

A letter from Capt the Rev Michael Hackbusch:

As I look forward to the 15th of November and this the second to last Sunday in the church year I give thanks to you and the people at Zion Lutheran for the opportunity to worship with you, and to proclaim Christ in your midst.

I have been serving at CFB Petawawa since 20 February 2020 and although at that time I was here until 3 June, I have since been extended until 31 July 2021!

Serving initially with 2 service Battalion for six months and getting to know the Chain of Command (CoC) and members therein, my perspective of the various trades who make-up of the forces has indeed grown.

The members vary in ages from very young (19) to more senior women and men (60.) Their routine is not so different that that of others'. They come to work and exercise their skills: mechanics, crafts persons, organizing equipment, repairing equipment and of course, administration to keep it all going, and at the end of the day they go home! Unlike the rest of society, these members can be ordered "out the door", that is, deployed to missions at a moment's notice leading to prolonged separations from family and loved ones (their usual support systems.)

Today I am serving with 3 RCR (3rd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment.) This is a unit that is preparing its members for deployment domestically or internationally.

My routine changes daily but the focus of Padres is to be present to the women and men serving. I have regular contact members who are be in need of pastoral care: relationship issues, hospitalizations, illness, work issues etc. (not too unlike everyone else in society) with the caveat that they again can be separated from their usual support systems. Mostly I provide a caring presence where members can speak freely about what troubles or frustrates them.

If they are persons of faith we can pray together. Although a Christian (and a Lutheran at that!) the Chaplain Branch (Royal Canadian Chaplaincy Service, or RCChS) in the Canadian Armed Forces is a multi-faith branch. We can speak of God and the tenants of our faith but only in a non-judgmental, never proselytizing way. We encourage conversations that support and in guide us in discovering the meaning our walk with God gives our lives and how our lives intersect with those around us. It is a truly rewarding way to live the call.

We are able to celebrate Word and Sacrament. There are two chapels on base in Petawawa (St Francis, RC and St George's, Protestant). Worship takes place there on every Lord's Day and more frequently during the seasons of the Church Year. When members are on exercise or "in the field" it is common to hold services there. The Gospel is proclaimed at these services and Holy Communion may be celebrated on the hood of a vehicle or other makeshift table followed by prayers and fellowship. (These days, with Covid-19 protocols, there are limits to everything we do including how we celebrate but the care of members and their families has not changed.)

Thank you for allowing me this brief opportunity to share a bit of what I do as a member of the RCChS and for your kind invitation to proclaim the Gospel and celebrate with you.

Peace and gratitude,
Michael+
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