

Heart & Soul

Update for Churches

October 2025

HEART & SOUL

Partnership at the Heart of Mission

Hospital chaplaincy is the church's mission carried to the bedside. That truth was celebrated at this year's Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistant Retreat, hosted by Milford Baptist Church under the theme "You Are the Presence of Christ."

This retreat was a powerful reminder that chaplaincy does not stand alone. It is rooted in the life and prayers of the local church. When congregations open their doors, share resources, and stand alongside chaplains, the ministry becomes stronger and more Christ-centred.

My hope is that more churches will see hospital chaplaincy as an extension of their own mission—bringing the love of Christ beyond the walls of Sunday worship, right to the bedside of those in need.

Visit www.hospitalchaplaincy.org.nz to find out more about our 'Heart & Soul' initiative for local churches.

Barry Fisk

CEO, Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa



Participants at the Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistant Retreat.

WHEN CHURCHES AND CHAPLAINCY WALK HAND IN HAND

A recent Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistant Retreat in Auckland brought together chaplains and volunteers for worship, fellowship, and encouragement.

Keynote speaker Fr Emile Frishe, who ministered at ground zero during 9/11, reminded everyone that chaplaincy is about being a living sign of Christ's love, peace, and hope in every encounter.

Milford Baptist Church's generosity shone throughout the retreat: opening their doors, donating toward the work of chaplaincy, and providing a shared meal that strengthened bonds among those serving in demanding settings. It was a powerful picture of what happens when local churches and hospital chaplaincy walk hand in hand—each sustaining and blessing the other.

As one participant reflected, **"Mission begins at the bedside, but it is rooted in the life of the church."**

Together, churches and chaplaincy remind us that wherever people are hurting, the presence of Christ can be made real.



Hospital Chaplaincy
AMOKAPUA HOHIPERA
AOTEAROA

ANSWERING THE CALL

When you hear Chaplain Falakesi's story, it's clear that God has been shaping his life for this ministry from the very beginning.

He 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 months in hospital. Doctors told his parents he was unlikely to survive. But one day the local minister walked five kilometres to pray over him: "God, I believe you want to use this boy—please let him live."

The next morning, young Falakesi asked to be taken to the door to see the sunshine. His parents feared it was a final request—but it was the first sign of his recovery. Even then he thought, "If I live, my future will be about helping people."

That calling has never left him. After serving as a teacher in Tonga and later as a Methodist minister in New Zealand, he longed to reach beyond parish walls and be present for anyone in need. In 2004, he found his place as a hospital chaplain—completing the circle from sick child prayed for in hospital to chaplain now praying for others at their bedside.

For Falakesi, chaplaincy is both privilege and passion. Whether sitting quietly, offering prayer, or connecting families with practical support, his ministry carries Christ's love into the hospital every day.

"I try to reach out to people regardless of who they are or what they believe – just like Jesus did."
Falakesi

Falakesi reminds us that hospital chaplaincy is the work of the wider church too. As congregations, we are invited to share in this calling—through our prayers, encouragement, and partnership—so that together we may continue to carry Christ's presence into places of great need.



WALKING WITH FAMILIES IN CRISIS

When families face a medical emergency far from home, the hospital chaplain is often among the first to walk alongside them. Chaplain Falakesi recently supported a Pacific Island family who travelled to New Zealand after their baby was born prematurely. Far from relatives and deeply worried about their child's health, the family felt overwhelmed.

The hospital provided emergency accommodation and food vouchers—but what truly eased their burden was the pastoral care and practical help that came through chaplaincy.

Through regular visits, Falakesi listened, encouraged, and gained the family's trust. This opened the way for him to connect them with a Pasifika wellbeing organisation, which provided shopping boxes so they could prepare meals in their hospital room.

Chaplaincy is more than presence—it is compassion in action. Whether sitting quietly with a grieving family or working with social workers and community groups, chaplains bring Christ's love into difficult places. As the wider church, our prayers and partnership help ensure no family faces such moments alone.



Falakesi with the couple he supported.

FEEDBACK CORNER



One of our chaplains recently received the following email from a local minister after a patient asked for suggestions about where would be a good place to worship once they were discharged:

"I wanted to touch base and thank you for referring Joe. He seems to have become a regular on Sundays and his wife has also come a couple of times. He's joined a confirmation-baptism study group on Tuesday morning, as well as our men's coffee group. Thank you again."*

* Name changed to protect identity

♥ 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 finished a long hospital shift and was waiting for her bus when she noticed an ambulance outside a nearby café. Inside was Jake*, a rough sleeper she had known for years, distressed and unwell.

Bronwyn sat with him, helping him to calm down, and travelled in the ambulance to the Emergency Department. Later that night, when Jake was refusing treatment, the hospital called her back. Though exhausted, Bronwyn returned, stayed by his side, and brought peace so urgent tests could be done.

Chaplains like Bronwyn embody Christ's compassion in practical ways—bringing calm, presence, and dignity to people who might otherwise face crisis alone. As the wider church, our prayers and partnership ensure this ministry of love continues, reaching those most in need.

Bronwyn also recently shared with Carey theological students about chaplaincy as local mission. Drawing on Acts 1:8, she reminded them that our “Jerusalem” is right here—our own communities, hospitals, and streets—and challenged them to see chaplaincy as one way of witnessing to Christ close to home.

As churches, we can play our part by praying, encouraging, and giving, so that Christ's love is made present throughout New Zealand hospitals.

* Name changed to protect identity.



CHURCHES UNITE FOR 24/7 PRAYER

Rotorua churches came together recently for a week of continuous prayer as part of the Global Week of Prayer, led by 24-7 Prayer International.

The event was held in the Rotorua Hospital chapel—a peaceful and welcoming space where people from many churches and backgrounds gathered to pray for the hospital, the community, and the city.

Rotorua Hospital Lead Chaplain, Paul Leighton said it was an incredible week with the chapel set up with seven prayer stations. Plans to host this prayer week again in 2026 are already underway!

COMING
SOON

Christmas Appeal



This Christmas we'll be launching **Strength Today. Hope for Tomorrow** — a special appeal supporting families in hospital.

Your church will receive resources to help you get involved through prayer, awareness, and giving.

Together, we can help ensure no one in hospital feels alone this Christmas.