



Methodist Chaplaincy in the Cadet Forces

The cadet forces today

Although the three cadet forces – the Sea Cadets, the Army Cadet Force (ACF) and the Air Training Corps (ATC) – are run by separate organisations, together they represent the largest association of youth engagement in the UK – involving more than 90,000 young people from all walks of life. Cadets, aged 12 to 18, take part in community and adventurous activities, designed to develop their confidence, leadership and teamwork skills.

Supported by the Ministry of Defence and about 29,000 adult volunteers, the cadet forces follow the traditions, values and standards of the Armed Forces. There is no requirement or expectation that young people should go on to serve in HM Forces.

Each cadet force unit, detachment or squadron is expected to have a chaplain assigned to it. Sea Cadets and Air Training Corps chaplains are typically assigned to a local unit; Army Cadet Force chaplains are assigned at a county level and may cover single or multiple detachments.

This publication focuses on community cadet forces, where Methodists can engage in chaplaincy. It does not cover the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), as this is a school-based youth organisation.



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A prayer for the cadet forces

Deacon Jo Critchley, ATC Chaplain

Loving God,

We give you thanks:

for the awesome privilege of serving our young people
through Cadets;

for their life and vitality;

for an opportunity to be intentionally present with them
and their leaders;

for the holy places we are able to create in a cadet force
building or whilst on an adventurous activity.

We pray for:

those who commit themselves to serve these young
men and women as volunteers;

those who have been a blessing and who receive a
blessing through these organisations;

those who are called to represent a God who cannot be
kept in a box.

Honour the service and sacrifices made in your name,
oh God.

Bless those who serve faithfully, and these young
people who make up our cadet forces.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.

Foreword

Life and ministry as a cadet force chaplain is varied and challenging, using and developing ministerial skills as a pastor, worship leader and educator, alongside offering moral guidance to young people as they develop into adulthood.

We hope this publication will offer insight into this very valuable ministry and provide an opportunity both to reflect on and give thanks for the work of cadet forces chaplains past, present and future.

A cadet force chaplain will typically visit their unit, detachment or squadron monthly to support and talk with cadets and staff. They may be asked to contribute to discussions, such as those referencing values and standards, and to conduct formal enrolment services for new cadets.

Chaplains also join the cadets on annual camp and may accompany them on other adventurous activities and during services or parades.

Some of the benefits of cadet forces chaplaincy are that it:

- provides an opportunity to exercise ministry in a very different environment to the local church
- creates a regular point of contact with young people, opening up pastoral and spiritual conversations, as well as allowing chaplains to learn from the cadets
- in some cases, allows chaplains to explore their calling to other forms of ministry or put into effect skills learned elsewhere, eg in the Armed Forces
- helps to refresh and/or sustain ministers in circuit appointments.

With gratitude and prayers for those who minister in the name of the Methodist Church.

Revd Dr Chrissie Howe, Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board, on behalf of the Methodist Church





The following 13 first-hand accounts demonstrate the experiences of Methodist cadet forces chaplains in a variety of ministry contexts.

If you would like to explore this form of ministry yourself, you can find further information at the following sites:

Sea Cadet chaplaincy (www.chaplain.org.uk)

Army Cadet chaplaincy (www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/corps-regiments-and-units/royal-army-chaplains-department)

Air Cadet chaplaincy (www.raf.mod.uk/aircadets/want-to-join/join-as-an-adult-volunteer/join-as-a-chaplain)

Prospective cadet forces chaplains should make the Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board aware of their intention to volunteer before they complete an application, by emailing SFB@methodistchurch.org.uk

Following the tradition of the Armed Forces, chaplains to cadet forces are known as 'padres'. In Sea Cadet units, chaplains are often referred to as 'Bish', just as they are in the Royal Navy.

An incarnational ministry

Revd Tony Buglass, ATC Chaplain

During a school visit to one of my churches, I showed the children around, explained what we did there and asked for any questions. One child asked: "Where do you sleep?" They had never been in a church before – this was alien territory – they had no idea what happened inside. This was the 'holy place' where religion was kept: 'God in a box', separate from their world outside.

Alongside my Methodist circuit ministry, I have been chaplain to a hospital, a prison, rural industry, an RAF base and the Air Cadets. In each context, I was the embodiment of faith on their turf, representing a God who cannot be kept in any box. That meant being with them in what they were doing, putting *their* matters first – whether that meant sitting at a hospital bedside talking about family, walking across a field talking about cows, visiting the ops room of a radar station, or joining in cadet activities. With the cadets I have built model aircraft, shown photos from air displays, taken part in quiz games, and taken them flying and gliding (including aerobatics)!

Most of my squadron visits have involved being intentionally present – sitting in on classes and discussions, watching cadets do drill or games, having a chat over coffee at break, just being there as one of the regular faces – getting to know and being known. Sometimes I help teach aircraft recognition; occasionally I do a talk, which might be about aviation history or about the Mission Aviation Fellowship. During the months of the Covid-19 pandemic when we weren't able to meet as a squadron, I used the squadron Facebook page, producing aircraft-recognition quiz sheets, aviation cartoons and jokes, as well as appropriate themes at Remembrance or Battle of Britain Day.

All of these interactions open the way for discussions touching on moral, ethical or religious matters. These





can start from the story of a significant Christian, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, or from a discussion about rules for life online, or the ethics of social media. It can also start from conversations during break or after squadron, when someone asks a question because of things taking place at home or at school – questions they feel able to ask because I'm a familiar presence on their turf.

They come onto *my* turf on Remembrance Sunday, when we parade at the Cenotaph and attend a church service together, and on Air Training Corps Sunday every February, when they come to church and I lead the service. That is also an occasion when, as well as sharing with the cadets in worship and Christian teaching, I can use the cadets to bring a fresh insight to the congregation (as when we used the illustration of the principles of aerodynamics to think about what lifts you up and what causes drag in your life).

Ministry is incarnational because it embodies faith values. Chaplaincy embodies those values in places outside the usual 'religious box' and enables so much in so many lives and places. It's a real joy.



All of these interactions open the way for discussions touching on moral, ethical or religious matters.

Rising to the challenge

Revd Steve Ward, ACF Chaplain

We'd just been on an expedition. The one-star cadets* had walked for three hours, some with enthusiasm, some needing a little coaxing. Finding our way using a paper map was new to many. By the end, everyone was tired and a fair few blisters had been earned. We were back at camp, all sat on the tarmac and starting to cook our meal. One of the cadets piped up and said: "Hey padre, will you say a prayer for us?" Some of the others began to ask too. We shared a prayer together and ate our rations.

Moments like that prayer don't just lift our spirits, they give us encouraging stories to share with congregations. We get encouragement for ourselves, too.

Balancing a busy circuit ministry with chaplaincy can be delicate at times. There may be some in our churches who feel it is wasted time. Others may see cadets and ministers in uniform as contrary to the mission of the church. One of the challenges of Army Cadet Force (ACF) chaplaincy is helping church members to realise what a missional opportunity it truly is.

In addition to training weekends and church parades, I get to spend 10 days and nights with upwards of 400 cadets and about 120 adult volunteers at annual camp every year. They are drawn from all backgrounds and many will have no connection to a church. All the time, I'm wearing crosses on my lapels and I'm available to everyone, no matter their age or rank or belief. I may come back from camp tired, but I'm full of stories. I'm encouraged that God is at work in this ministry, and that God is asking me to be there also.

* Stars are awarded to cadets for successful completion of each stage of learning. Each star will take a motivated cadet approximately a year to achieve. The reference here is to cadets who are still relatively new to the ACF.





God's call to go beyond the walls of the church

Deacon Helen Webster, ATC Chaplain

I have been a chaplain in the Air Cadets for nine years now, working with two different squadrons, having been approached by a Wing Chaplain to ask if I would consider taking on the role.

Before I became chaplain, I had little knowledge of the work of cadet forces but did have experience of working with young people. As a deacon in the Methodist Church my ministry is community-based and being chaplain to the squadrons has given me the opportunity to get alongside, and build relationships with, young people and leaders who might otherwise have little connection with church. I'm also in a position to offer pastoral care to individuals, or the squadron as a whole, in challenging times.

I try to go into the squadron once a month to lead sessions with the cadets and be available if either cadets or staff want to talk.

Cadets come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and it is a privilege to work with them and alongside the other members of staff at the squadron who work so hard to make the cadet experience a good one.

Although working with young people can be challenging at times, I find it rewarding, interesting and enjoyable. The cadets often give me things to think about, as I hope I do them, which enhances my ministry in the other places I serve.

Much of the work I do with the Air Cadets is based around the organisation's core values: helping them to explore what it means to work together as a team (as part of the squadron and Air Cadet movement) and how they can be good citizens, which is part of the promise they make. I also help them to think about

their wellbeing and how they can take care of themselves to cope better with life's stresses – something that has been particularly important in the last couple of years.

Coming together for special services, such as Remembrance Sunday, also means young people can be invited into church. This helps them to connect with members of the congregation and build relationships within local communities.

Being a chaplain with the cadets is a great opportunity to share the message, which comes from the values of our faith, that everyone is important and valued – and to think about how we can make a difference in the world to make it better for all. I consider it an honour to work with the cadets and staff teams.

If this is something that you feel you could do, I would encourage you to explore cadet forces chaplaincy further. I hope that if you do, you will be blessed and will bless others through this important and worthwhile ministry.



Although working with young people can be challenging at times, I find it rewarding, interesting and enjoyable.





What does a Sea Cadet chaplain do?

Revd Peter Hills, Sea Cadet Chaplain

The three cadet forces have distinct characteristics, but there is one common factor: the people. I mean both the cadets, who are a delight, and the wonderful adult volunteers who give so much of their time and energy week after week, year after year, for the young people in their charge. Cadets come from a variety of backgrounds and for some the cadet force becomes their safe space, their fellow cadets their second family, and the adult staff their support.

What is distinct about the Sea Cadets? Boats, for one thing! I rarely manage to be present on boating days because of other commitments, but I do turn up when I can. Any padre who wants to be a canoeing, rowing or sailing instructor will receive a particularly warm welcome, but it is not a requirement. What is required is a warm heart, a listening ear and an open mind.

Sea Cadets are also distinct in having a junior section, for children aged 10 to 12. Sea Cadets 'age out' at 18, by which time they will have had the opportunity to lead and mentor their younger companions, teach basic skills and work alongside adult staff.

The Royal Navy provides training facilities and support, but the umbrella organisation is a charity known as MSSC: Marine Society and Sea Cadets. It exists to give educational, financial and personal support to all seafarers, and so it is also linked to the Merchant Navy. However, it is the Royal Navy from which the traditions, dress, rank structure, etc, are derived. The chaplain holds a Queen's Cadet Commission, is designated a Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) chaplain and is issued with uniform (although smart clerical dress or the lay equivalent is perfectly acceptable).

A Sea Cadet chaplain may be a presbyter, deacon or lay person (lay people will usually only be considered if they are already in an authorised role in a church). The appointment process can seem slow, but once all the elements have been worked through (DBS, safeguarding training, induction course) the work is rewarding. I attend my unit once a week, but two visits a month would be acceptable. One of those visits would coincide with 'Ceremonial Divisions', at which the cadets wear their best uniforms and the padre says prayers.

On some evenings I teach a group of cadets, taking special responsibility for the core values (commitment, respect, honesty and integrity, loyalty, self-discipline and courage). It is a great opportunity to engage with young people and get to know them. On other occasions I just turn up, sit in on classes or chat to cadets and staff during 'Stand Easy' (rest periods). The chaplain's role is as much in support of staff as it is of cadets.



What is required is a warm heart, a listening ear and an open mind.





What does an Army Cadet Force chaplain do?

Revd David Hart, ACF Chaplain

If you ask that question of a group of Methodist ministers serving as chaplains to the Army Cadet Force (ACF), you will probably get as many answers as the people you ask! The fact is that ministry in the ACF varies according to the individual chaplain, the context of the units they serve and their relationship with those units, and the amount of time they can commit to the task.

So, let's begin with some basics that do apply to all ACF chaplains. We help instil values and standards in young people. In the ACF's case these are: courage, discipline, respect, integrity, loyalty and selfless commitment. Chaplains are expected to reflect those values as they provide spiritual support to the cadets and adult volunteers with whom they serve. A presbyter can be nominated to become a chaplain by the ACF County Commandant. A nomination needs the approval of the Methodist Church, via the Secretary of the Forces Board.

ACF chaplains, having undergone a selection process, are commissioned into the ACF and are members of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department. They serve the whole of a county cadet force (in the case of London, they serve in a 'sector') and may be a member of a team of chaplains who share the ministry across their county battalion.

The basic commitment, in terms of time, is to attend a short induction course at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre in Oxfordshire within twelve months of being commissioned, and then each year to attend the two-week cadet camp. Most chaplains do far more: visiting detachment, providing advice to adult volunteers and the staff of the county cadet force, as well as listening to cadets and sharing with them on a range of spiritual, moral and social issues.

What does an Air Cadet chaplain do?

Revd Peter Hills, ATC Chaplain

The Air Cadets started during a time of war, when recruitment to the Royal Air Force was a major factor. At that time, the age profile of the cadets was older. Nowadays, cadets are between 12 and 18 years old. It remains a youth organisation sponsored by the RAF, and annual camps take place in RAF stations across the country. As with the other cadet forces, it is not a recruiting arm of the Armed Forces.

Chaplains in the Air Training Corps (ATC) may be ordained, or lay people with an existing formal role in the Church. In lieu of uniform, chaplains are issued with a sweatshirt and polo shirt, as well as a chaplain's badge.

Besides the mandatory DBS check, chaplains are required to undergo a security assessment on appointment (enabling them to obtain an 'unaccompanied' pass when visiting or staying in operational RAF stations) and mandatory training (safeguarding, basic first aid, etc) – much of it online.

One key responsibility of an ATC padre is to present a 'padre's hour' from time to time – ideally monthly. This is based on the core values of the RAF, and there is a good deal of freedom in choosing material. The enrolment of new cadets also falls to the padre, set as it is in the context of prayer. Preparing for this gives the padre the opportunity to discuss what the young people understand by 'God', as the Cadets' Promise contains the phrase "...my duty to God and the Queen...".

As in all chaplaincy, the fundamental task is simply to be present. When the cadets are on parade, I attend the opening and closing ceremonies; when they are engaged on various tasks, I hover around. It is amazing how fruitful a shoe-cleaning session can be: therapeutic for the cadets and an opportunity for me to chat and help out when necessary.





Another opportunity arises when cadets are able to go flying (in gliders or training aircraft): it usually involves travel to a distant airfield or station and long periods as cadets wait their turn or, having taken their flight, wait for everyone else. To share such moments is a joy.



As in all chaplaincy, the fundamental task is simply to be present.



Christianity and cadet force values

Maureen McPherson, local preacher and ATC Chaplain

In the Air Cadets there are four core values – respect, integrity, service and excellence – and chaplains reflect these in their behaviour, in and out of the church building. This helps them to develop a relationship with the cadets that is supportive, understanding and healing, as necessary.

The chaplain acts as an ambassador for God in their pastoral care. By promoting dialogue and debate – not as a preacher or a minister but by simply engaging with the cadets on their terms – they are in a position to both encourage and challenge existing social attitudes.

A chaplain should offer guidance only when it is requested. Chaplains can help cadets to negotiate teenage pitfalls just by being present – a listener and facilitator. Sometimes I find myself sitting quietly to understand what a cadet is saying through their body language as much as their speech – all the while praying for guidance. The chaplain may be the only person the cadet can confide in about what happens at school or in their family. Displaying sensitivity while accompanying a cadet to become a caring, responsible adult is an extremely important aspect of the chaplain's role. Key qualities are open-mindedness, tolerance and impartiality; being broad-minded is definitely an asset!

Chaplains can encourage cadets to speak to the church family in parade services, by asking the cadets to give talks on what the ATC's core values mean to them. By being involved in the service, the cadets gain an understanding of community values and pass on the skills they are learning to the church families who nurture the squadron.

This is a special ministry; is God calling you to be a chaplain?





Chaplaincy in the field

Revd Stephen Caddy, ACF Chaplain

The annual camp in the school summer holidays is the core commitment of the chaplain to the Army Cadet Force. Generally, it takes place over a fortnight but it may be shorter. It's for the whole county and so may involve hundreds of cadets and tens of adult instructors.

Apart from the Commandant, the chaplain is the only one with the right to take their own car – useful for packing to cover a range of possibilities!

There are meant to be at least two chaplains present but that's not always possible. Working as a sole chaplain or as part of a small chaplaincy team will bring different challenges.

Camps vary but centre around training in field craft, navigation, shooting, first aid and adventure training. There may be visits to sites of military history or even a fun day out. The programme will vary according to the training level the cadets have reached. Adults and cadets may find themselves in very different groups to those they know and work with at home.

Camp is an experience of communal living. Every camp varies. For most of the period 'on camp' everyone lives in shared barrack-style rooms.

Many meals are in the cookhouse. The cadets will have their NAAFI* for downtime – an important place for the chaplain to be available to those who want to see them. The adults will have one or two messes, where they too can relax away from the cadets when off duty. This can also be a place for the chaplain to be seen from time to time. Cadets and adults appreciate chaplains being around, taking part wherever possible and being available to listen to the wide range of concerns that teenagers and adults may have – both while in the camp and from back home. Sometimes the safety of the

camp and its caring adults, not least the padre, will draw out safeguarding or mental health issues.

Chaplains are encouraged to use other skills they may have in addition to those of a minister. These may be related to sports or adventure training – rock climbing, mountain biking or raft building, for example. Being able to drive a minibus is always handy, especially if someone needs to be visited in hospital or taken to a place of worship.

The chaplain is busiest when something goes seriously wrong – such as illness, injury or accident at a camp, or bereavement at home. A sign of a good camp may be when there's nothing particular to do.

A few camps will have a church building, so it's easy to provide the chaplains with a workspace in which gatherings can be held. At others, there is nothing provided and a more inventive approach is required. Sometimes there may be a Remembrance Service or special commemoration, or a visit to a War Memorial or cemetery, or a Drumhead service. Cadets may ask for prayers at which to light candles for someone they've lost just before camp. The training staff may ask for a session on values and standards.

Chaplains can always use their initiative to put things on when cadets have their free time. Sometimes the appropriate style is all-age worship, on other occasions it can be quite traditional. The role of the chaplain at a camp is quite unlike that of anyone else there. This brings its challenges but also demonstrates its value.

The work is rewarding and valued by cadets and adults alike. Just try not to have too much to do on the Sunday after you get back from camp on the Saturday!

* mess hall/refectory



The work is rewarding and valued by cadets and adults alike.





Advocate, minister, chaplain, friend

Revd John Beadle, Sea Cadet Chaplain

The parade has been called to “Attention”, though the junior Sea Cadets cannot help fidgeting, as juniors always do, and silence falls. “Pipe the Still” is the next order heard. The ship’s bell strikes off the hour of the day and, as the ringing dies away, the shrill whistle of a bosun’s pipe cuts the air.

‘Colours’ are raised, salutes are performed and, as the ‘colour’ settles at the top of the mast, the shrill pipe is heard again. Once again the ship’s bell begins to toll and a red, white and blue triangular church pennant is raised up the masthead. The chaplain is on parade, the Sea Cadet unit is now at ‘church’.

The chaplain to the unit then says prayers. Sometimes just the Sea Cadets’ prayer and the Lord’s Prayer, but the chaplain can also include national, personal or individual prayers, depending on what is happening on the unit or in the cadets’ families. This highlights the other role the chaplain should have: the unofficial eyes and ears of the unit, able to talk to everyone and anyone in the unit about what they want to talk about. The chaplain is in the privileged position of being able to get alongside everyone – the cadets, the instructors, the volunteers and the parents. The contacts may be brief, but enough space and time should be given to learn of any underlying issues.

The cadet force chaplain should be a ‘friend and advisor to all onboard’. Chaplains take ‘all onboard’ seriously, which means that juniors and cadets have a friendly, unbiased, listening ear if they feel they are being mistreated in any way. There can be very few other groups of 12- to 18-year-olds* who have regular formal and informal interactions with an independent advocate who also happens to be God’s representative.

Chaplains can also get involved with the management of the unit on the Unit Management Team, where they will share with other adults in promoting the unit as a safe, friendly, progressive and worthwhile group.

From a Methodist perspective, the chaplain is an independent, caring, listening person to whom everyone else in the unit can turn. We can represent our faith in a way that is unique, fulfilling, exciting and progressive. A chaplain can invite the whole unit and their parents/carers (many of whom they get to know) into church for formal occasions – whether that’s Remembrance Sunday, Sea Sunday or a carol service, to name just a few.

What other minister gets to thank God for the privilege of being friend and advisor to a group of young people and their parents on a regular basis?

* 10- to 18-year-olds, when the Junior Sea Cadets are taken into account



The cadet force chaplain should be a ‘friend and advisor to all onboard’.





Joining God at work

Revd David Ely, ATC Chaplain

One of the great things about being a cadet force chaplain comes from the relationships that you build, not just with the young people, but also with the adult volunteers who are vital for the running of the organisation. As the chaplain, you are in the unique position of being able to walk alongside those who give their time and skills so freely and generously to the cadets. This gives the opportunity to offer words of encouragement and appreciation to build the morale of these dedicated people. It also allows space for concerns and issues to be raised in informal ways.

Aside from your duties as a padre, being able to engage in such helpful conversations with the adult volunteers can engender high levels of trust. Sometimes this gives space for the volunteers to ask questions about life and faith that they would not be able to ask anywhere else. It can also lead to sharing on a personal level, about family or wider issues outside the life of the cadets. This sharing is often deepened when the chaplain participates in cadet camps or days out, when time for longer conversations is possible.

As the chaplain, I'm able to move between ranks with relative ease. The officers and civilian instructors are normally happy to give time to the padre. There are times when providing a listening ear to the Officer in Command, while respecting confidentiality, can help alleviate problems before they become more serious. This reflects the fact that the padre holds a unique position within the life of the cadet forces. The padre can observe what happens around them without the responsibility of running events or getting paperwork up-to-date – leaving them available, when needed, to bring a perspective of faith into the lives of those who serve as adult volunteers. This benefits those who serve the young people and allows room for God to work.

Be a blessing, receive a blessing

Revd David Hart, ACF Chaplain

What are the blessings in becoming a cadet force chaplain? There can be many! The first is the privilege of being accepted into the lives and experiences of young people and adult volunteers who often share very deeply of their joys and sorrows, their hopes and aspirations.

There is great joy in offering Christian ministry in a community with an average age below 35!

Then there's the blessing of learning from a very wide range of life experiences, both by listening to cadets and adult volunteers, and by acquiring skills through the training and courses available in the cadet forces – from mountain leadership to first aid, from boat handling to leading a battlefield tour overseas.

Finally, and this is vital, is the growing in faith for the minister that comes from being identified with, and embedded within, the culture of the cadet force.

Chaplains hope to bring a blessing to the cadet force, but it also works the other way around. A cadet force chaplain will be surprised, amused, shocked and blessed by those whom they are called to serve!



There is great joy in offering Christian ministry in a community with an average age below 35!





Refreshment and growth

Revd Dawn Saunders, Sea Cadet Chaplain

I have recently had the privilege of joining the Jersey Sea Cadets, having been a prison chaplain and an army chaplain in the past. Chaplaincy with the Sea Cadets offers me a change of perspective from the day-to-day business of church life. You may question why a change is beneficial. One could say that church, circuit and district roles are ever-changing and varied enough. This is true, but those roles are only changing within the boundaries of similar experiences, and generally ones for which I take on a large amount of the responsibility.

Spending time with the cadets and instructors feels very special, as they are the ones with the responsibility. I witness their activities as an absorbed onlooker. The experience is educational. I learn new skills alongside them. It is refreshing and rejuvenating. The young cadets are inquisitive and often ask thought-provoking questions. I witness dedicated young people working together to achieve personal goals, build their self-confidence, self-awareness and an understanding of their responsibilities towards others. My time spent with the cadets is fun and rewarding; it adds an aspect to my ministry that feeds my creativity.

The result of this engaging work isn't just of benefit to me. I feel able to attend to my church roles bringing along some of the enthusiasm from the cadets.

In the safe space that I can offer the cadets, we tackle questions on serious subjects and the young people challenge me to consider my own views and perspectives. These types of conversations are much more of a two-way dialogue than you might first assume. A recent example arose from a debate by Jersey's parliament about legalising assisted dying. Discussions with young people outside the church have been engaging and inspiring. They have given me more viewpoints to bring to discussions within churches locally.

I have found that the cadets have begun to give more thought to activities that they might like to take part in and they involve me in their planning. This is extremely encouraging, as a bridge-builder between the church and community. This ministry should not be underestimated.



The experience is educational. I learn new skills alongside them.





A wonderful gift

Revd Ruth Midcalf, ATC Chaplain

I became an Air Training Corps (ATC) chaplain through a conversation with a local, lay ecumenical colleague. I happened to mention that I had completed some placement work with the RAF during ministry training. Unbeknown to me he was a Wing Chaplain for the ATC and so my association with the ATC began. When I became superintendent of a circuit some time later, I prayed about whether the ATC chaplaincy was something I could continue with and felt strongly called to do so for three main reasons.

Firstly, the ATC forms a key part of my contact with young people within the context of ministry, the benefits of which I can bring to wider ministry. I continue to be inspired by the cadets who, in their sharing, help to give me an insight into what it means to be a teenager, some three decades after I could claim the title! This in turn helps me think about how the Church can respond to the significant opportunities and challenges that teenagers encounter today.

Secondly, being a padre in the ATC is significant both for ecumenical and community engagement and witness. I continue to work with my Anglican Wing Chaplain colleague and we often collaborate to design and deliver activities. The cadets know us both as 'padre' and through working together we have shown that while we may come from different Christian traditions, there is much more that unites us. Through the ATC I have connected with parents, staff and volunteers whom I may never have met without being part of the ATC family. They appreciate the ministry of 'presence' and that, through me as a representative, 'the Church has come to me'.

Thirdly (and perhaps I've saved the most important until last), I enjoy being part of the ATC family – it nourishes and feeds me. My time on squadron is something I look forward to and

value. I'm sure I have learned more from the cadets than they will ever learn from me – and that's been, and continues to be, a great blessing. This nourishment positively impacts my wellbeing, and I hope that is of benefit to my wider circuit ministry and to all whom I encounter.

If you are wondering about cadet forces chaplaincy, do contact the Secretary of the Forces Board who can answer questions and/or put you in touch with a chaplain who can help you explore further. If, like me when I was first approached, you are interested but wondering if you are too busy, take time to pray this through. In the context of 'busy' circuit ministry, the busyness and business of chaplaincy with the cadets has been a wonderful gift.



Cadets appreciate the ministry of 'presence' and that, through me as a representative, 'the Church has come to me'.





This booklet offers insight into the challenges and joys of Methodists who serve as chaplains within the cadet forces.

They are fulfilling God's calling with skill and integrity as they minister among the many thousands of people who make up the cadet forces community.

We hope this resource will aid Methodists wishing to pray for colleagues engaged in this ministry.

If you are a Methodist and would like to explore this form of ministry yourself, please contact the Revd Dr Chrissie Howe, Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board, by email: SFB@methodistchurch.org.uk

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