



ANGLICAN PARISHES  
AND  
PASTORAL SUPPORT  
FOR  
MILITARY MEMBERS  
AND THEIR FAMILIES

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+Peter

The Feast of Saint Martin of Tours, 2008

## Message from the Anglican Bishop Ordinary

*“Almighty God, we thank you for the liberties this country enjoys, and for those who have worked and suffered and fought to secure them:*

- *for freedom from war and want;*
- *for freedom of thought, conscience, and speech;*
- *for freedom of worship.*

*Give us grace to defend these liberties and use them responsibly in your service; and grant that through the efforts of those who serve in the Canadian Forces throughout the world, and especially in N., these freedoms may become the secure possession of all nations. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

(Developed from FDR’s Four Freedoms speech in 1942)

*“Everlasting God, we thank you for those who continue to give themselves in defence of freedom, mercy and good faith among the nations, and especially Canadian Forces personnel in N.; for those who in life and death have quickened our lives, opened our eyes to the truth, inspired our hearts by their witness, strengthened our wills by their example, and through whose sacrifice we live. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen”*

(Adapted from the former UCC service book)

*“Almighty God, whose son is known as the Prince of Peace, we pray in earnest for all who serve in the Canadian Forces, especially in N. at this time. As they pursue their mission with courage, compassion, discipline, and honour, keep them safe under your protection, and inspire their chaplains of all faiths to give witness to the spirit and presence of the Prince of Peace. Watch over those who serve abroad and keep their families at home safe in your care. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

(Adapted from a former Canadian Forces prayer cycle.)

As Anglican Bishop Ordinary to the Canadian Forces, I have had many wonderful occasions to visit our Air, Navy and Army personnel on Wings, Formations and Bases throughout Canada. I have also been blessed with the opportunities to visit our deployed military personnel in such far away places as the Golan Heights and Afghanistan. On each of these occasions I have been moved with pride by the professionalism and dedication of our Canadian Forces personnel, and humbled by the ministry of our chaplains who seek to support them and their families. I know first-hand that the Church’s care for our military personnel is very much needed, and that such care is genuinely received with gratitude both by our service men and women and by the members of their families.

This resource provides valuable insights and practical guidelines to assist Anglican parishes in extending appropriate care to deployed military personnel and their families. ‘See how they love one another’ is the observation of the Roman world about the Christians in the third century (as noted by Tertullian, *Apology* 39.6). It is that same character of love and care for one another that we seek to embody in parishes today. This resource will help parishes become an extended caring family to Canadian Forces personnel and their families.

Please know that the members of the Chapter of the Anglican Ordinariate, and the seventy-five priests of our Clericus, are committed to assist parishes in providing spiritual and pastoral care to deployed military personnel and their loved ones at home. We want to help you to support them. If you have suggestions about how this resource can be improved, or if you have any questions, or desire to know more, please contact us. And may God richly bless your parish in this ministry.

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**Anglican parishes and the offering of spiritual and pastoral support for Canadian Forces members deployed on overseas or domestic operations, and care for their families at home.**

**Introduction:**

Canadian military personnel can be deployed overseas to many different types of environments and levels of threat. Deployment overseas might be to a hostile and aggressive theatre of operations; to a politically stable yet socially and psychologically disturbing theatre of operations in which the military member may witness severe poverty and abusive government control; to an area of the world where there is relative stability and prosperity yet requiring the presence of military personnel to maintain peace within a country or in a border area between countries; or to a place of reconstruction after a natural or civic disaster

Military personnel may also be deployed within Canada on domestic operations. Some are routine (e.g. a six month tour of duty in Alert, Nunavut), but it is possible that a situation may develop in Canada with a significant threat level that will require the presence of military for an extended duration in a specific location.

Regardless of environment, when a military member is deployed away from home and family for significant periods of time, the Anglican parish community with which the member or family is associated will want to be spiritually and pastorally supportive of both the deployed individual and her/his family at home. This leaflet will offer some practical suggestions to the parish that seeks to offer such support.

**Sample Prayers**

There are many excellent resources for prayers and liturgies in support of deployed personnel and families. Military chaplains in your area or the Chapter of the Anglican Military Ordinariate will be able to suggest appropriate resources for your particular parish circumstances. One useful resource is *They Shall Grow Not Old - Liturgies for Remembrance*, published by Canterbury Press 2006. A CD ROM comes with this resource.

As part of a litany or series of intercessions in a public liturgy, the following words may be helpful as a guide:

*...As we pray for peace on earth let us remember all who have been called to place themselves in harm's way for the sake of peace, security and justice, at home and abroad. Especially do we pray God's protection for the members of the Armed Forces of this Country who serve in distant lands (including Name of region at this time). May their efforts and sacrifice bring peace and hope to others. We also remember their families at home: for those that count the days, and for those who mourn. And we pray that the day may be hastened when war shall be no more.*

Other prayers below have been adapted from various sources:

*"Lord God of hosts, stretch forth your almighty arm to strengthen and protect all those who strive for peace, and especially those who serve in the Armed Forces of our country in places like N. at this time. Keep them safe from all evil, both in the day of battle, and in times of rest and training. Endue them with courage and loyalty, and grant that in all things, they may serve You, the Prince of Peace. Strengthen their families at home, and reunite them again in your Love. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

individual and family. Do not ask too many questions about the deployment itself, especially the worst-case scenarios. Coffee time should allow for some sharing of stories but not such that the member is prevented from reconnecting or is re-traumatized by the recalling of tragic events. Perhaps it would help the member to formally share their experience once at a coffee time but guided by covering the ups as well as the downs of the experience. Once there is this type of sharing, the member needs to be given opportunity to re-connect with parish life and projects: to return to life in the here and now.

Include the family when the member shares in this way so that the full story of the deployment is communicated. Be sensitive to the need for the sharing to be appropriate for the persons present. It would be good for a member of the parish to speak about how the member and the family were upheld in prayer, and what a privilege it was for the parish to do so. It would be appropriate to express how the parish family looks forward to the whole family's presence and participation in the faith community.

Sensitively give thanks for the family reunion, but remember that the military member may have returned with a profound grief and confusion about his or her tour of duty. Sometimes a defined psychological injury will only be diagnosed many months after return to Canada. In such cases the parish must be very sensitive to respect the appropriate rights of the family to reveal as much or as little of the nature of such an injury to others. Nonetheless, in all circumstances, the parish that is informed and prayerful will be seen to be the caring and compassionate extended family. For in reality the parish is exactly that - the extended spiritual family of the returned member who is re-united at home with spouse, children, parents, and friends.

### **Regular Force Members and Reservists**

A full-time member of the Canadian military (Regular Force member) is obliged to go to any area of the world and serve in any situation or conflict in which the Canadian military is involved and where his or her presence is required. A part-time member of the Canadian military (Reservist) normally is not required to participate in any specific overseas or extended domestic operation, but is often given the opportunity to volunteer for such an operation. This requires that the Reservist make arrangements with an employer or school for the required time to train, deploy and debrief. This can be as long as one year for a single deployment.

Most of the dynamics of pastoral support appropriate to deployed military members and families at home are applicable to both Regular Force and Reservist members. But there are some obvious differences that are highlighted in this resource. For example, a significant difference for the Reservist from a rural area who returns from deployment is the greater distance from health-care resources that are located typically in urban centers and near or in military bases.

### **When is it appropriate for a parish to offer spiritual and pastoral support to deployed members and families at home?**

Always.

Nonetheless this is an important and difficult question upon which the parish leadership must reflect, because it is very easy to confuse support of the member and family with support of the operations on which the member is

deployed. The intent of this resource is to describe ways in which parishes might offer support regardless of the nature of the operations to which the member is deployed. In any particular military mission in which Canada is involved, some individuals in Anglican parishes will be highly supportive of Canada's presence and role. Others will have doubts about the nature of Canada's involvement. Some will be determined that Canada should withdraw its troops immediately. In addition to these varying opinions on a particular mission, some Anglican pacifists will oppose violence in any form at any time.

Many Canadians support most of the conflict interventions, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian relief activities with which Canada's military becomes engaged. However, since this level of support is not always present it is critical that support of military personnel and families not be tied to the perceived moral right or wrong of a particular mission in the eyes of the parish or individuals in the parish. The emotional, psychological and relational stresses along with the spiritual needs of the individual deployed and the family at home remain real, regardless of the overall judgment of the moral worthiness of the intervention and participation of military personnel. It is too easy perhaps on the one hand to equate the offering of pastoral support to military members and their families with ideological support for military intervention, and on the other hand, to be slack in offering pastoral support because of one's disapproval of Canadian military involvement in a specific situation.

### **Post-deployment: the military member returns.**

*Significant stresses and issues for the member and family include:*

The member is transitioning from a war zone to a peace zone; from an unsafe environment to a safe environment; from an alone context on the intimate level to a coupled context; from a group mentality to once again an individual mentality. It is all about adjustment and re-integration.

For the family it is allowing a 'stranger' back into the fold. An older child may have to give up a role naturally belonging to the deployed parent. It is the same for the spouse. There is considerable literature on this and it would help a parish to know about this re-integration process.

It is important to note that issues for the member, and thus for the family dynamic, may not surface or become significant for several months, or even more than a year after the return of the deployed military member.

#### ***How the parish can help in the post-deployment stage:***

Learn about typical dynamics of family re-integration after deployment, and as far as possible help the family to anticipate what to expect, thus being better prepared for the homecoming.

Watch for signs of distress and anxiety in both the returned member and family.

Welcome the member back into the community deliberately and intentionally in ways appropriate to the

Spiritually, the tour can raise - for the member deployed, and for the family - existential questions. What is the purpose and meaning of life? Where is God in these situations? If a loved one is killed – how could God allow that to happen, as I prayed faithfully every day and the parish prayed as well?

There also can be significant spiritual growth. The member can feel he or she went through the valley and God walked beside them. The family can feel God was with them and helped them cope and become stronger.

***How the parish can help when a family member is deployed:***

Keep in touch with the family on a regular basis.

Establish a prayer chain for the deployed member and family.

Design prayers for the public liturgy that are appropriate – not supporting the mission itself, but supporting the troops that are on deployment, and their families at home, praying for the deployed member from the parish by name.

Send postcards, appropriate notes, assurance of prayers, care packages, etc. to the member on deployment.

Be careful not to offer simplistic answers to tragic events. Present a theology capable of allowing members and their families to have a deeper understanding of God amidst challenging life events.

**Chaplains in the military**

There are approximately two hundred Regular Force Chaplains and one hundred and thirty Reservist Chaplains in the Canadian Military. This includes forty-five Anglican priests in the Regular Force chaplaincy and thirty Anglican priests who serve as Reservists. The Canadian Forces chaplaincy is ecumenical and inter-faith. Chaplains (Regular Force and Reservist) accompany military personnel on all significant operations. For example, during the Afghanistan operations there were always four chaplains in theatre (situated in the base camps and regularly traveling to the forward operating bases), two chaplains in a staging area outside Afghanistan ministering to personnel as they entered and left the area of conflict, and one chaplain in the military hospital in Germany where the significantly wounded were taken. In addition, Regular Force and Reservist chaplains play an integral role in the ‘rear party’ pastoral support offered to families at home in Canada.

Military chaplains are highly trained and experienced in dealing with the psychological, emotional, relational and spiritual challenges of both deployed personnel and families. They are available to meet with parish leadership to share important insights as a parish seeks to establish appropriate and effective patterns of pastoral and spiritual support to members and families.

What follows is an attempt to outline some of the stresses that are typically experienced by the deployed member on operations and his or her family at home. The following is written in non-technical language for the average parishioner. If you want to explore more deeply and precisely the psychological, emotional, physiological and

spiritual dynamics of the effects of military deployment on members and their families, we advise that you consult with health care professionals.

### **At the pre-deployment stage.**

*Significant stresses and issues for the member include:*

Psychological – anticipatory grief reactions. Emotionally there can be anger and even depression for both the person deploying and those left behind. Children can have these reactions as well. There can also be an element of fear, not only about the dangers of the mission itself, but also about the impact of the separation on a couple's relationship and the family generally.

For the member there can be significant excitement in anticipation of the opportunity to put their training into action. Consequently there can be a significant 'disconnect' emotionally with what a spouse, if married, or parents, if single, may be experiencing – such as anticipatory grief. There can be impatience on the part of the member to simply 'get going' while the remaining family wishes that the day of departure never arrives.

Spiritually, there may be an issue of anticipatory grief. The emotional preparation for separation might be a new experience in the relationship. There are often concerns around fidelity, both for the partner deployed and the partner at home. Plans must be in place for extended family support. Farewell parties and gatherings may mask deeper issues of the separating family members. If active in the faith community, there is the need to build connections with parishioners and other spiritual support networks.

*Significant stresses and issues for the deployed member may include the following.*

For the member engaged in combat, the emotional gap and distance from life 'back home' can be considerable. By virtue of their profession they have entered a world that may be tremendously fulfilling professionally and yet its particulars not easily able to be translated/transferred to life with family in Canada. A soldier may have seen the death of some of his or her comrades, or of civilian non-combatants. A soldier may have killed someone of the opposing force. Such experiences are not un-expected on a military operation, but are entirely 'out of the ordinary' and almost incomprehensible in life back home in Canada.

Some physiological symptoms may also be experienced by a deployed member in an operational environment. Circumstances during the deployment or negative news about the family back home may lead to the member not coping well, being stressed and unable to function at an optimal level.

All military deployments have their cycles of highs and lows. As the tour of duty nears its end, especially during dangerous missions, there are considerable psychological challenges that may be manifested in different ways. The member may unwittingly begin to practice the avoidance of exposure to operational threats – such as a reluctance to 'go outside the wire' for fear of being killed prior to getting home. Members may begin to feel anxious about the prospects of returning home, wondering about the changes in themselves and in their loved ones during their separation, and the members may be uncertain whether the quality of relationships will quickly be renewed upon return.



### *In case of death or physical injury during deployment*

Particularly significant for the family at home will be if notification is given to another family in the parish that their loved serving abroad has been killed. Sensitive pastoral care must be provided to the families of other deployed military personnel in the parish who will be particularly affected by this situation. For the specific family that is notified of such a death, the parish that has surrounded the family with love and support before the incident will be well placed to offer appropriate and on-going pastoral support in this time of crisis. When a parish grieves the death of a military member, the spiritual leadership of the parish must be upheld in prayer as it guides not only the immediate family, but the entire parish through an appropriate grieving process that typically will last for many months and years. Part of this grieving will be the urgent existential pondering of questions of justice and evil in a world created and sustained by God's Love.

If a military member is wounded abroad, the immediate family will receive personal notification of such injury through a notification team that will include a chaplain. The chaplain will be eager to work with the Rector of the parish, with the family's permission, to establish both an immediate and longer term pastoral care plan that will ensure continued pastoral support both for the wounded military member and the family. The wounded member may return home immediately or may continue to receive medical attention abroad before returning home. If the parish has established a routine of public and private prayer for the deployed member and his or her family, the family will take great comfort in the continuing prayers of the parish. For such a parish, there will be many special opportunities to offer practical and spiritual support for the member and his or her family during recovery.

There will certainly be critical moments of ponderings and reflections. Special family times alone are very important.

Financially there is often less stress because the deployment often means additional income – but this means that there could be financial issues post-deployment if the received funds were not well spent by the deployed member or family back in Canada.

### ***How the parish can help at the pre-deployment stage:***

Chapels and local congregations may wish to put up signs to remember those members during a deployment; tie yellow ribbons at the front of the church or hang a banner within - to recall the coming deployment, to be reminded of those deployed during an operation, and then meaningfully take down these types of symbols after the deployment is completed.

The Military Family Support Centre and the Deployment Support Centre will be conducting family briefings prior to deployment. It is a good opportunity for local parishes to attend one of those briefings to have an overall view of the resources available to families during the deployment.

The pre-deployment phase affords a good opportunity for local parishes to become identified as resources for the families of the deployed.

Brochures and literature are available for distribution with contact numbers listing 'What to Expect' prior to, during, and following a deployment.

The Parish can be especially helpful if in their Sunday liturgy the deployed and family members are always

prayed for. To be intentionally remembered in prayer is very helpful to the member deployed, knowing he or she is prayed for, and to the families who are grateful that prayers are offered for their loved one and for themselves.

Pastoral visits to the family during deployment are important and need to be done routinely, i.e. not just following a critical incident in theatre. A visit to the family is always useful when there is any incident in theatre, even though not involving the family. This provides comfort as such an incident usually arouses concerns for the family. Routine visits will be much more beneficial and will allow the pastor to become aware of other, non-tragic issues that may be troubling a family, either with children not coping, spouse not coping, etc.

Generally, the parish leadership and members can make an effort to learn about the typical psychological rhythms of a military member preparing to leave and of the family preparing for the absence.

It is generally possible to talk to a military chaplain to get particulars of the specific operational environment to which the member will be deployed.

Of course there are very practical ways to show support. Simple initiatives like the sending of cards to the member in theatre, and the putting together of personal and 'homey' care packages not only encourages the member in theatre but also demonstrates the parish's supportive attitude to the family at home.

### **During the deployment of the military member.**

*Significant stresses and issues for the family at home include:*

If married, the spouse who remains at home obviously has increased responsibility for the running of the household and the care of children. The remaining spouse may be required to do tasks (such as handling finances) that had always been done by the deployed spouse. As a virtual single parent there will be many emotionally demanding and time consuming increased responsibilities that were formerly taken care of by the deployed member.

Psychologically there will be a need to make adjustments required by the absence of the loved one deployed. The family must think of itself in a different configuration during the deployment. The adjustment may entail a kind of 'letting go' and almost a kind of emotional 'moving on.' This can sometimes be disturbing for the spouse at home, who may feel guilty that the family is operating well, without the presence of the deployed member. This is normal and healthy but it does mean that at the end of the tour there will be a need to 'make room' once again for the re-engagement and reconfiguration of family dynamics.

Sometimes a spouse at home may not adjust appropriately to the absence of the deployed member. Such a spouse may begin to de-compensate, not eating or sleeping, and general functioning may be quite low. In this case, children's needs may not be met and the family may generally be doing poorly.