



Heartfelt

SUPPORTER NEWSLETTER
SEPTEMBER 2025

STORIES OF CARE MADE POSSIBLE BY YOU

With the arrival of spring, I'm reminded again of the hope and renewal that chaplaincy can bring to patients and families every single day. Whether it's sitting quietly with someone who is feeling anxious, offering a prayer when words are hard to find, or working behind the scenes to connect people with practical support, our chaplains are there—often in the most unexpected and difficult moments.

In this edition of **Heartfelt**, you'll read stories that highlight the heart of chaplaincy: compassion in action. You'll meet Chaplain Falakesi, whose own childhood experience of illness has shaped his life's calling, and hear how he now walks alongside families facing their hardest days. You'll also see how chaplains go above and beyond in moments of crisis, and how supporters like you make this care possible.

None of this would be possible without you, our supporters. Your generosity ensures that chaplains can be present in hospitals across the country, bringing care, comfort, and dignity when people need it most. On behalf of our team, thank you for standing with us and for making sure that no one has to face hospital journeys alone.

Barry Fisk

CEO, Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa



Hospital Chaplaincy
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AOTEAROA

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♥ Your Kindness Crosses Oceans

SUPPORTING PACIFIC FAMILIES IN CRISIS

When families face a medical crisis far from home, your generosity helps make sure they don't face it alone. Chaplain Falakesi recently shared the story of a Pacific Island family who travelled to New Zealand on a visitor's visa after their baby was born prematurely.

Far from relatives, navigating hospital life in a new country, and worrying about their child's health was overwhelming. Thankfully, the hospital was able to offer emergency accommodation and daily food vouchers—but it was the extra care, made possible by supporters, that really eased their burden.

During his regular visits, Falakesi listened to the family and built trust. This opened the door for him to reach out to The Fono—an organisation dedicated to improving Pasifika wellbeing—who provided shopping boxes so the family could prepare meals in their hospital room.

“These small acts of care bring a sense of normalcy and dignity at a time when life feels uncertain.”
Falakesi, Chaplain



Falakesi with the couple he supported.

Chaplaincy is about more than being present—it often means stepping in to find practical solutions. When extra support is needed, Falakesi works alongside social workers and community groups to ensure families receive the help they need. Even something as simple as delivering a food parcel is done thoughtfully, with compassion and respect for hospital boundaries.

Later, the family shared their gratitude on social media.

We are so grateful for the support we've received—the kindness of the chaplain and The Fono has made a world of difference during a very challenging time.

Their story is just one of many, showing how your kindness reaches across oceans—helping families feel cared for and supported during their hardest days.

PATIENT FEEDBACK CORNER



"It's been comforting to have the chaplains visit - not just to pray, but to talk about what's happening in the world and to reflect on faith. It's a reminder that healing isn't only physical." - Dave

Lorna works at Levin's Budget Service and has also been involved in pastoral care at her church for many years. She knows first-hand the difference chaplains make. Over the years, she's had many friends in hospital and has often seen how valuable chaplain support can be—especially when family can't always be there.

She recently shared how much it meant for her own family when her mum was in hospital:

"My mum was in Hutt Hospital and I couldn't always visit every day. Having a chaplain visit made all the difference and was a highlight of her day."

♥ Going the Extra Mile

HOW CHAPLAINCY CARE MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

Sometimes chaplaincy means being in the right place at the right time. Recently, Chaplain Bronwyn was covering an on-call shift when her evening took an unexpected turn.

After finishing a busy afternoon at the hospital, she was waiting for her bus when she noticed an ambulance outside a cafe that she knew well from her previous work.

Inside was someone she recognised: Jake*, a rough sleeper she had known for years, who was in poor health and struggling with the ambulance crew.

Bronwyn sat down beside him, helping him to calm down and listen. She then travelled with Jake in the ambulance, keeping him settled all the way to the Emergency Department. Once he was safely in hospital, she quietly stepped away and headed home.

But her night wasn't over yet. Not long after, the hospital rang—Jake was refusing to co-operate with staff.



Even though she had already worked a long day, Bronwyn returned, sat with Jake, and was able to calm him so that staff could carry out urgent tests and scans. She finally made it home just after midnight.

One staff member later wrote:

“Bronwyn gave remarkable care to one of our vulnerable patients. She was incredibly dedicated, compassionate and supportive. She went above and beyond.”

Stories like this show how chaplains step in with calm, compassion, and care when it's needed most. And it's your generosity that makes it possible—ensuring no one, not even the most vulnerable, is left to face a crisis alone.

* Name changed to protect identity.

NEW VOLUNTEER CHAPLAINCY ASSISTANTS FOR NORTHLAND



Five of the newly commissioned VCA's.

In July, we welcomed eight new Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistants (VCA's) to work in hospitals across the Northland Region.

A special powhiri and commissioning service, led by Rev. Amiria Te Whiu, was held in the Whangarei Hospital Chapel of St Luke to mark the occasion.

“We're so grateful to have this team of volunteers who generously give their time to listen and show compassion to anyone and everyone in hospital,” shared Chaplain Adrian Whale following the service. **“Their support can be an important part of a person's healing.”**

The VCAs will be working in Dargaville, Kaitia and Whangārei Hospitals.

Interested in finding out more about volunteering with us? Email us at info@hospitalchaplaincy.org.nz for more information.

BORN TO CARE

Falakesi's journey from sick child to a chaplain of hope.

When you hear Chaplain Falakesi's story, it's hard not to believe he was born to be a hospital chaplain.

Falakesi grew up on one of Tonga's remote islands, where medical care was scarce. At just nine years old, he became gravely ill and spent three long months in hospital. Doctors told his parents he was unlikely to survive. Then one day, the local minister walked five kilometres to pray over him: **"God, if this boy still has any use (value), let him live."**

The very next morning, Falakesi surprised his parents by asking to be taken to the door so he could see the sunshine. They thought it was his final request. Instead, it was the first sign of his recovery. Even then, as a child, he thought: **"If I live, my future will be about helping people."**

That promise has shaped his life ever since. He became a teacher in Tonga, then moved to New Zealand to study and later serve as a Methodist minister - and in doing so, he believes he finally realised God's call on his life.

But he longed to reach beyond parish walls, to be there for anyone in need. In 2024, he found his calling as a hospital chaplain—completing a remarkable circle, from the sick boy prayed over in hospital to the chaplain who now prays, comforts, and cares for others in theirs.

For Falakesi, chaplaincy is both a privilege and a passion.



He wants people to know that hospital chaplains are there for everyone.

"It's not just spiritual support we offer. We're here for anyone. Conversation is important for everyone."

Falakesi's support is always practical as well as pastoral, whether that means sitting quietly with someone, helping connect families with food, or linking them to resources that will make a lasting difference.

He is deeply grateful to supporters of Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa for the way they make his ministry possible:

"Many people are held tightly by their sickness and worries. Your support helps us reach out when they need it most and help untie them from that worry."

"A lot of what I see every day challenges me. But I try to reach out to people regardless of who they are or what they believe—just like Jesus did."

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