



**Tira Tūhāhā**

Prison Chaplaincy Aotearoa

2024

ANNUAL REPORT | RĪPOATA-Ā-TAU

# Introduction

## He kupu whakataki

Tēnā koutou, and welcome to the sixth public annual report by Tira Tūhāhā Prison Chaplaincy Aotearoa (TTPCA) – (previously known as Prison Chaplaincy Service of Aotearoa New Zealand).

TTPCA, with the oversight of a cross-section of New Zealand churches, provides religious and spiritual services to all New Zealand prisoners under contract to the Department of Corrections Ara Poutama Aotearoa. TTPCA is also contracted by Serco New Zealand to provide chaplaincy services to Auckland South Corrections Facility. The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference works closely with TTPCA to provide Catholic chaplaincy in all prisons throughout Aotearoa, New Zealand.

**Being the  
Hope that  
Transforms  
Lives**

This Annual Report is based on the 2024 calendar year and our financial year 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024. Published February 2025

Tira Tūhāhā Prison Chaplaincy Aotearoa  
National Office | Level 6 | 186 Willis Street | Wellington 6011  
[www.prisonchaplancy.org.nz](http://www.prisonchaplancy.org.nz)  
Phone 04 381 4982

# Contents

## Rārangi take

Board Chair's report .....	4
Chief Executive's report .....	5
Our Board/Our Management .....	6
Our Vision, Mission and Values .....	7
<b>About us</b>	
- The Trust .....	8
- Where we work .....	9
<b>An introduction to prison chaplaincy</b>	
- What is prison chaplaincy? .....	10
- Prison chaplaincy in action .....	11
<b>Prison General Manager perspective .....</b>	<b>12-13</b>
<b>TTPCA's strategy in action .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Developing our chaplains .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Chaplain profile - Pona Solomona .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Chaplain profile - Forrest Chambers .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Our volunteers .....</b>	<b>18-19</b>
<b>Strengthening our volunteers .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Volunteer profile - Vern Pullan .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>One man's story - prisoner story .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Two women's stories - prisoner stories .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Year in numbers 2023-2024 .....</b>	<b>24-25</b>
<b>Funding .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Thank you .....</b>	<b>27</b>



## Board Chair's report

### Te rīpoata a te Poari Matua

**2024 has come and gone for Tira Tūhāhā Prison Chaplaincy Aotearoa (TTPCA). The Board and I have tremendous confidence and trust in our CE John Axcell, the office staff and all the chaplains across the motu. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who work hard to provide support to the men and women in prison.**

Last year highlighted some strategic and relational challenges for TTPCA. The Board is working hard to fill some Board vacancies and this has prompted Board members to utilise their connections to find new trustees to represent the member Churches, as well as finding co-opted members. There is a particular focus on increasing the number of women on the Board.

Part way through 2024 the Board thought it necessary for a strategic planning day, with the view to developing a five-year plan. John, and staff, with regional chaplaincy managers and the Board members, held a planning day in November. An external facilitator, the Reverend Graeme Nicholas, facilitated the event. A strategic and operational plan will be issued in early 2025.

The planning day was very successful, and many important issues were discussed. A key aspiration for TTPCA is helping Ara Poutama reduce reoffending. We are also wanting to do our work with more involvement from stakeholders and especially the wider Church community. Changing circumstances means changing from doing more to being more.

No matter what work or challenges are before TTPCA we do it all in the presence of God. *'Nāna hoki tātou i ora ai, i korikori ai, i noho ai.'* *I pērā hoki te kōrero a ētahi o ō koutou kaitito, 'Ko tātou hoki tōna uri.'*

[Acts 17: 28, Te Paipera Tapu].

Mā te Atua hei manaaki, kia rātou mā, noho ora mai kia koutou e ngā pononga whakapono.

David Moko

**Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who work hard to provide support to the men and women in prison.**



# Chief Executive's report

## Te rīpoata a te Kaihautū

### Tēnā koutou katoa.

One of the biggest highlights of the year was the increased involvement by volunteers, who are a vital part of our service. TTPCA continues to roll out its volunteer training programme which focuses on volunteer safety and delivering quality group services that are relevant, engaging and culturally sensitive. The training programme has been warmly received.

The higher volunteer participation has meant that our core business of delivering group and individual care to the men and women in prison has grown too. The percentage of men and women in prison who accessed group services has risen from 9% to nearly 14%, since the previous financial year.

We have a long way to go, however, before we reach the 25-30% group service participation levels of the pre-COVID period. In the meantime, I'm really pleased to see chaplaincy continuing to provide near full-strength one-on-one services while the group services are in a long season of rebuild.

Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who work hard to provide the group and individual services.

TTPCA faced considerable operational challenges in 2024, with resources stretched to respond to the fast-increasing prison

population. There were 9,000 prisoners in January 2024 and by the end of 2024, there were 10,300. The numbers keep growing and so the way ahead requires careful discernment and an openness to God for seeing the best way to provide chaplaincy.

The middle of 2025 is a critical time for TTPCA with our current funding contract with Ara Poutama finishing at the end of June. The next several months will involve negotiating a new contract and this will set the framework for the next season of ministry in the prisons.

The Board continues to be in a transition phase with new members joining at the end of 2024. The Board elected a new Board Chair, David Moko, to replace Te Aroha Rountree who has gone to lead the Methodist Church. Despite the changes taking place in the Board membership, the Board successfully completed a planning day in November which will lead to a new strategic plan for 2025 and beyond.

On a final note, thank you to all those who support chaplaincy and fund our work, and especially to Ara Poutama Aotearoa and Serco who engage our services and keep us safe.



John Axcell



**One of the biggest highlights of the year was the increased involvement by volunteers, who are a vital part of our service... The volunteer training programme has been warmly received.**

# Our Board

## Tō Mātou Poari

### Appointing Church/Organisation

Te Rūnanga Whakawhanaunga | Ngā Hāhi o Aotearoa – Māori Council of Churches

Roman Catholic Church of New Zealand

Baptist Churches of New Zealand - Ko Ngā Hāhi Iriiri o Aotearoa

Associated Pentecostal Churches of New Zealand

The Salvation Army

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Co-opted

Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia

Te Rūnanga Whakawhanaunga i ngā Hāhi o Aotearoa (National Council of Māori Churches)

Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa

### Trustees

**David Moko** - Board Chair

**Stephen O'Connor** - Deputy Board Chair

**Henry Feleti**

**Peter Coventry**

**Shaun Baker**

**Fakaofa Kaio**

**Rob McIntosh**

**Vacancy**

**Vacancy**

**Vacancy**

### Our Management



Regional Manager  
Northern  
**Pona Solomona**

Regional Manager  
Central  
**George Frame**

Chief Executive  
**John Axcell**

Regional Manager  
Southern  
**Ramon Utting**

Regional Manager  
Auckland  
**Richard Ward**

# Our Vision, Mission and Values

Anei o mātou pūtake

## Our Mission

Being the hope that transforms lives

## Tū Rangatira - Professionalism

He aha te kai o te rangatira?  
He kōrero, he kōrero, he kōrero.  
What is the food of the leader?  
It is knowledge.  
It is communication.

## Haumarū - Keeping Safe

Waiho i te toipoto,  
kaua i te toiroa.  
Let us keep close  
together, not  
wide apart.

## Mahi Tahī - Teamwork

Naku te rourou nau te rourou  
ka ora ai te iwi.  
With your basket and my basket  
the people will live.

## Our Vision

Every prisoner has the opportunity to have  
their spiritual and religious life enriched

## Pononga - Servants of God

He taonga rongonui te aroha ki te tangata.  
Goodwill towards others is a precious  
treasure.

## Whakaute - Respect

He aha te mea nui o te ao?  
He tāngata! He tāngata! He tāngata!  
What is the most important thing in the world?  
It is people! It is people! It is people!

## Aroha - Compassion

Aroha mai, aroha atu.  
Love received, love returned.



# About us

## Ā mātou

**In 2000, churches formed a charitable trust known then as the Prison Chaplaincy Service of Aotearoa New Zealand.**

The new organisation set up a different structure for providing religious and spiritual services to prisoners in New Zealand, under contract to the Department of Corrections Ara Poutama Aotearoa, which is also its main funder. The Trust now employed and supplied chaplains, where previously they were employed by Corrections.

The Trust took over responsibility from Corrections for the faith-based volunteers in 2015. In August 2020, a new five-year funding agreement was settled between the Trust and Corrections.

In 2022 the Board renamed the organisation, **Tira Tūhāhā Prison Chaplaincy Aotearoa**. ('Tira' means a group of people travelling together. 'Tūhāhā' describes the ordered heavens in Māori mythology - a place of order and independence, of potential where knowledge leads to creativity and the emergence of new life. Tira Tūhāhā evokes a sense of a hopeful journey, especially for the men and women in prison, towards a life-giving and safe destination that brings hope).

TTPCA is governed by a Board comprising representatives from the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia, the Associated Pentecostal Churches of New Zealand, the Baptist Churches of New Zealand Ko Ngā Hahi Iriri o Aotearoa, the Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa, The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, The Roman Catholic Church of New Zealand, The Salvation Army Te Ope Whakaora, and Te Rūnanga Whakawhanaunga i ngā Haahi o Aotearoa (National Council of Māori Churches). Up to three members can be nominated to the Board.





# Where we work

## Ngā wāhi mahi

### Northern Region

Northland Region Corrections Facility  
Spring Hill Corrections Facility  
Waikeria Prison  
Whanganui Prison

### Auckland Region

Auckland Prison (Paremoremo)  
Mt Eden Corrections Facility  
Auckland South Corrections Facility  
Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility

### Central Region

Tongariro Prison  
Hawke's Bay Regional Prison  
Manawatū Prison  
Rimutaka Prison  
Arohata Prison

### Southern Region

Christchurch Men's Prison  
Christchurch Women's Prison  
Rolleston Prison  
Otago Corrections Facility  
Invercargill Prison



# An introduction to prison chaplaincy

## Koinei te Kaupapa

### What is prison chaplaincy?

The origin of the term 'chaplain' comes from the French word 'chappelle', which is a coat or covering.

The term originates from the old Christian story of St Martin who offered his chappelle to someone in deep distress and gave him a covering, a lifesaving protection, in a similar manner to the parable of the Good Samaritan; offering kindness, compassion and a Christ-like presence. Prison chaplaincy is focused on providing that covering or care to those in prison, regardless of their faith or spiritual identification.

Our organisation is dedicated to supporting some of the most disadvantaged and hurt people in our society. For many of them, this disadvantage has been experienced since birth and that has led them to prison.





## Prison chaplaincy in action

**Our chaplains and volunteers journey with prisoners as they encounter the challenges of incarceration and separation from loved ones and whānau.**

Prison chaplaincy has two areas of focus: ministry with individual prisoners, and building a healthy spiritual community at each prison site. This ministry is delivered both intentionally and serendipitously, through good organisation and unintended encounters as chaplains offer a ministry of presence.

Day-to-day, chaplains have a critical role in facilitating the building of a Spirit-filled community at their site and ensuring that all who wish to can contribute to that community – whether they are prisoners, volunteers, chaplains or prison staff. Chaplains ensure the service at each site is of the highest quality and reflects TTPCA's values, while also leading and managing volunteers. They offer expertise in the core chaplaincy disciplines of pastoral care, delivering worship and occasional services

(for example, cell blessings), and giving opportunities to study the scriptures and other religious and spiritual material.

Joining alongside chaplains are the volunteers, who are a critical part of service delivery. There are rules and processes that volunteers are subject to in a prison setting, which adds a level of commitment not found in other forms of volunteering. There are around 600 faith-based prison volunteers across the country.

Importantly, the relationship between TTPCA, Ara Poutama Aotearoa, and Serco is a partnership. The work chaplains and volunteers do helps with the tensions that can arise, as prisoners struggle with issues that are difficult to resolve while in prison. Every day, prison staff also help facilitate the chaplains' ministry and programmes in numerous ways across the country. Government-church cooperation is truly at its best in prisons.



## General Manager perspective

Roger Mita, General Manager, Tongariro Prison

I've been in the sector for 35 years now, and the General Manager here at Tongariro for two years. We're trying to push forward in all spaces of Corrections, whether that's cultural, religious, or the whole rehabilitation process. To do that, we need to make sure we look after everyone's well-being, and the chaplaincy team is critical in helping that happen.

Our prison chaplaincy team, led by Russell and Te Waiora, is very much a working part of the Tongariro community. They lead church services and events throughout the year, and behind the scenes do one-on-one counselling and group sessions. There's always something going on for somebody, so when our men are struggling, our chaplains are seen as a neutral person they can go to. They'll step in and can dedicate the time needed to take some hurt away from someone in a way that our staff aren't able to. Whether it's through scripture, karakia, or counselling, having a chaplain's support can stop someone from taking a negative turn, and help them connect with something positive instead.

One area where you really notice their support is with tangihanga (funerals).

Generally, prisoners can't attend in person and that can be a very difficult experience, and can send someone into a pretty negative space, especially when someone close has passed. So, you need to get the process right. Our chaplains organise video links so our men can participate, and be supported through the grieving process. We can rely on them to help someone stay settled and make sure they're OK. That support extends to everyone in our wider community as well, so if staff have a bereavement, or we want to do blessings or waiata, they're there to lead that. They're culturally sensitive and are very knowledgeable in Te Ao Māori. That's important for this site because a lot of our men are Māori. Russell has even taken men back to the urupā to see where their ancestors have been laid and helped them get a sense of connection, which has been a priceless experience for many of our guys.

Mental health is a big concern in prisons nowadays, and the chaplains' support plays a big part in ensuring our men are OK and able to stay calm in hard times. You've got to remember that a high percentage of prisoners haven't had great lives, and many feel disconnected. So, for us, it's about connecting them back to something positive whether

I think prison chaplaincy is an integral part of how our system should run.



that's whānau, culture, or religion. We all have our own faith and beliefs so having our chaplains support our men to keep their faith going and abide by what's important to them can empower them on their rehabilitation journey. Nurturing faith is a big part of making someone feel valued, and it's one way we can help them heal themselves while they're here.

For me, a whakatauki that's so important to a prison site is: 'Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini', meaning, 'Success is not the work of an individual, but the work of many'. As a general manager of a prison, I can see how it takes everyone working together to have success. No matter what steps an individual prisoner needs to take to get to a better place, we all need to be having a little bit of influence on that journey.

Whatever someone's personal beliefs are when they come here, I think prison chaplaincy is an integral part of how our system should run. It's one of the key ways we can help someone get to where they want to be. Without our chaplains, there'd be a big hole in our support, and I think if you took them away you'd find out very quickly how much good they contribute!



Above: Tongariro Prison.

# TTPCA strategy in action

## Mahia te mahi

**2024 was the last year for our current strategic plan (set in place in February 2019) with the Board now finalising a new strategic plan with effect from 2025.**

For the last six years, TTPCA has focused on four key areas of development including: increasing Māori participation and presence, developing our chaplains, strengthening volunteer participation, and community building. Work in these areas helps ensure our service is highly professional and meets the needs of the men and women in prison.

Our Tikanga Māori Enabler, Jacob Tobin, completed the second year of his two-year contract in November. His role has increased TTPCA's ability to support Māori in prison. During the year Jacob continued to coach staff and produced more resources to strengthen staff capability in the areas of tikanga, te reo and understanding a te ao Māori worldview. The Board did not extend Jacob's contract (although he will remain with TTPCA on a part-time basis) as it is looking to review the whole bicultural framework of TTPCA before committing to the next phase of development in this area.

2024 saw increased participation by volunteers with most sites having some form of volunteer activity by the end of 2024. Overall access

remains well below optimum, however, due to the limited availability of prison staff to support volunteer activity. By the end of 2024, most volunteers had been through TTPCA's new volunteer training programme. TTPCA is planning further development initiatives for volunteers, especially for those who act as assistant chaplains and pastoral visitors.

TTPCA now recognises that many of its new staff are starting a career in professional ministry. To support the new staff, TTPCA is developing a comprehensive formation programme for chaplains that covers both the craft of prison chaplaincy and the theological and pastoral foundations of ministry. It is challenging for new staff to deliver quality chaplaincy while they 'learn on the job', especially utilising skills that often take years to fine-tune. TTPCA relies heavily on experienced and skilled chaplains to mentor the newcomers.

TTPCA is a small to medium-sized organisation with quite limited resources spread over a national network of prisons. The willingness of staff to collaborate and help each other is essential for maintaining TTPCA's effectiveness. Teamwork, therefore, is emerging as a leading value for TTPCA as it tries to create a whole that is (much) larger than the sum of the parts.



## Developing our chaplains

The work of prison chaplains is deeply challenging, and requires them to navigate complex dynamics of faith, rehabilitation, and justice. To be effective in this demanding role, it is essential for prison chaplains to engage in continuous learning and self-improvement.

Our chaplains are studying theology, interfaith practices, cultural competency, and pastoral care. The courses provide more tools for the chaplain to use and deepens their understanding of their role.

In the past year, several chaplains completed Clinical Pastoral Education studies and others have completed Otago University papers. This study is supported financially by TTPCA and study time is factored into a chaplain's working week.

Here's what a couple of our chaplains had to say about their experience studying this year.

**We are pleased to see the positive outcomes from our chaplains' dedication to ongoing study.**



**Chaplain – Viliame Tuisoso**  
Spring Hill Corrections Facility

The study I did was a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) course, to upskill me in my prison chaplaincy work. It's been a long time since I last studied, so it's been a great help for me.

I've been a chaplain with TTPCA for nearly 19 years now, so I have a lot of experience, but this study has definitely improved my work by changing the way I see things. It has helped me improve my listening skills and reflect more – especially when working one-on-one with prisoners. It all means I can better help someone with the issues they are facing.

I'm thinking of doing more study in mental health in future. There are lots of prisoners who have mental health challenges, so having more skills in the area will complement my work.



**Chaplain – Te Waiora Stirling**  
Tongariro Prison

I recently did three theology papers through the University of Otago. I wanted to get a better understanding of what theology is actually all about, gain qualifications, and grow in my professional role. I also liked how it was a flexible distance learning programme because it really fit into my working situation.

I recommend the Otago courses to anyone. I was brought up in the Christian faith and the Salvation Army but to do formal theological study was a whole new ball game, and I picked up so much from the other experienced chaplains on the courses who have walked the talk.

Just being true to who I am as a wāhine Māori chaplain was the most important takeaway for my professional and personal life. We have to look past what we see in front of us and look deeper into what is sitting in the hearts of our people. Next, I'm going to do two more papers, with the aim of learning more about the Old and New Testaments.



In prisons, you work with people who are seen as outcasts in society, and who can feel hopeless and lost. But God has a purpose for everybody, so through Him, the people who can bring the most hope into this place are the chaplains.

## Pona Solomona

**Regional Manager Northern – A quarter of a century of service!**

### **What have you noticed in the time you have worked with TTPCA?**

I've been with TTPCA for over 25 years now. Through all of my time, respect has always been there for the chaplains and the need for our service is very noticeable, but prison chaplaincy has changed a lot.

The biggest thing is that there are more regulations in the Corrections' system, so our challenge as chaplains is to maintain our personal and compassionate approach to prisoners. We help provide that balance and can consult with prison management on what needs to be done because being a chaplain is about helping everyone in the prison context. That also extends to caring for people of different religions and making sure that the spiritual needs of all prisoners are being met, and our organisation has become well-equipped to do that.

### **What's kept you going here for so long?**

In prisons, you work with people who are seen as outcasts in society, and who can feel hopeless and lost. But God has a purpose for everybody, so through Him, the people who can bring the most hope into this place are the chaplains. That benefit goes both ways too, because I get a lot of energy from working with the men – especially when they can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Over the years I've seen so many people achieve success, which has brought a lot of joy to my life.

Being a 'middle person' in prison also means we are looking at the overall welfare of the community. So we focus on supporting staff as well, because they have to face some difficult situations. That aligns with my purpose of uniting people, and I have noticed that there is a strong sense of unity building up in prisons now. I believe that the chaplain is a vital part of that growth and that staff, and even prisoners, are stepping up to help our prison communities.

### **Where would you like to see chaplaincy go in the next few decades?**

I do think the significance of the chaplains is being realised more, but I would like to see chaplains solidify their place within the system. In my experience, when there are issues big or small, people call on the chaplain. I expect our chaplains to step up to the leading role of a 'kaitiaki' or 'guardian' because that's what's needed to help bring hope to the whole site.

### **What advice would you give to our new chaplains?**

One thing I would say is that it's always a bit discouraging when you see people return to prison after reoffending. But it's not our job to condemn or criticise. Regardless of what you may see, a chaplain's job is to keep on loving because that's what's important in our faith.

# Forrest Chambers

## Chaplain – Manawatū Prison

### Describe your journey into prison chaplaincy

I think that all Christians are called to be with people on the margins, to do as Jesus himself did, so I got involved in grassroots community work through the Catholic Worker Movement. Then when I was looking for the next chapter in my life, I saw a vacancy as a prison chaplain, and it seemed like a natural progression. It's a great privilege to still be working here seven years on.

### What stands out to you in your role?

People in prisons want to be acknowledged, so when you walk around, people will wave or call out to you because they like to be seen and recognised. You just have to, genuinely, be yourself, so that they know you are greeting them as yourself, rather than someone doing a professional role. I think that's possibly because a lot of prisoners don't get much recognition in the world. Many have had hard backgrounds and have been told they're rubbish, and some people will only be known for what they've done rather than as a person with a name. It's very simple in a way, but just treating prisoners in contrast to that, by regarding them as another person like yourself, shows you value them and are upholding their basic dignity.

### What advice would you give to our new chaplains?

When I'm talking with a prisoner, I'm only interested in how they can do better in life, get over hurt, find out who they are, and grow. Right then, I care about their journey and if there's anything they need I'm there to try and help. So, I'd say less is more, and try to get yourself out of the way. Rarely will I give advice, but occasionally you do see something obvious to you and you think, "I need to say this to this person." But generally, say less, listen to their story and cheer them on.

You also need to be clear about why we believe what we believe and be able to answer difficult questions, but at the end of the day, it's not about how much you know. You can get sidetracked by giving lots of explanations, but someone isn't going to remember exactly what you said, they'll remember how they felt when you were talking with them.

### What do you do in your spare time?

I like to be outside, I do a bit of hunting, and really enjoy building projects. I also love spending time with my family, and reading – I especially find theology and church history to be really fascinating.



...some people will only be known for what they've done rather than as a person with a name. It's very simple in a way, but just treating prisoners in contrast to that, by regarding them as another person like yourself, shows you value them and are upholding their basic dignity.

# Our volunteers

## Anei ō mātou kaiāwhina

### The role

TTPCA offers spiritual and religious support to all men and women inside prisons. To provide this service, TTPCA relies on faith-based volunteers to come into prisons to help deliver group worship, group study and individual pastoral care to prisoners every week. Our volunteers enable us to reach more of those prisoners who choose to begin or continue their spiritual journey.

Volunteers are managed by our chaplains at each prison site. Our professional chaplains provide leadership to the volunteers' chaplaincy activities in the prisons, maintain relationships with key Corrections staff, and liaise with the local church and faith communities.

We value the commitment of our volunteer network. They work with our chaplains to deliver religious and spiritual services to groups of prisoners, provide individual pastoral care (assistant chaplains and pastoral visitors), and facilitate Bible studies and other faith-based study groups.





## Who our volunteers are

Our volunteers come from all walks of life. They vary in age, ethnicity, faith and denominational background. Most are Christian, and some are of other religions (e.g. Muslim or Buddhist). They are all endorsed members of a faith-based organisation. All are welcome and important for the service.

In 2024 we had 620 volunteers. This is an astounding number of people who have chosen to offer their skills, experience, faith, and time to prisoners. The diversity of gifts that volunteers bring to prison ministry could never be provided by the chaplains alone.

## Safety and relationships

The process of becoming a volunteer is comprehensive. Every person is vetted by TTPCA, with commendations from their respective church or faith-based community, and there are extensive requirements from Ara Poutama Aotearoa and Serco to gain access to the prison.

When organising the volunteers' activities at prisons, the chaplains are constantly aware of the need to be prepared for disruptions. The main disruptions include sudden prison or unit lockdowns, or when there are too few prison staff on-site to facilitate the volunteers' activities and/or ensure their safety.

Being a TTPCA volunteer is different to being a personal visitor to a prisoner. As a member of the public, you may be able to become a visitor to a prisoner. However, this relationship is initiated by the prisoner and must be approved by prison management (Corrections or Serco). Generally, TTPCA does not allow its volunteers to also be a personal visitor to any prisoner.





# Strengthening volunteer participation



The twin pillars of TTPCA's chaplaincy service are professional chaplains and volunteers. Volunteers deliver the bulk of group services and some vital individual care to prisoners. TTPCA has strengthened its volunteer participation over the year in two areas: growth in volunteer numbers (those joining TTPCA and those able to operate at prison sites), and development of volunteer skill.

## Volunteer numbers

As prison staff have increased their capacity to host group services, TTPCA has been able to deliver more services, which is very exciting. In 2022-2023 only 6.8% of men and women and prison could attend group services, while in 2023-2024 nearly 14% could attend group services. The pre-COVID norm was between 25 and 30% so there is still quite a way to go to reach normal group service delivery. The steady 'return to normal' in group service activity at most sites has been enthusiastically welcomed by both prisoners and prison staff. Prisoners report that their interaction with volunteers – ordinary people from the outside community, is immensely valuable and a highlight of their week.

This year, nearly 400 volunteers turned up regularly at sites and patiently navigated the complexities of being a prison volunteer – they completed paperwork, background checks and site inductions, travelled to and from isolated sites, and coped with the restrictions and disruptions that occur regularly in their time on-site. There are a further 250 in the system whose applications are being processed or are waiting to start their volunteering work.

Alongside the teams of general volunteers who support the group worship services, in 2024 there were 19 volunteer assistant chaplains and 30 pastoral visitors. Assistant chaplains offered individual pastoral care, ran group services and filled in for chaplains when they were away, and pastoral visitors provided specialist one-on-one support to prisoners with distinct religious and spiritual needs.

## Volunteer skill development

One of the ways we have strengthened our volunteer participation this year has been with a focus on volunteer training. The training events, throughout the country, have focused on how to run good group services and practice safely as a volunteer. So far, 514 volunteers have completed the new training package and 164 completed the training in 2024. Feedback about the training has been consistently good, along the lines of one volunteer who said that even though he has been volunteering for a long time he found the training really helpful and it had added new skills to his kete.



# Vern Pullan

## Volunteer Assistant Chaplain – Hawke's Bay Regional Prison

### Describe your journey into volunteering as an assistant chaplain

I started volunteering at Hawke's Bay Regional Prison about 30 years ago. The whole process into it was pretty simple for me. A series of prophets came through our church, and they all said exactly the same thing, that because of my personality and life experiences, prison chaplaincy was where I needed to be. I think we tend to avoid the obvious because we think it's too simple, but God is obvious, and we can miss that little voice or the words someone says. This opportunity was God saying: "Here's a door, it's open, are you going to walk through it now?" So, when I started in prison, I knew I was where I was supposed to be, doing what I was supposed to be doing, and serving whom I was supposed to be serving.

### What do you do in your role?

As an assistant chaplain, I help organise the Sunday services, and support the guys by listening to them and offering resources that will help them out. When you listen, there are words that come out of people, and you go, "Aha! I know a resource we can use to help with that." It could be as simple as going into the Word for the Day or doing a Bible study or one-on-one session. It's also important to listen to the Corrections staff too, and you get to pray for them in the briefing meetings. It's a real privilege to be able to do that for them.

### What stands out to you in your role?

I intently listen to someone's words, but I look at their eyes, and I know when the light comes on. It's like a switch, and that's the big moment. The mind switches in an area that was being held captive, and bang! It then gives you something to talk straight into, it's an open door we can go through. For me, having that experience over and over again just shows how the Holy Spirit is always in control. It's not about me, or the person I'm speaking to, it's about the glory of God!

### What would you say to other potential volunteers?

You'll find out way more about your walk with Jesus doing this, than if you don't. I've been in some really stressful situations, especially visiting prisons overseas. But every time, God has rocked up and made it so easy for me. He always delivers, and that is so good!



**I intently listen to someone's words, but I look at their eyes, and I know when the light comes on. It's like a switch, and that's the big moment.**

## One man's story - He kōrero ā tētahi tāne

**I am a male in my early 40s. I'm married. I have five children to two women, and I also have three stepchildren. My family has been my life. While in prison, I started to agree with a few of God's words, and that moved my spirit. I grew a hunger to search for God's word, although I struggle to read and write.**

The chaplains here have helped me navigate through the Bible. I can speak openly and honestly, one-on-one, with someone who will listen to my pain and help me heal, and talk about Christ's words. They echo the love of God, by sharing His word and displaying His love. They genuinely care about my spiritual growth and have helped to speak life into my lost spirit, which means so much to people who are lacking love. They fill the environment with

spiritual encouragement and let God's words live inside you so that you will never be lost in the darkness again.

God's word shows me how to apply the corrections I need in my life, and I've never known words so life-giving, spirit-moving, and empowering. They have changed my way of thinking and reacting, and enhanced my character. Now I see the world in a different light. These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

With God's message on how to live and the chaplain's encouragement, I am on the right track. The chaplains are a true example of Christian care and have contributed to my growth, peace, and relationship with God. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for using the chaplains to reach out to me. All glory to you Lord!



With God's message on how to live and the chaplain's encouragement, I am on the right track.

## Two women's stories

### He korero ā ngā wāhine tokorua

**I am a single mother in my early 30s. I have four children to care for.**

I arrived in prison earlier this year on my first sentence. The chaplains have been my most trusted outlet and are a safe space to talk, reflect, and confide. The regular one-on-one catch-ups have given me an ear so I can share whatever I need and receive prayer for the challenges I am facing, like my unforgiveness of myself for putting my family in this position. They have also offered me many spiritual resources, and I have regularly attended church services and Bible studies and completed the 12 Steps to Recovery programme. I understand God's word and appreciate His true love, grace, and mercy.

This all helps to keep me connected with the body of Christ and teaches me how to lean on God through the challenges. I am applying the truth of God's word to my life, and this has reignited my passion, knowledge, and gifts – which had been masked in my offending. I have learnt to forgive myself and found peace through trusting in His faithfulness, plan, and provision. I am also sharing the word of God to help empower the wāhine around me.

If other women are feeling hurt, lost, or that something is missing, I would recommend visiting the chaplains and allowing yourself space to find out who you truly are. This place of calm, healing, and support has been vital in my journey through prison.

**I thought I had hit rock bottom until I was incarcerated. I was sentenced to three years and had this overwhelming feeling of isolation within a facility chocka-block with lost souls. I feel like the trauma we've experienced in the past is like having a cold; every now and then it rears its ugly head, making you forget your values and core beliefs.**

But when I first stepped across the threshold of the spiritual space, an immediate feeling of relief came over me. I had a sense of comfort and non-judgemental support. The chaplains made embracing the Lord our Saviour into our lives exciting, and I quickly became

a regular face at chapel. They helped me discover knowledge and encouraged me to share God's word with others through leading Bible studies in my community. I found a renewed sense of self, rebirthed with their guidance of faith and unwavering support. Most importantly, through Jesus Christ, I have found purpose, and my pathway now includes giving back to spiritual spaces in facilities like prison.

In moments of reflection, we can only turn to ourselves to change in our direction, and to open our hearts and minds to our Creator. Take it from me, a relationship with Jesus Christ is never too late to embrace!

## A year in numbers 2023-2024



TTPCA HAS  
**46 STAFF**



WE PROVIDED  
**1** FULL-TIME  
CHAPLAIN



PER  
**355**  
PRISONERS

**20,563**

INDIVIDUAL  
SESSIONS

WERE PROVIDED  
TO PRISONERS

**4,501**

GROUP  
SERVICES

WERE DELIVERED IN  
ALL NZ PRISONS



IN A TYPICAL MONTH

**1,178**



INDIVIDUAL PRISONERS  
RECEIVED ONE OR MORE  
ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT SESSIONS





AN AVERAGE OF  
**12.8%**  
 OF PRISONERS  
 RECEIVED INDIVIDUAL  
**CARE**  
 AT LEAST  
 ONCE A MONTH



IN A TYPICAL MONTH



**1,275**

INDIVIDUAL PRISONERS  
 ATTENDED GROUP SERVICES

THE TOTAL  
 PRISON  
 NUMBERS  
 AS AT 1 JULY  
 2024 WAS

**9,703**

AN AVERAGE OF  
**13.8%**  
 OF PRISONERS ATTENDED  
**A GROUP SERVICE**  
 AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH



**620**



**VOLUNTEERS**

WERE ON OUR DATABASE  
 (AS AT JUNE 2024)



**Tira Tūhāhā**  
 Prison Chaplaincy Aotearoa

# Funding

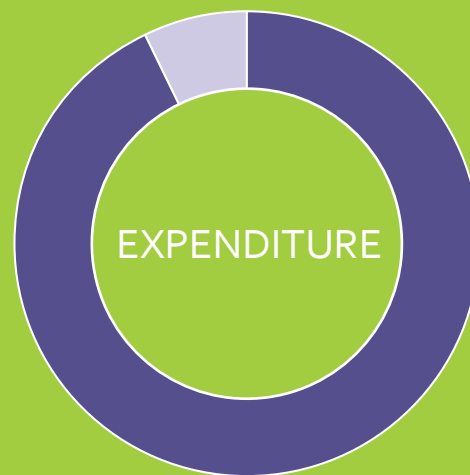
## Pūtea moni



### Sources of Funding

#### 1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024

● Contracts	\$3,067,367
● Investments	\$49,228
● Other	\$32,696
● Donations	\$11,868



### How funds were spent

#### 1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024

● Personnel Costs	\$2,900,741
● Operating Expenses	\$222,232

This financial information is extracted from the audited financial report of Tira Tūhāhā Prison Chaplaincy Aotearoa. A full set of audited financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2024 is available on request.

Charities Services Registration: CC24724.



# Thank you

## Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou

We sincerely thank the following donors and churches who supported TTPCA during the past financial year. Their regular contributions toward our work are very much appreciated.

### Donors

Crossroads Methodist Church, Auckland  
 Kohimarama Presbyterian Church  
 Lincoln Union Church  
 Manukau City Baptist Church  
 St Aidan's Anglican Church, Remuera  
 St Stephen's (Waikiwi) Presbyterian Church, Invercargill  
 Tasman Smith Charitable Trust Hawke's Bay  
 JP Axcell & AJ Shrapnell  
 D & V Marshall  
 B Wood  
 M Pascoe  
 Anonymous via payroll giving and other

## Department of Corrections Ara Poutama Aotearoa

A very big thank you to The Department of Corrections Ara Poutama Aotearoa for their support and funding of our service.

## Serco

Thank you to Serco for their funding of chaplaincy at Auckland South Corrections Facility.

## Bible Society New Zealand

Thanks to the support of the Bible Society, who donated 2,955 Bibles and New Testaments (397 of these were non-English) and a further 194 scripture portions for distribution to men and women in New Zealand prisons this year. The Bible Society's mission is to "make the Bible accessible to everyone" and we are grateful that this includes providing Bibles and associated reading material to men and women in prison including resources in English, Māori, and other languages. These books and resources are some of the few items that prisoners can keep in their cells and are greatly valued by them.

## Volunteers and supporters

We thank all our faith-based volunteers, and those in the volunteer network, who dedicate themselves to helping us to deliver prison chaplaincy, through their time and skills. We are continually amazed by our many volunteers!





# Tira Tūhāhā

Prison Chaplaincy Aotearoa

[www.prisonchaplaincy.org.nz](http://www.prisonchaplaincy.org.nz)