this example blazes the trail for us and makes it possible for us, the weak climbers, also to walk in this way. In the case of Jesus, our trailblazer also reaches his hand down to help us up the most challenging slopes” (pp.82-83).

Redemptive vs. Exploitative Suffering

“Christ’s suffering, is for the sake of the Gospel. It is not the suffering of a victim who is subject to repeated illegal or immoral acts on the part of those who wickedly use their power over the weaker party” (p.216). Some readers might argue the case that Christ’s suffering is exactly that – the just suffering criminal injustice at the hands of the powerful, However, Baxter reminds us that in the bigger picture of God’s plan rolling out – good would ultimately triumph over evil, and that God was very much in-charge of rolling out this redemptive plan even in the midst of Christ’s suffering – even through Christ’s suffering.

Socio-Ethical Implications

Not neglecting the ethical implications of Christ’s redemptive suffering, Baxter skilfully draws the application that it is the powerful who are responsible to endure suffering in order to protect and raise up the weak – and to see in the story and acts of Christ, this is essentially what God has done. “The

death of Jesus cannot and should not be used as a warrant for all kinds of suffering. The fact that he protested at injustice against the weak demonstrates that he does not call the weak to suffer more injustice, but rather calls the strong to suffer in order to protect the weak” (p.216).

Relevance to Defence Chaplaincy

There has been in our context an unstated maxim or assumption that religion is tolerated, maybe even encouraged because ‘access to God’ or religious/spiritual belief enables members of a military to do hard things. To a very large extent the second part of that assumption about religious or spiritual belief enabling endurance and hope in the face of hardship and suffering is true. With quite triumphal language, Baxter neatly sums up this sentiment while offering suggestions for us, as both recipients and practitioners, as to why this might be the case:

“One of the consequences of which we become aware as we contemplate these things is that Christ’s victory is the banner under which we march or the shield under which we shelter. Whatever is hurled at us in the fight against evil, Christ is above us to protect us, even when we fall or die. It really is the case that those who are marked with the sign of the cross, and who trust in Jesus’s death and resurrection as their protection, are awaiting the final victory which they know is his, even while they are in the thick of ‘mopping-up operations” (pp.185-186).

Within the Christian framework, Baxter sums up that the disciples of Christ who witnessed his wounds, his suffering, his death and resurrection:

“were ready for persecution and death because they now knew that death was not the end and was therefore not to be feared. Jesus’s resurrection had shown them that they too could hope for resurrection from the dead. They no longer feared those who could harm the body, since they knew that Jesus had secured their eternal salvation. His wounds for them, now glorified in resurrection and ascension, strengthened them in the face of situations which brought them similar wounds”.

Defence personnel understand and know the feelings of helplessness and being overwhelmed in the face of evil, they understand and know what it is to look at the back of someone else and follow them into sheer terror, they know what it means to confront evil and endure suffering in the process – because it is the right thing to do, and that the desired of confronting evil is righteousness and peace. Warriors know what it is to need, want and have a Hero – an inspiration and an exemplar, to emulate in the face of hardship. Soldiers themselves might be in the unenviable position of being a substitute even unto death – suffering evil in order to protect those who ought not to, should not or cannot. Baxter’s book picks up and develops these real-world themes – inviting the reader to be immersed, either by curiosity or by faith, in the life, wounds, suffering, death and Resurrection of Christ. These themes and ideas find resonance in popular and clinical psychological frameworks such as Viktor Frankel’s “Logotherapy” and Richard Tedeschi’s articulation of “Post-Traumatic Growth”, and reading on those two topics make good reading companions alongside Baxter’s “The Wounds of Jesus”.

Book Review: Chaplains Ministers of Hope

Author: Alan Hilliard
Messenger Publications
ISBN: 978-1788125109
160 pages

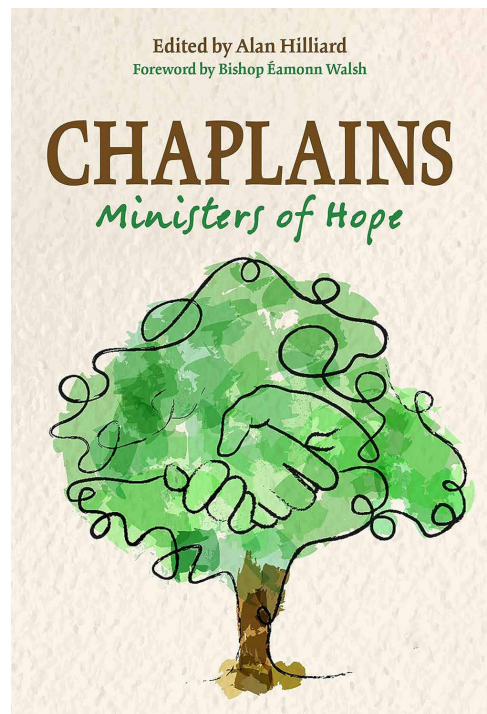
Reviewed by Chaplain Matthew Stuart

Chaplain Matthew Stuart is a Minister with the Uniting Church in Australia and serving as a full time Army Chaplain. He is currently posted as the Coordinating Chaplain for the 3rd Armoured Amphibious Brigade.

Since becoming a coordinating chaplain, a common conversation with others who are reaching 8-12 years of ministry as an ADF chaplain revolves around similar questions we are asking: am I being effective, am I making an impact? I have been wrestling with these very questions myself since moving from unit chaplaincy into coordinating chaplaincy. I enjoy reading and learning from the experiences of others and yet I often struggle with books from chaplains that are simply about positivity and mass conversions seen as the ultimate testament to successful evangelism. In contrast, I welcomed the more down-to-earth and honest portrayal of the opportunities and challenges of being fit for purpose in the book *Chaplains: Ministers of Hope*.

A rather unassuming book at only 180 pages with a soft beige cover and a characterised image of a tree containing hands clasping on the front, *Chaplains: Ministers of Hope* is an anthology edited by Alan Hilliard split into three parts. Produced as a tribute to Fr Gerry Byrne, one of Ireland's longest-serving chaplains, this is a book that not only invites readers into the often unseen ministry of chaplains, but also offers scholarly reflections on the theological, ecclesiological and scriptural development of modern chaplaincy around the world. Alan Hilliard is joined by twenty-one other Catholic contributors, ordained and lay, who explore the practice and shared dedication of chaplaincy in schools, hospitals, universities and the military.

The first part of the book is a testament to the ministry of Fr Gerry Byrne, who suffered with MS for the entire thirty-four years that he served as the chaplain at Blackrock Clinic. This part has two contributions, one from a family member of a clinic patient and the second from a consultant. Both speak to the enduring ministry presence of Fr Gerry Byrne. What I appreciated here is that the



contributions, though short, were filled with deep appreciation for the consistent faithful presence of a chaplain who shared the journey with so many.

The second part is made up of a selection of academic essays, from historical development to theological reflections, exploring some of the issues facing chaplaincy in modern environments. These six pieces are written in a very accessible and relevant manner that touches upon issues shared across institutions where chaplains are present. The theological and scriptural reflections are unapologetically Catholic and I felt that this made them richer. I found the style of writing was incredibly invitational and, as a minister from a different denomination, I never felt awkward but, instead, encouraged to do my own wrestling from my denominational perspective.

The final part of the book is a collection of first-hand experiences from thirteen different settings that chaplains are present to. The depth of commitment among the chaplains demonstrates the dedication to serve out of the boundless grace of God and the importance of chaplains being grounded in their own faith in a disciplined and honest way. Of particular interest for ADF chaplains would be Eoin Thynne's contribution of chaplaincy within the military. A Monsignor who served 25 years as an Army chaplain and concluded his time as the Head Chaplain to the Defence Force in Ireland, his brief contribution captures the breadth of ministry and the impact it leaves upon our chaplains. He comments insightfully: "A unique factor, and one that military personnel have in common, is that they tend to look upon things in the same way. They are recruited, educated and trained in the same tradition. The chaplain, however, looks upon things from another angle." (pp. 125-126) As chaplains our presence within the system is not only of one in the uniform but of also creating opportunities for people to share their stories and to know they are heard.

I can imagine that, for some, there will be a frustration with this book as it does not offer a specific model of chaplaincy, nor does it delve into how chaplains can convert people to Christianity or any other faith, for that matter. For me this is an aspect that I actually found encouraging and refreshing. Through it all there was a resounding echo of the importance of a chaplain to be firm in their personal faith and strong in their spiritual disciplines, in order to be able to care fully for all the people they encounter. It does not shy away from the range of challenges that the different communities in Ireland have been facing and the hardship that chaplains have had standing in those spaces with people.

This offering from Fr Gerry Byrne's denominational acquaintances and peers is one that I would hope chaplains of other denominations and faiths would find inviting. It is helpful to not only hear the depth of commitment from our Catholic peers but to also feel encouraged to explore our commitment to this role.

In the encouragement of reading this book *Chaplains: Ministers of Hope* I certainly have found a sense of hope in my own questioning around whether my presence is actually providing a light of hope for people. I am thankful for the reflections and thoughts around the grace of other chaplains who are standing in these challenging and dark times - sitting with grieving families, listening to teenagers and young adults wrestling with the world, or walking along with the six young soldiers cradling the coffin of their friend, their mate, their family to the aircraft. Alan Hilliard concludes the book with the observation that those who do this "take on a mantle, not of authority, but of service, in a role known to us as 'chaplain'".

This little unassuming book is a testament to the real and lasting hope that this role brings in daily engagement, and is one that I will be holding on to and recommending for any chaplain, or future chaplain, to read.

Book Review: Resilient Restoring your Weary Soul in these Turbulent Times

Author: John Eldredge
Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2022
ISBN 1400237823
256 pages

Reviewed by Chaplain Darren Cronshaw

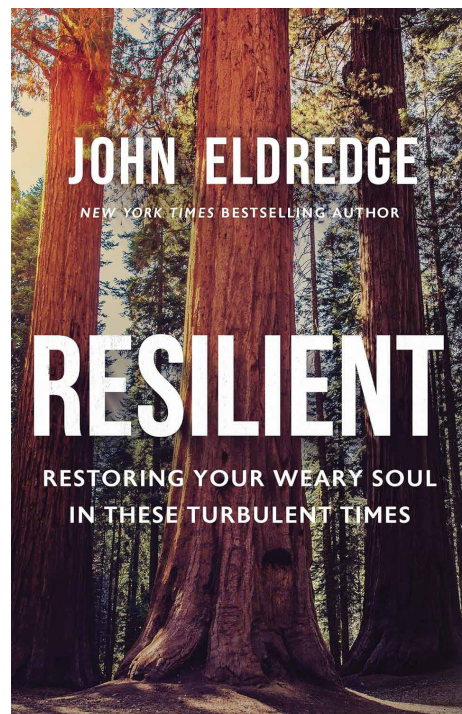
Chaplain Darren Cronshaw is a Baptist pastor currently serving at Defence Force School of Signals. He is also a Professor of Practical and Intercultural Theology with Australian College of Ministries (Sydney College of Divinity).

I am fascinated by why and how some people can overcome overwhelmingly difficult circumstances and find hope through despair. Some people draw on the strength of social supports, others on peak physical fitness, and some have amazing mental strength. At our best the resilience that guards us in tough times is a strong combination of all factors, as books such as *The Resilience Shield* explains. Another important resource for some is faith or spirituality – which is why I was attracted to John Eldredge's book *Resilient*.

John Eldredge is an American Christian counsellor and author of over a dozen books, best known for his book *Wild at Heart*. He writes from a Christian perspective on why we desperately need to focus on recovery from past trauma and build reserves of resilience for challenges of the future. The book is thus of particular interest to Christian readers. Yet Eldredge points to practices and principles that are accessible to anyone. Moreover, his words might suggest to readers of other living faiths (or none) how they can draw on both their own inner spiritual resources and that which they see as bigger than themselves.

The book discusses how COVID-related stressors remind us we need all the help we can get for resilience. We had already seen challenges to resilience levels from society's addiction to technology, media consumption, social media and other exhaustions of modern life. But COVID-19 brought isolation, grief, anxiety and other vulnerabilities to record levels. We've seen toilet paper stampedes and mental health support waiting lists grow. Populations resorted to renovation projects when locked-down and then holidays in record numbers.

There has been a "Great Resignation" as people quit jobs and church attendance fell dramatically. We have not actually seen the end of COVID's after-effects either – as with any trauma the aftermath is most concerning.



Eldredge urges taking time to recover from the uncertainties of recent times and building resilience for the future. He says we need the Churchillian grit to “Never surrender; never give up!” but with more developed strategies than turning to a bottle of wine and munchies with a Netflix binge. Eldredge counsels (re)building resilience through engaging with beauty, nature, walks, play, stillness, positive self-talk, forgiveness, simplicity, being off-line and at times limiting giving out. As well as the physical world he urges also being comfortable in the spiritual world and tapping into resources of God through prayer and worship, and connecting with the depths of love, joy and hope. Eldredge offers other resources along these themes in another book *Get Your Life Back: Everyday Practices for a World Gone Mad* and in his “30 Days to Resilient” experience, accessible on the free App “One Minute Pause” < <https://www.pauseapp.com/>>.

The metaphor for resilience he uses is a camel which has amazing resilience, but its Achilles heel is that it can collapse without warning. We may have high levels of resilience but even then can reach a tipping point: “We tap into our deep reserves to ensure endure years of suffering and deprivation. Then one day our heart simply says, I don’t care anymore; I’m done. We abandon the fight and go off to find relief. I fear this is what’s happening now on a global scale.” The lesson is to keep our reserves maintained rather than reaching a point of pushing on too long until nothing is left and we collapse in discouragement or blankness of soul. This is why we need margin to allow our souls to breath and space for recovery and resilience – which was part of the gift of Sabbath from Judaism and Christianity, but available for all of us:

*“Walk away from a whole lot of what is draining you.
I beg of you – practice benevolent detachment.
We do need to provide for periods in the rhythm of our week, month, and year where we are intentionally operating below our capacity to replenish reserves. It doesn’t have to be limited to your vacation time. It’s something you can build into the rhythm of your life. Which evenings each week are blocked out in your calendar? You should block several out: no activity, no nothin’. Turn your phone off, and let your soul; simply rest.... We need margin to replenish, margin that is so protected it is sacred margin – untouchable, non-negotiable.”*

Eldredge’s advice that we build reserves by ensuring more is coming out in than going out resonates with something I heard a Commanding Officer tell their Command team – they said they wanted the unit’s wings to be operating at 80% effort for the next quarter of a year. The rationale was that there was an anticipated surge coming that would require a greater effort and adaptability, and the unit needed to be ready to tackle that with their reserves full up and not depleted.

To check in with ourselves and our teams, Eldredge suggests coaching questions:

- How is your operating strength and if you normally function at 100%, what are you at now?
- What sort of reserves do you have available?
- If we experienced another pandemic or other unexpected challenge, what is your capacity for endurance?

A highlight of the book is its stories of survival situations bringing out our best such as the climbers of Mount Hood who urged each other “Put away the pain and hold on”; or bringing out our worst such as shown by the Pacific Ocean crashed B-24 crew member who hogged the leftover food for himself from fear of not having enough. Crash survivors, mountain climbers or endurance athletes can get tired and dehydrated and have their physical and mental abilities eroded. But the same can happen to any of us in work and relationships – thus the critical need for guarding our resilience levels.

Resilient is relevant particularly for people of Christian or other faiths, but offering inspiration and valuable skills for anyone who wants to guard and rebuild resilience in themselves and their teams.

Book Review: A Brilliant Life My Mother's Inspiring Story of Surviving the Holocaust

Author: Rachelle Unreich
Sydney: Hachette Australia, 2000
ISBN 9780733650178
336 pages

Reviewed by Chaplain Andrew Downes

Andrew Downes is a full time Army Chaplain serving at 1 Armoured Regiment, Edinburgh, SA. Prior to joining Defence he served for 26 years as the Senior Pastor of the Aldinga Bay Baptist Church, Aldinga Beach, SA.

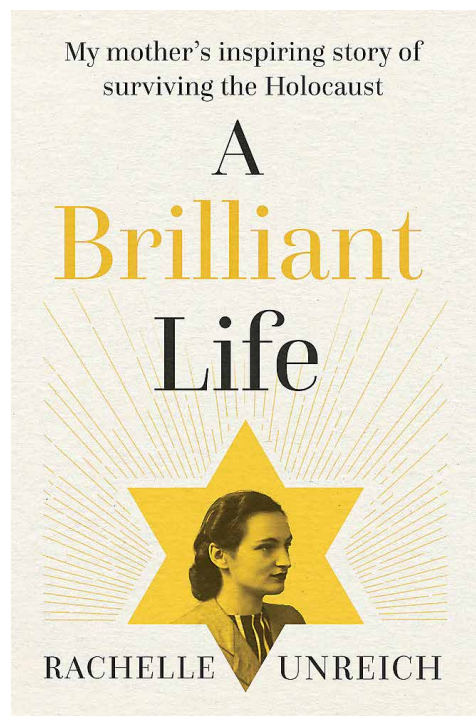
The reading of history reminds us there is a darkness to the human soul. People can be capable of unimaginable cruelty. People like Mira Unreich knew this firsthand. Although Mira also knew something else, the power of kindness.

A Brilliant Life – My mother's inspiring story of surviving the Holocaust is a well-written biography. Rachelle Unreich, an Australian journalist, interviews her 89-year-old mother in the last six months of her life. Mira is dying of cancer. Rachelle writes, "It is my last chance to learn some of the details of her life, which has known both beauty and brutality. But more importantly, it is an opportunity to discover the origins of her deep belief. I am curious about the unwavering steadiness of her faith."¹

It was these words that first drew me to this book. After reading the article I found myself asking; how does someone who endured the horrors of the Holocaust, complete with the brutal death of her parents, siblings, and her own dehumanising experiences, bounce back to live a flourishing life? It seems an important question for all of us.

Mira grew up in Poland. She was the youngest of

five children. Home was one where family and faith were central. She had a deep respect for her parents and life was happy. Then came WWII. By September 1941 the atmosphere had growing darker. For Jews, movements were restricted, property seized, bank accounts frozen and cars were confiscated. In time, the SS came across Mira and her family. On the night of their arrest Mira's father was murdered and in the following weeks, her mother too. The subsequent months would leave Mira as a witness to hangings, shootings and rape. Her own experience was one of humiliation, starvation and constant fear.



A Brilliant life covers many stories of the desperation and cruelty experienced during these years. Perhaps there are no surprises that a book such as this would do so. What is insightful are the beams of light that pierce the darkness. Amidst the cruelty, there was kindness. This is clearly captured in the following quote from the book.

“Half a century after the Holocaust, Mira gave her first video testimony about what had occurred so that her account could be catalogued and kept forever...”

At the end the interviewer asked one final question ‘What do you think was the main thing that saved you?’

Mira did not have to think twice about her answer. ‘The goodness of people... In the Holocaust, I learnt about the goodness of people.’ It was the one thing she held aloft, intact. Rather than zeroing in on the people that had tried to destroy her, she focused on those who had helped her, and there were many, Jewish and non-Jewish alike” (pp. 187, 188).

As I read this book I found that I wasn't aligned with all aspects of Mira's thinking. At times she has a tendency to be quite mystical. Nonetheless, I greatly enjoyed reading it. I believe it can be helpful for a number of reasons. Here are a few. It is an important reminder of the horrors that can unfold when evil triumphs, even in a civilised world. The strength forged through the bond of family. And, the possibility of a beautiful future in spite of the pain of the past.

A Brilliant Life is a worthwhile read.

End Note

1. *Weekend Australian Magazine* (Oct 21, 2023).

Book Review: Man's Search for Meaning

The classic tribute to hope from the Holocaust

Author: Viktor E. Frankl
Rider, London, 2008
ISBN-10: 9781846041242
160 pages

Reviewed by Chaplain Andrew Robinson

Chaplain Andrew Robinson has been an Australian Army Chaplain since 2002. His recent postings include Chief Instructor, Defence Force Chaplains' College and Deputy Command Chaplain, Headquarters Forces Command.

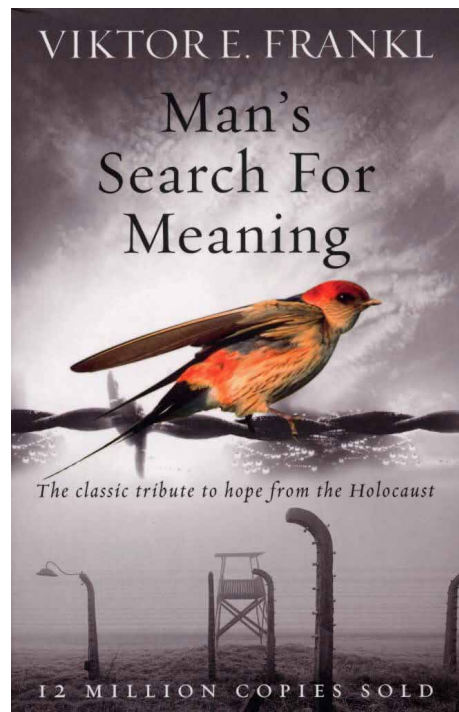
It is a nightmare scenario: imagine being arrested by the authorities and sent to a concentration camp for no crime except being a member of your faith group. There, you are confronted with the realities of suffering and death on a daily basis. You desperately want to survive the experience, but how? What is the key? Over weeks and months it becomes clear that it is not what many imagine: physical endurance alone is not enough. Instead, survivors – although diverse in many ways – all share this common trait: each possesses a strong why or reason to live. This is the terrible, life-threatening – but confirmatory – experience described by Viktor Frankl in his little book entitled *Man's search for meaning*.

Publication details and structure

First published in German in 1946, Frankl's book has been translated into 22 languages and sold more than 12 million copies. It is divided into two parts, "Experiences in a concentration camp" (pp.15-100) and "Logotherapy in a nutshell" (pp. 101-136). The book also contains two prefaces (pp. 7-10), one from 2004 (written by Rabbi Harold Kushner, the author of "When bad things happen to good people") and another – authored by Frankl himself – in 1992. Finally, there is a postscript (written in 1984) which is a further treatment of Logotherapy (pp. 139-154).

Logotherapy – a third school of psychoanalysis

Prior to his arrest, Frankl practiced psychiatry in Vienna. Despite training and working in that city – Sigmund Freud's city of origin – he was not a Freudian. Instead, he rejected the famous psychoanalyst's idea that people are basically driven by desire (p.104). Nor did Frankl agree with Alfred Adler who (in his assessment) argued we are primarily motivated by a longing for power (ibid). Instead, he adopted a third perspective: that meaning (or meaning-making) is each person's most fundamental need (pp. 104-105).



Logos is a Koine Greek term with which readers may be familiar. It appears 15 times in the New Testament of the Bible, including – perhaps most famously – in the first verse of John’s Gospel. Frankl translates this word as “meaning” (p.104) and explains that his approach, Logotherapy, proceeds on the basis that “striving to find a meaning in one’s life is... [our] primary motivational force” (ibid). Consequently, in therapeutic sessions, “The patient is actually confronted with and reoriented toward the meaning of his [sic] life. And to make him aware of this meaning can contribute much to his ability to overcome his neurosis” (ibid).

Applying Frankl’s insights

Frankl not only applied his insights into meaning and its importance in his work as a psychiatrist; he also drew upon it personally to survive his long years in concentration camps. Prior to his arrest, Frankl already found himself agreeing with Nietzsche that those who have “a Why to live for can bear almost any How” (pp. 7-8). In the camps, however, Frankl had this view strongly confirmed (p.84). What application, then, is there for us as Defence Chaplains and for those we serve? Physical robustness is not enough – to survive the rigours of operations, tough training, and even the vicissitudes of everyday life men and women must have a Why, a reason or purpose to endure. As a capability, we are well-placed – by dint of our training and experience – to assist members and dependants articulate their particular Whys.

The book’s limitations

First, some contemporary readers may balk at Frankl’s title. As mentioned, his book was originally published in the mid-1940s. At the time, the term “Man” (or “Mankind”) was used to reference all humanity (ie women and children, along with men). If it was written today it would most likely have a different title – perhaps “Our common search for meaning and hope”?

Second, the book is not simply a meditation on the broad themes of suffering and the redemption of suffering. It actually contains very specific details on life and death in concentration camps, including torture and suicide. Certainly, it is important these things are documented. (As George Santayana put it, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”)¹ However, the book contains no content warnings, and the reader is very quickly plunged into the terrible reality that Frankl and many others experienced. If readers are not prepared for this – or already may be vulnerable – such may find Frankl’s “Man’s Search for Meaning” traumatizing.

Conclusion and recommendations

“*Man’s search for meaning*” is an important book and a valuable resource for Defence Chaplaincy. However, thoughtful Chaplains will use it judiciously. I do not recommend we simply place a copy in every member’s (or dependant’s) hands. Some may not be impacted but others, as mentioned, could certainly be traumatized. Instead, I would encourage Chaplains to use selected readings with members or dependants in pastoral counselling or, in the education space, as the basis for a brief series of Character Development sessions. (Frankl’s material would lend itself to many activities, including role plays, small group discussions and reflective writing.) This would still deliver a strong, positive effect while mitigating the risks associated with such challenging historical material.

End Note

1. George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, 1905. From the series Great Ideas of Western Man.

Book Review: Ethics at War How Should Military Personnel Make Ethical Decisions?

Authors: Deane-Peter Baker, Rufus Black, Roger Herbert and Iain King
New York: Routledge, 2023
ISBN: 1032321202
174 pages

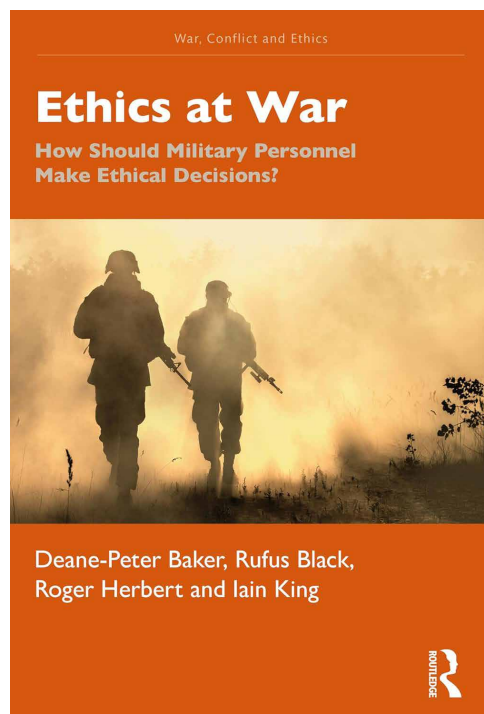
Reviewed by Chaplain Christopher Booth

Chaplain Christopher Booth

The competition in our near region is heating up in volatility and complexity. Like a frog in a pot slowly boiling, ethical decision making in the ADF is at risk of not realising the significant work required to help prepare our men and women for this competition. As chaplains it ought to be on our conscience to promote sound decision making as we advise and care for the highest of commanders and most junior of private. At the intersection between character training/ identity and moral injury, ethics sits as a crucial nexus of success on the battlespace and at home. This book looks at the discussion of ethics from differing approaches to help readers consider foundational principles and application of ethical decision making.

Ethics at War brings together four key thinkers in military ethics. Deane-Peter Baker has served on faculty at UNSW for some time as a military ethicist, has published prolifically and has lectured in programs delivered to ADF personnel across a range of contexts. Rufus Black from the University of Tasmania was a key member of the three person Afghanistan Inquiry Implementation Oversight Panel and promotes a natural law based approach which supports current doctrine (ADF-P-0 Military Ethics). Roger Herbert brings a deep contextual understanding of the military environment as a former US Navy Seal and lectures at the US Naval Academy. To complete the "AUKUS" field, Iain King developed and presents the model that he is responsible for as he teaches at the UK Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS).

The authors outline different approaches to military ethical decision-making and then critique one another's approaches. Two authors prefer decision-making drawing on multiple theories (Baker and Herbert) and two prefer "philosophical rigour" (King and Black). Baker and Herbert share much in



common as they maintain the tension between three main theories of deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics. Their Ethical Triangulation model and the Moral Deliberation Roadmap are only distinguished by one step but otherwise appear nearly identical and their critique of each respective model reflects a shared affinity. King's third approach is a "quasi-utilitarian decision-making" tool which highlights the "Help Principle" key to making decisions. Finally, Black presents a natural law-based approach to ethics.

The introduction shows insight into the violent endeavour of war and the role of ethics: "an action can be both legal and *immoral* ... the law is often mute regarding what service members ought (and ought not) to do. 'Ought' is the purview of ethics." (p. 2) The book outlines frameworks for what "ought" to be done. When discussing a core issue of how military personnel make ethical decisions a crucial aspect is rolling the model out before a class of ordinary soldiers in a way that is "credible, comprehensive and coherent". Part of that "credibility" must come from the trust established between the one who believes in the model and the practitioner. In this sense, some authors might garner more credibility with particular readers.

All acknowledge the need to remain consistent with the "underlying ethical logic" that governs LOAC [Laws Of Armed Conflict] – the just war tradition, and all reflect upon the insufficient nature of relying upon one dominant ethical theory. King comments:

"Individuals are expected to show good character (virtue ethics), to follow certain rules of behaviour (deontology) and to achieve positive results (consequentialism). But as soon as the ethical checklist has more than one item on it, there is a possibility – often a likelihood – that the different ethical considerations will provide conflicting advice, leading, once more, to incoherence." (p. 63)

This excellent summation of the problem is what this book is all about. How can an ordinary sailor, soldier or aviator take these three dominant approaches to decision making, and when the stakes are at their highest, make a sound decision that they can live with and also help others live?

Questions can be raised from all the chapters on how to make a right judgement in an increasingly 'grey' warzone. Baker and Herbert excel at offering a deliverable framework to the common soldier. The critique, however, of philosophical coherence is a good one – do we need a model that doesn't neatly deal with the less desirable aspects of an ethical theory but instead holds them in 'tension'? Black's approach fights to maintain philosophical coherence well – natural law theory is appealing, and replaces consequentialism as a preferred third angle in the latest ADF ethics doctrine. But it might be helpful to ask what exactly constitutes 'good' in its teleological approach to just cause. In an increasingly pluralistic society, of which the ADF reflects, the very definition of good is no longer seated in an agreed-upon worldview. It is difficult to see, if there is no agreed-upon good giver, how not slip into moral relativism or understand what natural law theory means by an innate, objective sense of good. Finally, King's 'Help Principle' seems appealing and is illustrated with great examples but can seem idealistic for some combat veterans.

As an organisation we need assistance to strengthen the philosophical underpinnings of our judgement calls. It is dangerous to say, "we don't have time to work that out, we are too busy", but often our best and brightest leaders (with an excellent appreciation of the modern context) are directly contributing to live operations. The pace of the current competition is too high with too much at stake not to have the best scholarly assistance in thinking through good ethical models. That, however, diminishes no less responsibility from those within the profession of arms. Whetham concludes:

“This important discussion is not one that should be settled by philosophers and academics – if military service means that one is part of a genuine profession rather than simply an armed bureaucracy, critical reflection on its own values and standards is an essential part of that existence. While a healthy discussion should be drawn on both internal and external expertise, the discussion should be given by, and most importantly, owned by, the profession itself.” (p. 155)

The responsibility is also on us in the profession of arms to not simply adopt an ethical approach off the shelf but to robustly work it out and continue to do so as if as important as weapon handling drills. Combat behaviours must hold sound judgement in ethical decision-making at their core.

Book Review: A Burning in My Bones The Authorised Biography of Eugene H. Peterson

Author: Winn Collier

Random House, Authentic Media Milton Keynes, UK 2021

ISBN: 978-1-788893-203-5

340 Pages

Reviewed by Chaplain Charles Vesely

Chaplain Charles Vesely is an ordained Minister of the Uniting Church in Australia and a senior Army Chaplain. CHAP Vesely's present role is the Director, Spiritual Health and Wellbeing for the Australian Defence Force. Alongside his Defence work, CHAP Vesely maintains a busy preaching ministry.

As a first year theological/ministry student, having left behind a career in policing and law, moving into Christian ministry, I had my first encounter with Eugene Peterson.¹ One of our biblical studies lecturers at the then Wesley Institute,² in the Sydney suburb of Drummoyne, had been a student under Peterson at Regent College³ and was keen to expose us to this contemporary theologian, teacher, pastor.

Being a fan of Peterson's work and writings, our lecturer was keen to encourage us new students to the careful scholarship and intersecting praxis that Peterson had to offer to help shape our future ministries. Peterson, by that time, had completed and published *The Message - New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs*⁴, but the full Bible was still incomplete.⁵ However, Peterson had already published numerous books on the Scriptures, ministry, faith, and prayer. These books, published internationally, were in circulation as valued texts with some listed as "best sellers".

Much to my shame and theological immaturity in those days, I did not appreciate the great gift that our lecturer bestowed on us raw ministry students in requiring us as a part of ministry education and training to read and write essays on Peterson's works. Our first such encounter was through the pages of his book "*Reversed Thunder*"⁶. This short but powerful tome on the Revelation to Saint John quickly taught us just how powerful and pastoral the last book of the Bible is. It also introduced us to what a gifted writer, and pastor, Peterson was.

When meeting earlier this year with my professional ministry supervisor, they suggested to me that I might consider reading *A Burning in My Bones*. I had been discussing with my supervisor some of the exasperating paradoxes of the ministry situations with which I engage daily in my present role. From the moment, that I obtained a copy of the book and commenced reading it was as if the words came to life from the pages and wrapped me into the story. The biography author, Winn Collier, much like Peterson, writes in a manner at times quite raw. Whilst some readers may find this rawness disconcerting, it assists to give the reader the feel for the reality of the story, and the humanity of the subject.

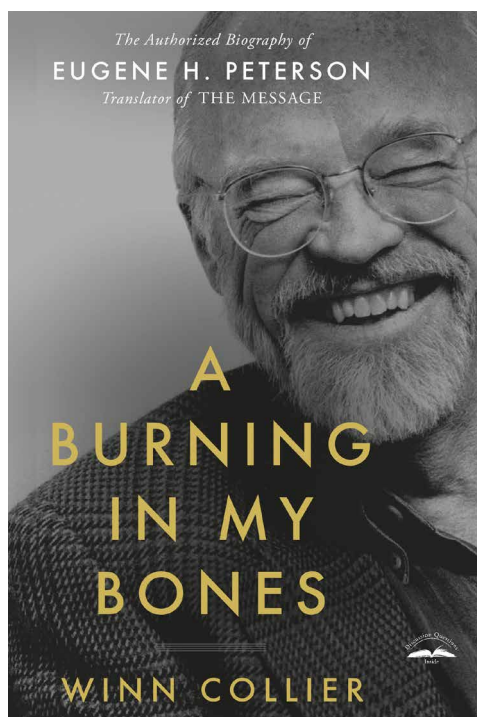
As one would expect from a biography, there is the mandatory family history of the subject. This may be less than riveting to a reader. However, this biographer skilfully tells the story of the Peterson family and the early days of the frontier church mission and ministry in Montana. The reader needs to become acquainted with this part of the story if they are to begin to understand the person who Peterson was. The means by which Collier captures his readers is to tell the story as if his readers are present eyewitnesses to the events skilfully told. This engaging story telling journey sets the tone for the remainder of the biography.

Collier chose to divide the biography into three parts. The first part deals with Peterson's early life and college days. The reader is able to see through both large and small events in Peterson's life the shaping and formation of Peterson's young life and the seeds sown for what would later become the gift to the life and learning of the English speaking church and beyond.

In the designated Part 2 of the biography, Collier records the active ministry and academic life that Peterson so successfully led. Yet again Collier tells the story as a journey travelled by the reader. The reader travels with Peterson through Collier's pen, leading gently from the basement church plant, to the sanctuary of *Christ Our King Presbyterian Church*⁷ in Bel Air Maryland, with the regular retreats by Peterson and his family to his hometown at the lakeside in Montana, through to the halls of academia. Yet all through those events and places Collier keeps, his readers well reminded that Peterson was a pastor in his deepest of deep desires. The reader learns how that deep-hearted pastoral desire shaped Peterson's theology, praxis, and writings.

A life well lived is also not without its controversies. Collier is not afraid to delve into these matters. The reader of the biography witnesses how Peterson and those around him worked through those, at times hot issues. The one key take away from these tumultuous times in Peterson's life, for the inquiring reader, is that Peterson always sought to approach the difficulty with the heart and attitude of the prayerful pastor. Collier quotes from Peterson's Journal one of those controversial matters which arose in Peterson's later life in the church:

"I have no patience with schism. This dividing the church because we don't like or approve of some of our friends or neighbours is a far more serious heresy than anything posed by same-sex issues... The more "pure" the church becomes the more defiant it becomes to entering into the prayer of Jesus for us that we all be one. Are these friends the enemy? Fine, what is Jesus' command regarding the enemy? Love them right? I took vows in the United Presbyterian Church of the United States of America and I plan to keep them. I can live and respect men and women whom I don't agree with – I have for 53 years now. This is nothing new. But this invective and meanness is new and I want no part of it. I don't think as pastors we are called to be God's policemen". (p.283)



If the reader is unstirred in their heart by Parts 1 and 2, then Part 3 is bound to move the reader deeply. As I read this last part of the epic story, I reflected that although, sadly, I never had the opportunity to meet Peterson, been a member of his congregation, or a student under his tutorship, I felt I had gotten to know Peterson as a friend. Such is the skill of Collier in his ability to reach his readership with the life of his subject. Collier brings together the complexities that made Eugene Peterson the human, husband, father, scholar, and pastor that he truly was. Part 3 is not a reading that one is able to just leave and walk away from without it having had some impact upon the reader.

Like all earthly things, in time they undergo the ravages of this earthly existence. Peterson's translation of Psalm 103:15 reminds us:

*"Men and women don't live very long;
like wildflowers they spring up and blossom,
But a storm snuffs them out just as quickly,
Leaving nothing to show they were here".¹⁰*

No doubt, Peterson, when he translated this psalm, understood well this universal truth for all. Collier, as he was writing this last part, would have resonated with this universal truth not just for all people but that his subject, Peterson, was in the eventide of his life leading to his passing to eternal life. Yet, every now and again, God allows one to leave that significant longer lasting legacy¹¹. As Peterson's family laid Eugene's earthly body to its final resting place in Montana, the writings of Peterson endure as that legacy. Many generations will have the enduring opportunity of a deeper understanding of the Christian faith through Peterson's pen.

A Burning in my Bones is a book that those who seek to live a life of faith, or the life of a pastor, will find as navigating light for the contemporary world in which we live. After reading this biography, I reflected upon what I had learned about Peterson's life from both Peterson and Collier's pens. I wished that this book had been written when I was that fresh first year student at Wesley Institute all those years ago. However, it is never too late even after all those years. The reading of *A Burning in my Bones* inspires me to return to Peterson's works, especially *The Message*. I now appreciate anew the work and legacy of Peterson, and have a better appreciation of his translation of Jeremiah 20:9...

"The words are fire in my belly, a burning in my bones." (MSG)

In the midst of the frustrating paradoxes of life, and ministry of the present, my newly found literary friend speaks loud and clear giving hope, wisdom, and guidance with a fresh view to faith.

End Notes

1. Eugene H. Peterson. Born 6th November 1932, East Stanwood Washington. Died 22 October 2018, Lakeside Montana.
2. Wesley Institute is now "Excelsia College," Macquarie Park NSW.
3. Vancouver, Canada. <https://www.regent-college.edu/>
4. 1993
5. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message – The Bible in Contemporary Language*, Colorado Springs, Colorado US. NavPress / Tyndale House Publishers, 2002, revised 2018. <https://www.navpress.com>
6. Eugene H. Peterson. *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins Religious US, 1988)
7. <https://christourking.net/about-us/about-cok>
8. *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*, (Colorado Springs, NavPress, 2018)
9. Peterson published some 37 books in his lifetime. In addition, Peterson wrote and edited a devotional series "Praying with the Bible."

Photograph - Back Cover:

Australian Red Cross: Missing and Wounded Enquiry Bureau; WWI Case Cards

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AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS
WOUNDED & MISSING INFORMATION BUREAU
EGYPT.
E.S.F.
(K.31/10/17.)

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S.R. 1445

2nd. L.H. Regt.

Informant says:- "Weeks was killed at Bir Saba at the very beginning of the big Stunt. He was not buried for two days and was then laid in the Cemetery. He was a strong, fine fellow, and seems to have been well liked by Chums."

Informant:- Tpr. Dullamty 30 61.
2nd. L.H. Regt. A.I.F.

14th. A.G. Hospital
PORT SAID. 11.5.18.

14th. A.G. Hospital
POST SAID. 18/5/18

ORIGINAL STATEMENT SERIALIZED.

C O P Y

Ed
S.P.I.
5

Statement made by Lieut Fletcher A.H. 33rd Bn.
re Capt Linklater C.E. 33rd Bn.
Missing 7/9.6.17

I was on duty in the new front line opposite St Yves on the morning of the 11th of June 1917. Capt C.H. Linklater was O.C. Company and at about 12.30 a.m. sent forward a runner to get from near the address of THOMAS of A. Company a message to the front line to occupy Fuzze Cot. The runner was a private named THOMAS who was carrying a message to the front line. The runner was shot by a German soldier and the runner Pte W.S. Smith to try and get in touch with the party. They did not reach Fuzze Cot. The runners had been sent back by Lieut Thomas at about midnight of the 11th of June. The runner did not get back until about 1.45 a.m. when he stated that the German had shot a runner who had been sent forward to occupy Fuzze Cot. The runner was shot by a German soldier and the runner Pte W.S. Smith had come. When these two figures were about 20 yards from the post they were challenged in English and two shots were fired. Then the runner came from the German post and the figures disappeared. The runner of the party saw about ten Germans

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AUSTRALIAN ARMY CHAPLAINCY JOURNAL

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<http://drnet.defence.gov.au/Army/DGCHAPA/Pages/Home.aspx>

1st Battalion A.I.F.
16th Reinforcements

I knew Gibson
of mine. We joined
together, and left
He was in C. Company
name was Bill, and
Private Billie
at Warrumbungle
Barracks in the
seemed quite
people that