

ANGLICAN ORDINARIATE FOR THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES PASSIONTIDE AND EASTER 2016

BULLETIN/VOLUME 13, No. 4



BISHOP ORDINARY TO THE FORCES

THE RIGHT REV'D PETER COFFIN STB, MA, DD

BISHOP ELECT

Col the Ven N. Shaw, CD

ARCHDEACON PRO TEM

LCol the Rev'd M.L. Staples, CD

CANONS

Maj the Rev'd R. Fead, CD
CANON RESERVIST

LCdr the Rev'd J. Gosse
CANON SECRETARY

LCol the Rev'd T. Meaker, CD
CANON TREASURER

LCol the Rev'd Canon D. Friesen, CD,

LCdr the Rev'd E. Swayze, CD

Maj the Rev'd S. Samson, CD

This bulletin is an informal document for the members of Clericus, intended as a means of communication and as an expression of our fellowship. It is issued under the authority of the Anglican Bishop Ordinary. **To submit an article, please email michael.peterson@forces.gc.ca**

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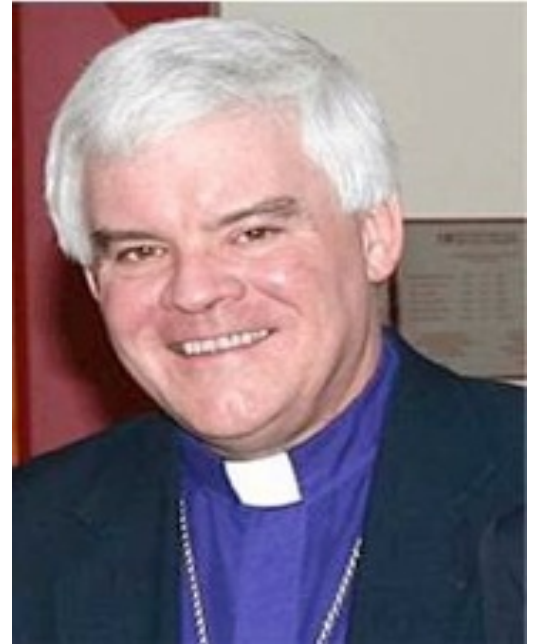
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BISHOP PETER'S MESSAGE

Holy Week and Eastertide 2016

Dear Friends

As you know by now and as you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, my successor Padre Nigel Shaw was chosen by members of the Anglican Military Ordinariate on March 5th and ratified by the Primate and the four Metropolitans (Regional Archbishops). This is good news indeed and we wish Nigel, Janet and their family every blessing in this new and blessed ministry.



I would like to thank those who brought us to this point and those who brought the choice of a new bishop to fruition. Padre Gordon Mintz headed up the Search Committee and four nominees were gracious enough to let their names stand for discernment. I am particularly grateful to Gordon for keeping in touch with these worthy people throughout the process. I am also grateful to Padres Michelle Staples (Archdeacon Pro Tem) and Jennifer Gosse (Canon Secretary) and to our Chancellor, Ann Bourke, for managing the process. I particularly thank our Primate for his usual gracious support and enthusiasm throughout. His address to the Electoral College is on the Anglican Military Ordinariate (AMO) website and is worth a visit. I am grateful to a whole host of other people who are acknowledged in Padre Staple's article further on in this edition. I am grateful to The Very Reverend Shane Parker and the staff and people of our Ordinariate Cathedral, Christ Church Cathedral, Ottawa. For all of these and for our new bishop we give thanks to God the giver of all good gifts!

This is my last Newsletter and I would like to give thanks for so much and for so many. I have had the privilege of serving with a great number of wonderful people some of whom have retired ahead of me. Amongst these are members of The Chapter, the Canons and Archdeacons who take counsel for the affairs of the AMO community. There are also people that do particular 'bits' of the ministry: Cynthia Greenwood who keeps our list of chaplains; Padre Michael Peterson our newsletter editor; Padre Shawn Samson who keeps our Canons (rules which govern us) in good order and our new Chancellor, Ann Bourke; Padre Gordon Mintz who set up our website and Padre John Hounsell-Drover who is our

webmaster and Facebook page person now. I give thanks for members of the Interfaith Committee on Military Chaplaincy (ICCMC) with whom I have served these many years and for all that they have taught me about ecumenical and multi-faith expressions of “doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God”. (Micah 6:8) And there are so many more who stand ready to serve and with whom I have had the privilege to work.

Above all I give thanks for our chaplains – all of them- our Anglicans and those with whom they serve! I have always been particularly proud of the place that Anglicans have taken in the chaplaincy in numbers far beyond our percentage of the Canadian faith community demographics. I am proud of the way that our Primate, our bishops and indeed the whole Anglican Church of Canada support our chaplains, our military members and their families. And I am so proud of the Canadian Armed Forces – members past and present and their families who also serve. May God continue to hold them all in the palm of His hand!

I have had the privilege of serving as the Bishop Ordinary for twelve years, three of which were contiguous with being Bishop of Ottawa. I have always been blessed with every appointment that I have ever had and if someone were to ask me what my favourite appointment was I would have to quote a former Chaplain General, Padre John Fletcher: “Whatever I was doing at the time”. This time with you has been a particular blessing. When I came on board in 2005 I was close to retirement age but not yet ready to fade into that good night. Not at all! Being with you has been life giving to me personally and Deborah feels the same. We both came from military families and when we were back with you it felt familiar. It was a time of high operational tempo with stresses and strains on military members and those who also served on the home front, the rear party people and the families, and still, as always, you have stood ready. I am so proud to have been a part of your life. I am so grateful for the graciousness that you have shown to us.

We now are in the midst of that for which we must be truly grateful for it gives us our ultimate meaning and indeed, abundant life! It is the very core of our faith and our eternal joy! This is the season of our Lord’s Passion as he goes to the cross and suffers and to win a victory which we will share. Though the darkness closes in and evil seems to predominate it will not have the final word. These things will never go away until the Kingdom comes in its fullness but they will be redeemed, overcome and transcended. The barriers to life here and in the future are down and on the third day He rises and the women race from the tomb to tell the story. In that we live and move and have our being and for this we need to be eternally

grateful and in response live grateful lives. He rose again and lives in each and every one of us! Alleluia!

May you all have a blessed Eastertide and Thank You so very Much!

+Peter

A Word From Our Bishop Elect

One week later the reality of the election is just starting to settle in. It has been some time that the possibility of being elected was present but the actuality is of a different order. That I will soon be releasing from the CAF in order to undertake these new responsibilities is now confirmed and not just a theoretical possibility. I must state that it is difficult to accept leaving military service though I am quite excited by the new ministries that await.



Col. the Ven. Nigel Shaw
Bishop Elect

Of course it makes it much easier to contemplate knowing that I am leaving but not really going. The next few months will be very busy transitioning out of the military and commencing ministry as Bishop Ordinary and I ask for your prayers during this time. I will need your prayers throughout but especially at this time.

The first thing that I would like to do as the departing Archdeacon is take a moment to thank everyone who has assisted in helping us as an Ordinariate to come to this day. I am not just thinking of those directly involved in the selection and election process, though their work was absolutely critical and faithfully executed, but of all chaplains and laity who have worked for many years to bring

us to the point of electing a Bishop Ordinary for the first time. It is a long and remarkable story that has been over a decade in length.

I am humbled by your trust in selecting me for this office and promise to do my utmost to honour and respond to that trust. As I have stated earlier the opportunity to continue in ministry with the Ordinariate is a great privilege for which I am profoundly thankful. I would be remiss if I did not ask in particular for prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude for +Peter our beloved Bishop. This is equally a time of transition for him and Deborah and words are inadequate to describe what they have meant to our corporate life and to us as individuals who have been recipients of their pastoral care. May God's richest blessing fill their lives as they move into new ministries in his name.

I will be in a position to say more about my plans at the clericus meeting this summer and have only a few announcements to make at this time. I will be immediately creating a dedicated civilian e-mail address to provide for confidential communications and I will also establish a Facebook account for more general communication (though first I am going to have to learn how to use Facebook). The information concerning these will be distributed by Canon Gosse and published in subsequent newsletters.

I am pleased to inform you that Canon Staples has accepted to serve as Archdeacon of the Ordinariate and will be collated at the Ordinariate service on 29 May. I am also announcing that Padre Gordon Mintz will be appointed a Canon of the Ordinariate at the same service (*see p. 9 for service details - ed.*).

It is my hope that despite the logistical challenges many of you will be able to be present for these services. I look forward to meeting and sharing ministry with you in the time ahead.

May this Easter season be a rich blessing to you and your lives a blessing to others

Yours in Christ.

Nigel+

An Historic Election

For the first time in history, Anglicans in the CAF have chosen their own Bishop. On Saturday 5 March, a cross section of delegates lay and ordained, representing Anglicans from across the CAF, dialed into a conference call and were greeted by the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. After receiving the Primate's Charge, and saying Morning Prayer together, they proceeded to vote electronically for one of the four nominees for Bishop Ordinary to the Canadian Forces.

In the past, the Bishop for the Anglican Military Ordinariate (AMO) was appointed by the Primate (the senior bishop within the national church) from among serving or retired bishops. A few years ago, however, the Anglican Clericus, a group consisting of Anglican chaplains in the CAF, raised the vision of electing its own bishop. The proposal was approved by General Synod and on 5 March the vision became a reality.

The current bishop, The Rt Rev'd Peter Coffin, was appointed 12 years ago when he was still Bishop of the Diocese of Ottawa. Since his appointment to the AMO, he has provided wise leadership on the Inter Faith Committee on Canadian Military Chaplaincy (ICCMC) and compassionate pastoral oversight to Anglicans in the CAF. He will, however, reach compulsory retirement age this year. Our new bishop, Colonel the Venerable Nigel Shaw, was duly elected and will be consecrated Anglican Bishop Ordinary to the CAF in Christ Church Cathedral, Ottawa, on 28 May 2016.

As bishop-elect, Padre Nigel Shaw brings a unique depth of experience to his new role. He enrolled in the CAF as a chaplain in the Primary Reserve in 1985, serving 26 Service Battalion located in Sault Ste Marie. He is a graduate of Trinity College, University of Toronto, having completed a Bachelor of Arts in 1980 and a Master of Divinity in 1984. He was subsequently ordained as a Deacon in the Anglican Church in 1984 and then as a Priest in 1985. Prior to enrolling in the Regular Force, he served as Assistant Curate at Holy Trinity, Sault Ste Marie in the Diocese of Algoma. In July 1986, at the completion of his curacy, he transferred to the Regular Force.

Bishop-Elect Shaw served a number of units over his distinguished military career, ending up as Director of Chaplain Operations in NDHQ. All the while, he continued to foster his vocation as priest by volunteering at local Anglican parishes, participating in military chapels, and by accepting leadership positions within the AMO such as Treasurer and, finally, Archdeacon. At the same time, his formation as an Anglican has been strengthened by his engagement with members of other faith groups. He is deeply committed to building inter-faith relations.

Married with two grown daughters, our new Bishop-Elect understands the unique challenges families face in the CAF. He looks forward to moving to a role where he can devote more of his time and energy to offering compassionate, pastoral care to CAF members and their families. The Royal Canadian Chaplain Service's motto is "Called to Serve". Bishop Elect Shaw has been called to serve in a unique ministry. He has answered the call and is ready, aye, to serve as the Anglican Bishop Ordinary to the CAF.

Canon Doug Friesen

"Archdeacon, we have an election..."

The first draft of the Canon was crafted in a tent, in a sandpit, in Yellowknife, in February. How else would an organization like ours begin the process of change, if not from an operations base....somewhere? Thinking back to the conditions of that exercise, I am so very thankful that there were many willing hands waiting to take that draft and run with it: folks like newly appointed AMO Chancellor, Ann Bourke, General Synod Chancellor David Jones, the Council of General Synod Chancellor Team, Padre Shawn Samson, and, a whole host of other interested parties inside and outside of the military.

Given the sheer numbers of fingers in this particular pie, this process might have been burdensome, and could well have been a real mess. But this was not the case at all. From our beloved Primate, +Peter our bishop, to all who were there to advise us and help shape our work, lay and clerics alike, there was never a deviation from course: we were on track to set in place the means to elect a bishop for our military family, and by golly we got there.

And so it was, on the 5th of March 2016, +Fred the Chair of the Electoral College, Archdeacon Paul Fehely as one of our advisors, and Brian Bukowski, our tech-guy, the three musketeers plus one (as we laughingly called Jennifer Gosse, Ann Bourke, Chuck Staples and myself) all gathered at Church House for the day that we had been working toward for over five years: the day of election. It was a surreal experience for most of us in that room.

Let me backtrack to remind everyone where we had been. Six years ago this summer, we asked the General Synod to allow us to change the General Synod Canons to include the provision for us to elect a bishop for the AMO. Upon receiving approbation, we got to work. Immediately on board were the chancellors of General Synod, and many hours were spent working with Ann and David, researching and laying out the options to make this happen. In a full half day consultation with the AMO Clericus, we decided to use an Electoral College approach, which would allow us to include our AMO laity. Then we rolled up our sleeves. Since that time, we have presented, and received approbation for, General Synod Canon XX111, Canonical Prescription IV, Terms of Reference for Electoral College, Search Committee, and finally, for the holding of our first election. What a team effort! Upon reflection, it has been an effort of the whole church (internationally—as we often consulted with our military friends serving other nations), and many of our colleagues within our AMO family. Who says that church can't move when she needs to!

And so we found ourselves at Church House on a cold Saturday in March. And on the table before us was a BAS, one that had been used aboard Canadian warships, on FOBs across Afghanistan—from Khandahar to Kabul to Bagram—and in the airplanes performing search and rescue missions across the Atlantic Ocean and beyond. There was a candle from the chapel at Church House. There was a Bible opened to the reading of the day, and there were 20 faithful souls gathered across the country and in that room; some were holding onto their phones, some were gathering shoulder to shoulder, as together, we, the Electoral College of the AMO, prayed the office led by our Pastor, Padre for-a-day +Fred. We did this knowing that +Peter, our beloved Bishop, was in vigil for us back in Ottawa. Never for a moment did we think that we were not covered in prayer. And then those wonderful words, *Archdeacon, we have an election.* And the Primate's smile was infectious; everyone around the table was swept up in the moment. God is good.

We could not have come to this place without the work of many, but today I would like to take the opportunity to thank those who humbly and graciously allowed

their names to stand: Cdr (Ret'd) Baxter Park, Maj (Ret'd) Reg Gilbert, Maj (Ret'd) David Warren, and, now bishop-elect, Col Nigel Shaw. I would also like to thank the hard work, prayer, and diligence of the Search Committee headed up by Padre Gordon Mintz, and comprised of Christina Barrett, AB Justin McAuley and Kristin Mills (with Margaret MacLennan ready to pitch hit if necessary), and Padres Jeanine Friesen, Michael Peterson, and Shaun Turner. The work of this committee allowed us to better enter the process of the election, by enabling us to get to know the nominees and for leading us in a prayerful approach to the election itself.

Finally, I would like to thank the Electoral College who came together to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst, and who gave their vote joyfully and with prayerful dedication and presence: Joshua Newhook, Chuck Staples, Kathy Cormier, Debbie Thomas, Dawn Lea Greer, and Padres Todd Meaker, Doug Friesen, Rob Fead, Murray Bateman, John Hounsell-Drover, Marty Keatings, Brad Smith, and Lisa Pacarynuk.

Canon Michelle Staples,
Archdeacon Pro Tem



Around The Ordinariate

May Service Schedule in Ottawa

28 May (Saturday) - Consecration Service

14:00hrs, Christ Church Cathedral, 439 Queen St, Ottawa, ON K1R 5A6

Reception to Follow

Dress for All Military Is CAF 1A

All AMO Chaplains are invited to vest, cassock/surplice or alb and stoles vice chaplain scarves. Liturgical colour: Red.

29 May (Sunday) - Ordinariate Service

10:30hrs, Christ Church Cathedral, 439 Queen St, Ottawa, ON K1R 5A6

Dress for All Military is CAF 1A (Only Chapter Vests)

Padre Healy-Morrow Retires

From Bishop Peter:

After 14 years as Chaplain to the Rocky Mountain Rangers out of Kamloops, BC Padre Isabel Healy-Morrow departed from the CAF with dignity after she reached 60 on February 19th. I quote from a letter I received from her: "Many years ago the CF recruiting team had a slogan 'There is no life like it', and it is true. The years that I have spent as a padre have been the best ones of my life, and I am sure that you feel the same. I hope that you and I can both in our retirement continue to encourage and support the men and women who wear the uniform and defend our beautiful country of Canada." (Flagstaff Farm, 7135 Blackwell Rd., RR # 2, Kamloops, BC, V2C 6V8 - st.georges@shaw.ca)

Isabel has always been in touch with me and I receive news of her often from her Bishop, Barbara Andrews. She is an exemplary priest in the Territory of the Central Interior and chaplain to the Rocky Mountain Rangers where she is held in deep fondness and esteem. We will miss her and give thanks to her and to God for her ministry with the CAF and wish her all the best in that which is yet to come. She has been a blessing to us!



Treasury Matters

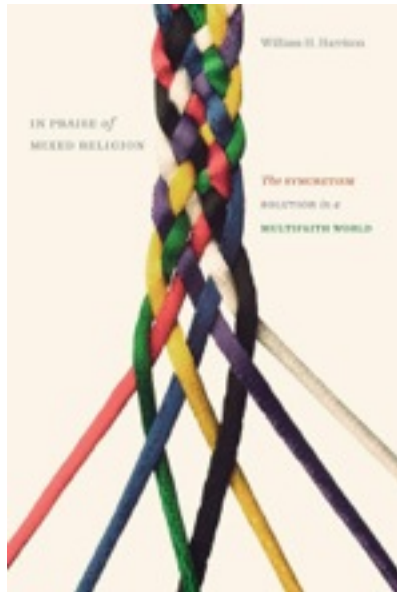
I really want to thank all of those who have contributed and continue to contribute to the Anglican Military Ordinariate so faithfully. This has allowed us to have our own bishop and to make contributions to a wider mission and thus participate fully in the life of the Anglican Church of Canada. It is always our desire to do more and your gifts, as always, will go a long way to ensuring the continuation of our mission within and beyond our military community.

There are a number of routes for contributing. Many of the chaplains do so through the unit's annual United Appeal Campaign. Others do so via 'Canada Helps' and by entering 'Anglican Military Ordinariate'. This is by far the easiest route. Cheques can also be sent to our treasurer Major the Rev. Gordon Mintz who has kindly agreed to fulfil this role which has been so ably done by LCol the Rev Canon Todd Meaker. As Gordon may be moving this summer we have no address for him but we will use this mail drop: Anglican Military Ordinariate, c/o Bldg. 469, CFSU Uplands, 101 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0K2

With Gratitude
+Peter

Book Review:

William H. Harrison, *In Praise of Mixed Religion: The Syncretism Solution in a Multifaith World* (Montreal and Kingston: Queen's University Press, 2014).



By Padre Michael Peterson

The Rev. Dr. William Harrison is a priest in the ACC, and as such, his recent book seemed worthy of a notice in this newsletter. Harrison founded the Kootenay School of Ministry in Kamloops, BC, in 2009 and was its first principal. In 2014 he moved to the Diocese of Huron to become Director of Mission and Ministry.

Harrison's book is clearly written and aimed at a general readership. His title may promise more than it delivers, because at the end of the day it is really a call for open, inter-faith dialogue based on the supposition that all religions seek the same answers to the same human question. If there is a `problem` for which Harrison sees syncretism as the solution, that solution would seem to be rest on two proposals. One is for a return to the religious viewpoints that that the Enlightenment claimed we could do without. The second is for religious viewpoints with soft boundaries that allow believers to benefit from the wisdom of other religious viewpoints.

As confessing Christians who belong to a multi-faith organization, we may be suspicious of the word `syncretism`. Indeed, in discussions and research with chaplain colleagues on the subject of pluralism, I have heard syncretism used

pejoratively to indicate a kind of debased or adulterated faith. Harrison himself admits that many religious people see syncretism as a threat, but the kind that he himself advocates for in this book is a sharing of insights and wisdom between religious traditions. He argues that we as Anglicans should be receptive to this idea of syncretism, since Anglicanism “has a too-often ignored commitment to learning from the rest of the world” (xiii).

In defence of his claim that religion “is always more complicated than we might initially imagine”, Harrison offers three historical examples of beneficial syncretism from religious history: the Han Chinese adoption of Buddhism when officially-sponsored Confucianism proved inadequate, the Arab Islam adoption of Greek scholarship to flesh out its legal and philosophical structures (and the subsequent reintroduction of Greek thought into medieval Christianity from Islam), and Mediterranean Christianity’s incorporation of elements (such as an appreciation of nature as part of creation) from Celtic culture. In these cases, he argues, syncretism has enlarged the pool of mental and spiritual resources available to religious believers as they try to understand life’s questions.

Sometimes syncretism has negative consequences, as when religious viewpoints are appropriated and used, almost parasitically, by other viewpoints. Harrison offers several examples as well, such as the post-Constantinian confluence of Christianity and Roman imperial thought, whereby Christianity could bless and foster hierarchical social structures and state-sponsored violence. The way in which late-modern capitalism has monetized Christianity and Buddhism, so that the prosperity gospel and mindfulness become vehicles for unsustainable and inequitable wealth, offer two other examples. In these cases, Harrison freely admits that the standards by which we judge syncretism to be positive or negative are subjective. As a liberal protestant, Harrison’s decision that just war theory or the prosperity gospel are negative syncretisms would not be shared by a conservative Catholic (just war) or by certain American evangelicals (prosperity gospel), who might even reject the proposition that these are syncretisms.

In deciding what is a good or bad syncretism, Harrison tries for a tricky balance on what he calls the “principle of preservation of insights”. In other words, each religion has a core viewpoint that gives it its boundaries and identity. Harrison rests his opposition to the prosperity gospel and just war theory on a certain reading of the Christian gospel as originating in “an intimate group coming together to worship Jesus, share in the Eucharistic meal, and distribute alms to the poor” (144). However, too much concern to preserve a faith’s insights can lead believers into a trap of the trap of rigid boundaries and closed thinking.

At its heart, Harrison's book is essentially a long cry against sectarianism. Towards the end he writes that "We betray (openness) if we fall into closed-mindedness now, or if we try to deny openness as part of our own formation. Rather than being a fall away from traditional purity, openness is an acceptance of historical reality. Openness means the honesty to admit that we live and have always lived with soft boundaries rather than with clearly defined and impermeable walls around us" (179).

After reading the book, I remain unsure if, outside of his historical examples, Harrison is using the term syncretism as it is classically understood in Religious Studies, or whether he is simply describing conditions of postmodernity and globalization as they influence practices of belief and spirituality. Take, for example, a Canadian who worships in a Christian church, keeps a mostly vegetarian diet for health reasons and because of some notion that it is less cruel to animals, and also practices yoga and mindfulness meditation. Is that person an example of syncretism, or merely being a Canadian in postmodernity? While I remain somewhat uncertain of his "syncretism solution", my stance in the Anglican tradition, which grew out of an historical confluence of Calvinism, Lutheranism, and a certain Elizabethan tolerance to elements of Catholicism, makes me sympathetic to Harrison's idea of "soft boundaries". The influence of aboriginal spirituality on Canadian Anglicanism, both in large issues such as alternate models of episcopal governance and smaller examples such as the incorporation of smudging into liturgies, is certainly an example of a modern syncretism as Harrison seems to use the term.

As Anglican chaplains we practice our faith and ministry in an increasingly complex environment. We may retreat to our own denominational corner to regroup and recharge, but we may also feel the need, as Harrison quotes Gandhi as saying, that we need to be open "to religious wisdom, whatever the source" (198). Perhaps the greatest value of Harrison's book is that it sets out the principles through which interfaith dialogue in postmodernity might proceed, and powerfully argues for why such dialogue should proceed.

“We Had Very Hearty Services”: Easter 1916 In The Trenches - Remembering Anglican Chaplaincy In The Great War

By Padre Michael Peterson

To mark the centennial of the First World War, the AMO Newsletter continues a series of vignettes of Canada’s Anglican chaplains and their ministry throughout that conflict. Each instalment in the series will recall a time one hundred years prior to the writing of each Newsletter.

By Easter 1916, the Canadian Army in France had finished its apprenticeship of war and was starting to gain its reputation as an aggressive, modern force of shock troops. With 36 combat battalions in three divisions in the line in France, and a Fourth Division soon to join them, Canada was hitting its stride of near full mobilization. Its armed forces had doubled since the Canadian Expeditionary Force had first formed in 1914. The CEF now included within its ranks specialists in tunnelling for the cat and mouse game of laying and detecting vast subterranean explosives planted under enemy trenches, while aggressive Canadian raiding tactics, first by night and later by day, had been approvingly noticed by the British Commander in Chief, Sir Douglas Haig.

France was not the only theatre of operations. Canadian medical personnel operated in the Middle East, and two hospitals had been established at Mudros, a barren section of the Greek island of Lemnos (modern Limnos), to support the failed operation at Gallipoli. Personnel and patients there suffered cruelly from inadequate water and rations, weather and disease, including scurvy. The war diary of one of these hospitals conveys a sense of hardship in this one entry: “Sickness among Officers, Nursing Sisters and men becoming prevalent. Admission to Hospital of dysentery cases increasing daily. The fly menace is very great, also the dust, and poor food supply very trying”. It was at Mudros that Mary Frances Munro died, the first of 47 Canadian nursing sisters to die in the Great War. A native of Ontario and a graduate of Bishop Strachan School in Toronto, she died of illness and is among the Canadians buried at the Portianos Commonwealth Cemetery on Limnos.



Canadian medical staff on Lemnos, 1916

Even in England, far removed from the hardships of Mudros, chaplaincy was challenging. George Wells, the Anglican padre assigned to Shornecliffe military district, worried about how the Canadian soldier was “getting a very bad name” because of the temptations to “immoral behaviour” in “objectionable houses” and from those “soliciting in the streets”. Wells worked hard to protect his soldiers, “those who were the pawns of war”. His attempts to have such establishments put off limits were not sympathetically received by senior officers, who tended to blame the troops’ bad behaviour on the inadequate moral influences of their chaplains. As Duff Crerar notes, the padres working in training camps faced an uphill battle. Alcohol was easily obtainable, leadership was heavy handed, routines were tedious, and mandatory church parades were widely hated. Social work in such conditions was especially challenging, but Wells had some success in championing unwed English mothers and getting Canadian soldiers to take responsibility for them. In the near-Victorian morality of the period, one has to see this as an especially fearless and prophetic ministry.

For the CEF in the trenches, April 1916 was a cruel month. Following the German offensive at Verdun, there was great emphasis on offensive action to

relieve the pressure on the French Army. Just south of Ypres, Canadian troops were committed to a battle that became known as the St. Eloi Craters (27 March – 16 April 1916). Four large mines were detonated under the German lines, but instead of the hoped-for breach, vast craters were created in the soggy landscape, complicating maneuver and navigation in the dismal landscape. While some ground was won, the battlefield was “under constant enemy shelling, and men had been forced to crouch in mud-filled ditches and shell-holes, or stand all day in water nearly to their waists with no possibility of rest”. During a relief in place under these appalling conditions, the Canadian 6th Brigade was caught in a German counterattack while badly strung out and not in defensive positions. The Canadians were thrown back with heavy casualties, and the ground was retaken by the Germans. The battle dragged on for days as an artillery duel before it ended, leaving 1,373 Canadians killed or wounded. The Canadian official history describes St. Eloi as a “fiasco”, and its costly lessons were taken to heart in future trench offensives.

One of the regiments hard pressed in the St. Eloi battle was the 6th Brigade’s 29th (Vancouver) Battalion. Its chaplain was an Anglican, the Rev. Cecil Caldbeck Owen, a graduate of Wycliffe College and the Rector of Christ Church, Vancouver (today’s Christ Church Cathedral). Owen, a vigorous man in his middle age, and widely popular in Vancouver, had long been a militia chaplain, and he went overseas with the newly formed 29th BN in May of 1915. His 22 year old son Harold was by then already in France as an infantry officer.



Padre Cecil Caldbeck Owen (right) and his son Harold, in front of the Christ Church rectory, Vancouver.

Christ Church granted Owen leave to serve in the CEF, and despite worries about his parish's finances and attendance, he gained a reputation as a dedicated front-line chaplain. He would have gone into action at St. Eloi still coping with grief, for his son Harold had been killed in action on 1 February, 1916. Owen made a three hour journey on horseback to be present at Harold's funeral, and like his colleague Canon Scott, continued in his ministry after losing his son to the war. After the war, Owen served as a hospital chaplain in Vancouver, and was present at the dedication of the Vimy Monument, where he spoke of how "We must educate our children in the finer aspects of courage and sacrifice which emerged during the war so that they will remember the heroism and the deeper lessons which should have resulted from it". Sadly, war would ask another sacrifice of him. Owen's adopted son Luder Keshisian, an Armenian refugee, was an RCAF pilot in the Second World War, and was killed over Germany in June, 1944. Padre Owen died in Vancouver on Christmas Eve, 1954,

For those troops not in the line, Easter Sunday 1916 (24 April) happened to coincide with St. George's Day, which was not lost on troops of English heritage. Canon Scott, in the Ypres Salient with the First Division, describes how the engineers "built me a church, and a big sign over the door was first used on Easter Day ... and we had very hearty services". For those Canadians in the nearby town of Poperinghe, like the Queen's Own Rifles which observed Easter Sunday with a church parade, there was the possibility of a visit to Talbot House, an all-ranks refuge created by an enterprising English Anglican, Padre "Tubby" Clayton.

Talbot House, or "Toch" as it was known, offered soldiers a chance to worship in the chapel upstairs (which rocked alarmingly when packed with men) or to remind themselves of civilian life in the comforts of its drawing room and garden. Visitors first saw a sign enjoining them to "Abandon rank, all ye who enter here". Padre Clayton knew the Canadian chaplains like Canon Scott, and welcomed many Canadian visitors. He wrote that "Canadian churchmanship impressed me not a little. For six months in 1916 a Canadian sergeant-major was the Vicar's warden; and it was he who most appropriately welcomed the Archbishop of Canterbury on his memorable visit to the House early that summer. Almost the first Canadians I saw were two tunnellers, who on a weekday morning set out from the old French dug-outs beyond Vlamertinghe at 5am and arrived at the Chapel for the celebration (then at 6:30 on weekday), having heard that the service was held daily, and being quite prepared to forgo their chances of breakfast at the end of a ten-mile walk."

While Toch was a refuge, it was not a shelter. Poperinghe lay within the Ypres salient, and as Clayton wrote, shells "crossed and recrossed the roof from three points of the compass". The congregations who knelt and prayed in Toch's small chapel had to return to an even more dangerous front line. A long war and uncertain survival still lay before them. For padres like Clayton, all they could do was to find these momentary places and times of grace, and commend the men to God in the terrible battles to come.