

## **Inter-church Tertiary Chaplaincy Council (ITCC)** **2026 Report to Anglican General Synod/te Hīnota Whānui (GSTHW)**

The Inter-church Tertiary Chaplaincy Council (ITCC) is the national body which brings together the interdenominational Christian tertiary chaplaincy boards throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. Through these regional boards, chaplaincy support is provided across all universities and in most polytechnic regions, with the exception of the West Coast, Nelson–Marlborough, and the Bay of Plenty. The Council (Representation of Regional Boards) last met in Wellington in December 2025.

We remain deeply grateful for the faithful ministry of chaplains serving students and staff across the tertiary sector. Chaplains continue to provide pastoral care, spiritual support, crisis response, community-building, and advocacy within increasingly pressured educational environments. Their ministry represents a significant and visible expression of the Church's mission and care within the tertiary sector.

Rev Heather Kennedy (Southland Tertiary Chaplaincy Board) continues in her role as Chair of ITCC, bringing considerable experience from both parish and hospital chaplaincy contexts. Hamish Smith (Chair of the Otago Tertiary Chaplaincy Board) has taken over the role of the Secretary of ITCC from Professor Peter Lineham. We remain thankful for the continued contribution of Peter Lineham, who has remained on the ITCC executive. The executive also includes Terry McGrath, Steve Downey, and Tessa Campbell.

The tertiary sector in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to face considerable change and uncertainty. Both universities and polytechnics are experiencing ongoing financial pressures, restructuring processes, staffing reductions, and increased demands around student wellbeing and mental health support. A number of universities have continued significant reviews of staffing and programmes during the past year, creating anxiety and uncertainty for both staff and students. Chaplains report that they are increasingly being called upon to support people affected by stress, isolation, redundancy, and financial hardship.

Within the polytechnic sector, the disestablishment of Te Pūkenga and the transition back toward regional governance structures continues to create instability. Some institutions are seeking to re-establish themselves as standalone entities while simultaneously managing substantial budgetary pressures. Several polytechnics have undertaken staffing reductions and programme restructuring. Chaplains working within these environments have often found themselves providing pastoral support not only to students, but also to staff and leadership teams navigating difficult transitions. In some places there remains uncertainty about the future shape and funding of chaplaincy services themselves.

At the same time, chaplains are also observing encouraging signs of spiritual openness among students. In several centres there has been increased engagement with Christian groups, conversations around faith and meaning, and strong demand for resources such as Bibles and pastoral support. One regional Board reported that during Orientation Week activities in early 2025, chaplains and Christian student groups in some campuses distributed all available Bibles within the

first evening of events, reflecting a notable level of student interest and spiritual curiosity. Chaplains continue to report that many students are seeking spaces of belonging, hope, prayer, and personal connection amidst growing pressures around study, finances, housing, and wellbeing.

The growth in international student numbers following the reopening of borders has also continued to shape chaplaincy ministry. International students often face unique challenges including loneliness, cultural adjustment, financial stress, and distance from family support networks. Chaplains are working closely with Christian student organisations and international student ministries to provide hospitality, pastoral care, practical support, and opportunities for community connection.

We also continue to note the important development of Māori chaplaincy leadership and the growing recognition of the importance of culturally grounded pastoral care within tertiary institutions. Chaplains are increasingly expected to work collaboratively across diverse faith and cultural contexts as institutions seek to support increasingly diverse student communities.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Tertiary Chaplaincy Association (ANZTCA), which includes chaplains from a range of faith traditions, continues to develop standards and training pathways for tertiary chaplaincy. Our Christian chaplains continue to receive positive recognition from university and polytechnic leaders for the value of their contribution to student and staff wellbeing.

At a governance level, many regional boards continue to face challenges in sustaining volunteer leadership, maintaining compliance obligations, and securing long-term funding. The changing legal and regulatory environment for charities, trusts, and incorporated societies continues to place additional pressure on voluntary boards. ITCC remains committed to supporting local boards and encouraging healthy governance structures that can sustain and strengthen chaplaincy ministry into the future.

Financial pressures remain significant across the sector. Many chaplaincy boards are now required to support multiple chaplains and increasing operational costs at a time when churches and denominational bodies themselves are under financial strain. We are therefore deeply appreciative of the ongoing partnership and generosity of churches, trusts, and supporters whose contributions make this ministry possible. ITCC continues to explore opportunities for new funding partnerships and potential expansion of chaplaincy presence into campuses and regions where little or no chaplaincy support currently exists.

In all of this, we remain convinced that tertiary chaplaincy is a vital ministry. In a time marked by uncertainty, loneliness, anxiety, and rapid social change, chaplains provide a trusted and compassionate presence among students and staff. They bear witness to the love of Christ through listening, hospitality, prayer, advocacy, and care, often in moments of deep need. We thank the Anglican churches of Aotearoa New Zealand and the General Synod/te Hīnota Whānui for their ongoing encouragement, prayer, and financial support for this important work.

**Heather Kennedy, Chair & Hamish Smith, Secretary**

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