

Abstract

This dissertation aims to examine the Royal Army Chaplains' Department and its relationship with the Church of Ireland as a sending church. There has been a level of ambivalence identified on the part of the British sending churches towards its chaplains in the forces. The purpose of this work is to identify if this ambivalence is present within the Church of Ireland, the causes of that ambivalence, and the potential solutions to the problem of ambivalence. In addition, this work seeks to explore areas in which the Church of Ireland may learn from its chaplains to better engage with chaplaincy and the mission of the church more generally. To identify if such ambivalence does exist between the Church of Ireland and its chaplains I have conducted research questioning chaplains to the British Forces in this regard as well as inquiring as to the nature of their ministry, its impact, and the usefulness of the theological training they received as ordained persons in the Church of Ireland. This research took the form of a questionnaire which was distributed to all those who serve as forces chaplains in both reserve and regular capacity by the Senior Chaplain in Northern Ireland. The result of my research identified a level of ambivalence from the Church towards its chaplains and also a reciprocal lack of understanding and incomprehension by chaplains towards parish clergy. The research also revealed a common perception that pacifism had played a large role in shaping attitudes towards chaplains and this idea was explored in-depth. The hope is that this research will help the church comprehend the work of the chaplain and the implications of this work to the church. This will be a potential aid to mission in both chaplaincy context and parish context, facilitating a shared learning and an increased understanding and furthering respect of both forms of ministry.