

# Hospital Chaplaincy Report 2026

## Presented to the Waikato and Taranaki Anglican Synod

Covering Chaplaincy at Waikato and Taranaki Base Hospitals.

### INTRODUCTION

The past year has been one of continued growth, adaptation, and faithful service for hospital chaplaincy across both Taranaki and Waikato. Amid ongoing change within the health sector and increasing pressures on patients, whānau, and staff, chaplains have remained a steady and compassionate presence within our hospitals.

Across both regions, chaplaincy teams have continued to offer spiritual care to people of all faiths and none, providing support in times of uncertainty, crisis, and hope. Through listening, prayer, pastoral presence, and collaboration with healthcare teams, chaplains contribute to the holistic wellbeing of those within the hospital environment.

This report outlines the key activities, developments, and highlights of chaplaincy ministry at Taranaki and Waikato Hospitals over the past year. It reflects both the diversity of contexts in which chaplains serve and the shared commitment to compassionate, person-centred care.

### Impact Across the Waikato and Taranaki Diocese

Over the past year, chaplains in hospitals across the Waikato and Taranaki Diocese have provided direct care to **over 16,705 patients, whānau groups, and staff members**. Each interaction represents a moment of listening, comfort, hope, or prayer offered at a time of need.

The reach of this ministry across these two hospitals has been substantial:

| Hospital        | Patients      | Whānau Groups | Staff      | Total         |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
| <b>Waikato</b>  | 9,100         | 1,700         | 545        | 11,345        |
| <b>Taranaki</b> | 4,077         | 909           | 374        | 5,360         |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>13,177</b> | <b>2,609</b>  | <b>919</b> | <b>16,705</b> |

### WITH GRATITUDE

The chaplaincy ministry serving Waikato and Taranaki Hospitals is sustained through the partnership, generosity, and encouragement of many individuals and organisations. We are particularly grateful to the **Anglican Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki**, **Bishop Philip Richardson**, local parishes, and the wider church community for their continued commitment to this work through prayer, advocacy, and financial support.

Together, this partnership enables chaplains and volunteers to offer compassionate spiritual and pastoral care to patients, whānau, and staff at some of life's most significant and vulnerable moments. We also acknowledge the many supporters, volunteers, hospital partners, and donors whose contributions help ensure this ministry remains accessible throughout the region.

Thank you to all who stand with us in this important work. Your faithful support helps maintain a visible and caring chaplaincy presence within our hospitals, bringing hope, comfort, and practical expressions of Christ's love to those who need it most.

The following report provides an overview of chaplaincy ministry across **Waikato and Taranaki Hospitals** during the past year.

## WAIKATO HOSPITAL

### Ministry and Relationships

The past year has seen continued growth in the visibility and reach of chaplaincy across Waikato Hospital and its regional sites. Chaplains have worked intentionally to strengthen relationships with hospital leadership, fostering positive engagement both within the Hamilton campus and across outlying hospitals. These relationships are enabling greater integration of spiritual care within the wider health setting.

Chaplains are now regularly invited to contribute within clinical and organisational contexts. Monthly blessings are offered in areas such as the mortuary, Women's Assessment Unit, and Delivery Suite, with additional requests received from other departments. A Lead Chaplain meets routinely with the Hospital Manager and participates in the Health and Safety Committee, ensuring chaplaincy perspectives are included in wider organisational discussions. Engagement has also extended into teaching and professional development, including presentations to Year 5 medical students and to palliative care teams, alongside collaboration with ICU staff around the spiritual needs that arise in critical care settings.

Sunday chapel services, including prayer and Communion, continue weekly, with bedside Communion offered on request. These rhythms remain central to the spiritual life of the hospital community.

Over the past year, we have served patients, whānau, and staff across multiple hospitals in the region, including Hamilton, Thames, Taumarunui, and Te Kuiti.

### Team Changes and Development

During the year, the team farewelled Rev. Paul Weeding from his part-time chaplaincy role, while remaining grateful for his ongoing service as a locum. At the same time, the team were delighted to welcome Rev. Gabriel Jens into a part-time chaplaincy position, following his previous involvement as a locum.

The development of the Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistant (VCA) programme has remained a key priority. After sustained effort, a new VCA training course was successfully established at Thames Hospital, with strong support from hospital management and existing volunteers. Three newly trained VCAs are preparing to begin visiting ministry, further extending chaplaincy presence in that region.

### Initiatives and Community Engagement

Practical expressions of care and hospitality continue to shape chaplaincy ministry. An initiative led by Rev. Heather Major—providing muffins for whānau on a children's ward—has remained warmly received by both families and staff. She has also led the organisation of the annual Christmas Carols and continues to nurture connections among Christian doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals, creating spaces for fellowship and mutual support.

The work of chaplaincy has been enhanced through active engagement with Friends of Hospital Chaplaincy (FOHC), whose generous support enables many aspects of ministry. This includes resourcing for team meetings, small pastoral items such as Christmas candles, provision of uniforms to increase chaplaincy visibility, and the facilitation of a successful choral fundraising concert. Planning is already underway for a further concert in 2026.

## **Challenges and Support**

The transition to Te Whatu Ora systems has presented ongoing challenges, particularly in relation to computer access and administration. Significant time and effort have been required to resolve these issues, ensuring chaplains can continue their work effectively within hospital systems.

The team remains deeply appreciative of the support provided by Te Whatu Ora Manager Renee Sharp and her team, as well as Charge Nurse Managers across the region—especially in Te Kuiti and Thames—where chaplaincy presence continues to grow.

Ngā mihi nui

**The Chaplains of Waikato Hospital**

## **TARANAKI BASE HOSPITAL**

### **Ministry in Practice**

Hospital chaplaincy contributes to the holistic care of patients, whānau, and staff across Taranaki Base and Hāwera Hospitals. While healthcare understandably focuses on physical and mental wellbeing, chaplaincy addresses the spiritual dimension of care, recognising that illness, loss, uncertainty, and major life events often raise deeper questions of meaning, purpose, hope, and connection.

A significant part of chaplaincy ministry is the simple but important work of being present. Whether at a bedside, in the Emergency Department, within Intensive Care, or alongside a family facing difficult news, chaplains provide a listening ear, a calm presence, and support that is shaped by the needs of each individual. For some, this may involve prayer, faith-based conversation, or religious rituals; for others, it may simply mean having someone available to listen and accompany them through a challenging time.

Chaplaincy care is available to people of all faiths, cultures, and worldviews. While our team includes both Catholic and Ecumenical chaplains, our ministry is inclusive and responsive to the diverse communities served by our hospitals. Staff support also forms an important part of the role, with chaplains regularly providing pastoral care to healthcare workers who are navigating the pressures and emotional demands of hospital life.

In addition to routine ward visiting and pastoral care, paid chaplains provide 24-hour on-call support, responding to emergencies, sudden deaths, trauma situations, and end-of-life care needs outside normal working hours.

### **Team Ministry and Community Support**

Chaplaincy across Taranaki Base and Hāwera Hospitals is strengthened through a collaborative model of ministry. Paid chaplains provide leadership, clinical integration, and emergency response, while Volunteer Chaplaincy Assistants and Locum Chaplains extend the reach of the service through regular ward visiting and ongoing pastoral support.

Our volunteers play a vital role in helping maintain connections between patients and the wider community. Their ministry of presence, conversation, and encouragement ensures that people who may be feeling isolated or vulnerable know they are cared for and not alone.

## **Looking Ahead**

As healthcare environments continue to evolve, the need for compassionate spiritual and pastoral care remains unchanged. We are grateful for the support of Health New Zealand, local churches, volunteers, and the wider community whose partnership makes this ministry possible. Together, we continue to offer hope, dignity, and human connection to those who find themselves facing some of life's most challenging circumstances.

Ngā mihi nui

**The Chaplains of Taranaki Base Hospital**

Hospital chaplaincy is fundamentally a ministry of relationship. Every conversation, prayer, and bedside visit brings us into the lives of people facing uncertainty, illness, grief, recovery, and hope. The following stories offer a glimpse into the difference that spiritual care can make during these important moments.

### Waikato Hospital

#### Faith and Comfort in a Season of Loss

A patient recovering from a lengthy health journey had developed a strong connection with chaplaincy through regular visits, prayer, and communion. Faith remained an important source of strength and encouragement during an extended hospital stay.

During this time, the patient received news of the sudden death of a close family member overseas and felt the loss deeply, particularly being unable to gather with family to grieve in person. Chaplaincy was able to provide pastoral support, prayer, and a space to acknowledge both the sadness of the loss and the challenges of mourning from afar. The opportunity to entrust a loved one into God's care brought comfort during a difficult and lonely season.

#### Walking Alongside in a Time of Crisis

Chaplaincy supported a parent whose child was receiving intensive care following a serious accident. Facing an uncertain situation and spending long hours at the hospital, the parent welcomed regular visits, conversation, and prayer.

Through ongoing pastoral support, the parent found comfort in having someone outside the clinical team to talk with openly about fears, hopes, and faith. Prayer became an important source of strength during this difficult period, and the consistent presence of chaplaincy helped provide reassurance, encouragement, and a reminder that God's care remained alongside the family throughout the journey.

### Taranaki Hospital

#### Faith, Fear, and Prayer

A patient living with a long-term health condition had been supported by chaplaincy over an extended period through multiple hospital admissions. During a recent admission, the patient faced transfer to another hospital for specialist treatment and spoke openly about feelings of fear and uncertainty about what lay ahead.

Chaplaincy provided a listening ear and a space to acknowledge those concerns without judgement. Through conversation, reassurance, and prayer, the patient was reminded that God remained present in the midst of the uncertainty. Before departing, the patient requested prayer for strength, courage, and peace. Together they entrusted the journey ahead into God's hands, and the patient left feeling more settled and supported.

#### Presence in a Time of Crisis

Chaplaincy was called to support a family during a critical medical emergency involving a young child. As hospital staff worked to provide urgent care, the family faced an overwhelming and frightening situation.

The chaplain was able to remain alongside family members, offering a calm presence, practical support, prayer, and reassurance grounded in their Christian faith. As the medical team continued treatment, chaplaincy stayed with the family, helping them navigate uncertainty and providing spiritual care during an intensely difficult time. The ministry of presence, prayer, and compassionate support remained important until the child was stabilised and further care could proceed.