

The Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy – ICHC

Operating as Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa since November 2024.

Report to 67th Session of the General Synod/te Hīnota Whānui (GSTHW) 2026

Recommendation:

- That the Synod affirm the ministry of ICHC / Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa.
- That this report be received.

This ministry continues the Church's call to compassionate presence among those who are vulnerable, unwell, and in need.

Matthew 25:36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you visited me

Our purpose:

We provide hospitals with chaplains who offer quality holistic spiritual and pastoral care.

Overview:

The Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia is one of nine founding denominations that, over 50 years ago, established a coordinated approach to hospital chaplaincy within the public health system.

The Anglican Church has maintained continuous representation on the Trust Board since the organisation's inception.

Funding:

Initially funding for chaplaincy was to be met on a 50/50 cost basis between the churches and the Department of Health. Changes in 1996 resulted in the advisory council becoming the Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy (ICHC).

Funding is made up of Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora contracts, grants, local public hospital contributions, Church denomination and congregation funding and from individual donations.

While our contracts with Te Whatu Ora are significant, they represent the employment of 30 chaplains (including provision for continued professional development), the remaining funds received allow us to employ an additional 27 FTE.

Additional support from individuals, organisations, churches and denominations allow for the employment and support of additional chaplains and trained volunteers. Our service would struggle without this valuable support! Our combined income from all sources allows us to provide chaplaincy across 39 hospitals nationally.

Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa currently employs:

- 64 ecumenical Christian chaplains (drawn from multiple denominations, including Anglican)
- 29 diocesan Catholic chaplains, appointed and accountable within Catholic structures

Together these roles provide the equivalent of 55 FTE positions across 39 hospitals nationwide.

Our Outcomes:

In the 12 months to 31 December 2025, more than 121,000 patients, whānau, and hospital staff received spiritual care. This ranged from informal bedside presence to supporting people navigating serious illness, trauma, and end-of-life situations.

Chaplains facilitated more than 40,000 acts of worship and spiritual rituals, including prayer, blessings, Holy Communion, funerals, and chapel services. Approximately 5% of this support was provided directly to hospital staff, reflecting increasing recognition of staff wellbeing needs.

Narrative accounts illustrate the breadth and depth of culturally responsive and compassionate care:

- **Sikh Patient and Family**

Met with a Sikh patient and family. After conversation, the patient requested prayer. The chaplain prayed and shared a personal story about time spent in India, which helped build rapport and trust. A cultural connection was made and a caring relational approach.

- **African Mother with Baby in NICU**

Supported a mother from an African country whose baby was in NICU. We shared Holy Communion at the incubator and later had a conversation about her life and cultural challenges while living in New Zealand. I acknowledged my limited cultural knowledge and focused on listening and being present.

- **Hindu Family in Distress**

A Hindu mother in a wheelchair was accompanied by her daughter, who was distressed about her mother's dementia and lack of commitment to rehabilitation. The chaplain listened, encouraged faith as a source of strength, and emphasized self-care. Follow-up visits showed improvement in the daughter's outlook.

- **Spiritual Support for a Mental Health Patient**

A patient in the mental health unit expressed anxiety about an upcoming court case. After sharing her fears, she asked for prayer. The chaplain prayed with her, and she responded with tears and a hug.

This ministry represents a significant and visible expression of the Church's presence within the public life of Aotearoa.

Accountability:

The use of a chaplaincy activity reporting tool allows us to provide both statistical and narrative to demonstrate the value the service provides. We report six-monthly to Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora, provide quarterly reports to hospitals as well as reporting annually to denominations. We produce an Annual Impact Report with independent auditor's report which are available via our website (www.hospitalchaplaincy.org.nz) and upon request.

Looking forward:

Recently our Board held a strategic planning hui to set out goals for the next three years and affirmed the following strategic themes from which more specific goals are being developed. Some of these have been added

Strategic Themes:

- **Te Tiriti o Waitangi:** Strengthening our tikanga capability
 - Strengthen cultural governance through a dedicated Te Tiriti / tikanga sub-committee.
- **Whānau-Centred Care:** Developing holistic, whānau-first approaches
 - Embed a whānau first approach to care
- **People and Culture:** Enhancing skills, experience, and capability
 - Strengthen how we attract, recruit, and retain people.
- **Sustainable Future:** Strengthening financial resilience, reducing risk, and improving systems
 - Ensure fair, transparent, and sustainable resource allocation across hospitals.
 - Strengthen our systems and processes to improve efficiency, data quality, and digital capability.
- **Presence and Identity:** Increasing awareness of who we are and the value we bring

In the coming year, Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa remains committed to providing sustainable chaplaincy across public hospitals. We maintain a focus on mental health, having successfully recruited chaplains to work in this important field. Our opportunities continue to be in providing appropriate support for the increasingly diverse spiritual makeup of our community within public hospitals.

Planning is well underway for our 2026 national conference, to be held from 13–15 October, with the theme: “Aspire! – Whāia te iti Kahurangi / Pursuing Excellence in Chaplaincy.” We anticipate 75–80 chaplains attending. This gathering provides a vital opportunity for connection, formation, and professional development.

We continue to participate in Health Research Council–funded research exploring spiritual care in healthcare settings across Aotearoa New Zealand. This three-year programme includes six interrelated research streams and will culminate in a final report with recommendations. We warmly invite engagement from individuals, churches, and faith communities, including the Methodist Church. More information is available at: <https://www.spiritualwellbeing.nz/>

Healthcare chaplaincy remains both demanding and deeply valued, with increasing recognition of the importance of spiritual care within holistic health models. The value of chaplaincy in hospitals is generally well accepted. There has been a progressive embracing by hospitals of a more holistic approach to health care which includes the spiritual dimension. This corresponds to the recognition of holistic models of wellbeing such as Te Whare Tapa Whā, Te Wheke and Fonofale.

The continued support of the Anglican Church goes a long way towards ensuring hospital chaplains are available and equipped to support the mental health and wellbeing of New Zealanders. We invite your continued support via financial contribution together with the

invaluable service of Board representatives, volunteers and ordained ministers. Recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced chaplains is often difficult, particularly in some parts of the motu. We are grateful for the assistance of the Anglican Church with our recruitment efforts.

The question of spiritual diversity within healthcare chaplaincy continues to be raised. This includes discussion about the provision of non-Christian chaplaincy alongside the current model. At present, stakeholders, including Health New Zealand and supporting denominations, continue to affirm the existing model while recognising the need for culturally responsive and inclusive care within that framework.

Your representation:

The Anglican Church continues to play a significant and valued role in this ministry.

Governance: The Anglican Church is well represented on our Trust Board by two Trustees, being the Very Reverend Julian Perkins and Archdeacon Mere Wallace.

Chaplains: There are currently sixteen Anglican ministers employed as chaplains with Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa. One serves as out Kaumātua, one as a Regional Manager, five as lead Chaplains in their hospitals, two focused on Mental Health Chaplaincy. Further to these, there are others functioning as locums who provide relief cover for Chaplains and one as a local administrator.

Volunteers: Many of our voluntary chaplaincy assistants throughout the motu are congregation members of the Anglican Church. All are valued members of our team and we are grateful for their support.

We commend this ministry to the Synod and give thanks for the Anglican Church's ongoing partnership in this vital work.

Written by: Barry Fisk
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