

Heart & Soul

Update for Churches



Hospital Chaplaincy
AMOKAPUA HOHIPERA
AOTEAROA

HEART & SOUL

A Message from our CEO

As I reflect on the stories in this newsletter, I'm reminded that chaplaincy is ultimately about people. Whether it's Jennifer finding comfort through a trusted relationship with her chaplain, or patients and whānau receiving support during some of life's most challenging moments, these stories demonstrate the difference a compassionate presence can make.

Behind every encounter is a partnership. Hospital chaplaincy exists because churches, individuals, volunteers, and chaplains share a common vision of ensuring people are cared for spiritually, emotionally, and pastorally when they need it most.

Over the coming weeks, we'll be launching a new initiative designed specifically to strengthen our connection with local churches. Under the banner of Heart & Soul, we'll be inviting congregations across Aotearoa to partner with us in supporting compassionate care in local hospitals. We're excited about the opportunity to share more stories of impact, deepen relationships with churches, and invite more people into this vital ministry.

Thank you for your church's faithful support, prayers, and encouragement. Together, we are helping chaplains bring hope, comfort, and care to thousands of patients and whānau each year.

Barry Fisk

CEO, Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa



FEEDBACK CORNER



"A church member recently shared how grateful they were for the support one of our chaplains provided to a friend whose husband suffered a catastrophic medical event and later died in hospital.

Faced with devastating circumstances and difficult news, the chaplain's kindness, compassion, and gentle presence helped the family process what was happening.

They reflected on how valuable it was to have chaplaincy support available during such a challenging time."

Chaplain Helen

A Conversation Between Friends

WALKING THE JOURNEY TOGETHER

When Chaplain Matiu Best drops in to see Jennifer, it's less like a hospital visit and more like listening to a conversation between two old friends.

There is laughter. There are stories. There is genuine care.

For Jennifer, who is in her 80s and lives with an ongoing medical condition, hospital has become a familiar place. Frequent admissions and medical procedures can make for difficult days. Without close family nearby, those challenges can feel even heavier.

Yet whenever Matiu or a member of the chaplaincy team stops by, something changes.

"We have some really interesting discussions," Jennifer smiles.

Her most recent hospital stay had been longer than expected.

"My week has been up and down. I didn't think I was going to be in for quite so long and now I'll be in longer, so it's up and down. But today is a good day."

Matiu knows those ups and downs well. **"Some days you're out of it and we know not to bother you,"** he says gently.

But Jennifer is much more than a patient to the chaplaincy team. Over time, she has become a much-loved friend.



"I've been a little unsettled as I've had lots of procedures," Jennifer explains. **"But seeing Graham and yourself calms me down."**

The support often extends beyond spiritual care. Jennifer recalls one occasion when she drove to hospital for what was meant to be an outpatient appointment, only to be unexpectedly admitted. **"The chaplain arranged security for my car. It's all those little things, and just the opportunity to talk. It's so important."**

There have also been times when Jennifer has needed help contacting family members or navigating challenges that come with long hospital stays. For Matiu, this is part of what chaplaincy is all about.

"We're here to listen to your story and journey with you. We offer hope and comfort and support."

Jennifer agrees wholeheartedly. Reflecting on the care she receives, she describes it as **"all part of my healing."**

**It's always a joy to see you.
You fill us with such joy and aroha.**

– Matiu

A strong relationship has developed between Jennifer and the chaplaincy team. They bring communion to her bedside when she's unable to get to the hospital chapel. They provide daily devotional resources such as Word of the Day. They offer a listening ear when life feels overwhelming.



It's all those little things, and just the opportunity to talk. It's so important.

– Jennifer

Conversations like these remind us that healing is about more than medical treatment alone. It's about being seen, heard, supported, and accompanied through difficult seasons.

Thank you for partnering with us through your church's faithful support. Together, you are helping chaplains journey alongside patients like Jennifer, bringing comfort, connection, and compassionate care when it is needed most.

♥ 24/7 Prayer Week

COMING
SOON

HUNDREDS UNITE IN PRAYER

This year's 24-7 Prayer Week was a wonderful success, bringing Christians from across Rotorua together in prayer and worship.

More than 450 individuals from at least 13 churches took part during the week, with many returning multiple times. In total, there were more than 550 visits to the prayer room, representing churches from a wide range of traditions and backgrounds.

Those who attended spoke positively about the variety of interactive prayer stations, with many appreciating the fresh approach compared to previous years. While some people were initially hesitant about attending, especially if they had never experienced a prayer room before, feedback showed that participants quickly engaged with the activities and found the time both meaningful and rewarding.

It was particularly encouraging to see so many groups book time together. For some, attending as part of a group made the experience more approachable, while for others it created opportunities for deeper conversations about prayer and faith.

Above all, the week was a powerful reminder that while our churches may worship in different ways, we are united in Christ. This year's global theme of unity was reflected beautifully as believers from across the city gathered in one place to pray. We pray that spirit of unity will continue to grow in the months ahead.



Growing Together

Churches have been at the heart of hospital chaplaincy from the very beginning. Through your prayers, encouragement and support, chaplains continue to provide compassionate care to patients, whānau and healthcare staff in hospitals throughout New Zealand.

Every day, chaplains walk alongside people facing illness, uncertainty, grief and major life challenges. This ministry is made possible through the support of churches that share a heart for caring for their local communities.

Over recent months, we've been exploring ways to help churches play an even greater role in supporting chaplaincy close to home. We're excited to be developing a new initiative that will strengthen connections between local churches and local hospital chaplaincy, helping ensure this vital ministry continues to thrive for years to come.

We'll be sharing more about this exciting opportunity in November.



A Practical Way to Care

“Our church has supported hospital chaplaincy for many decades, reflecting a long history of connection with chaplains serving in our local hospital. We value knowing that followers of Jesus are available to walk alongside patients during difficult times, offering care, support and a listening ear. Supporting chaplaincy is a practical way for churches to show Christ's love and compassion within the hospital community.”

St Anselm's Union Church, Karori

MEET CHAPLAIN JEANNINE EPPLETT

For the past six years, Jeannine Epplett has been walking alongside patients during some of the most significant moments of their lives.

Whether someone is facing uncertainty, loneliness, grief, or an unexpected diagnosis, Jeannine sees her role as being present, listening, and helping people navigate the journey they're on.

"The privilege of coming alongside a patient and journeying with them during their hospital stay is what I find most rewarding," she says. "Each journey is different. Sometimes it's helping someone process their emotions, sometimes it's offering spiritual support, and sometimes it's walking with a patient and their family through end-of-life care."

One of the things Jeannine values most about chaplaincy is having the time to simply sit and listen.

"Nurses and other staff are wonderful, but they're incredibly busy. I can make time to sit with someone who may be feeling lonely or fearful about what the future holds. When people feel heard, it helps them process what's happening and can be very empowering. **"**

Over the years, many patients have left a lasting impression. Jeannine recalls supporting the wife of a critically ill ICU patient whose chances of recovery seemed very slim. The couple's deep faith led them to ask the chaplaincy team to pray regularly. As the weeks passed, the patient gradually improved, emerging from a coma, regaining his ability to communicate, and eventually learning to walk again.

"Meeting them again a couple of years later and seeing how far he had come was wonderful," she says. "I felt privileged to have been part of their journey."

Yet some of the most meaningful moments can be much quieter. Jeannine remembers visiting a patient who had no family living nearby. Through regular conversations, trust developed, and the patient began sharing her story, concerns, and hopes for the future. When she was discharged, she thanked Jeannine for helping her through a difficult time.

"I knew I'd made a difference simply by being there and spending time with her," she reflects.

Outside the hospital, Jeannine has discovered an unexpected way to recharge: golf.

"My work life is busy and my family life is full, so I decided to take up golf as some 'me' time," she laughs. "It's also a great conversation starter with patients. We can talk about how frustrating golf is and have a good laugh together."

For Jeannine, chaplaincy is about far more than religion.

"It's about the person in front of us. They are important and worthy of our time and support. **"**



Thank you for your church's faithful support of Hospital Chaplaincy Aotearoa. Through your prayers and generosity, chaplains like Jeannine are able to journey alongside patients and whānau every day, during life's most challenging moments.

