



ANZAC DAY 2024 MESSAGE

Anzac Day is a significant occasion in the life of our country and many will be attending services next week on 25 April.

I have asked two of our Defence Force Chaplains, Rev Chris Purdie and Rev Paula Levy, to share their thoughts on Anzac Day with us.

We are grateful for the valuable work they do as chaplains, and pray that God will continue to bless, strengthen and equip them as they serve in this capacity.

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LEST WE
FORGET

Anzac Day message from Defence Force Chaplain Rev Chris Purdie

Reflecting on ANZAC Day after 17 years of ministry as a chaplain to the forces has been an interesting exercise for me, and one which raises issues of memory.

We in New Zealand do remember and pay tribute to all those people who have sacrificed their lives in the cause of war against tyranny, and for our freedoms, and it's right and important that we do so. So, we remember the people and the families of those people, and yet, by contrast we have lost sight of things closer to that time - the importance of war memorials.

I think we have forgotten why memorial stones in the town square, on the wall of the church, at the memorial gate at the school, the rugby ground, or at the municipal gardens, are important.

These memorials are important because for many years after the significant wars in our country's history -

Anzac Day message from Defence Force Chaplain Rev Paula Levy

This year it will be my privilege to lead the dawn ANZAC Service for several hundred soldiers, families and guests at Linton Military Camp, Aotearoa's largest military base.

Being only my second year as a uniformed chaplain I have much to learn but I know this service will be of deep meaning to those who attend.

Reflecting on the specific events of WWI and the ANZAC landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula is one thing; such immense sacrifice and loss of life on both sides by those who gave all for a cause they believed in or were asked to fight for. Thinking about all those since, who have committed themselves to protect and defend our country is another.

For those serving, all know or know the stories of those who have died in service. They also know the sacrifice of those who have survived but have been forever changed and affected by what they have seen and experienced.



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WW1, WW2 and Korea - they were the only place where the name of the deceased was publicly remembered in the community from which they came.

Why? Because there was no grave for them in New Zealand.

In those wars, military personnel were buried where they died, a whole world away in Belgium, in France, in Turkey or in the North Sea, or on an Island in the Pacific. From those wars no caskets came home. No remains, no casket, no grave, no headstone, and therefore no place to mourn or to remember them by.

All that the families would have received back then was a telegram, which informed them of the death of their loved one. Later, the family might have received a letter from the unit commander or the unit chaplain explaining some of the circumstances of their death and possibly some words about their actions or their character. Maybe sent with it some personal items - their dog tag, a watch, a ring, some letters - mere bric-a-brac of their existence.

In the hard times of these wars, and in the following years, ANZAC Day wasn't just a day of remembering, it was a funeral procession to the local memorial for family and veterans alike - to the only place where the existence of these people was recognised and visible.

I am honored as a Presbyterian Military Chaplain to participate in services at memorials on ANZAC Day, and to bring dignity and mana to those occasions in order that we are able to remember the fallen with their due respect.

As time goes on it's important to remind ourselves that not so long ago these carved names were people who were known personally to those who stood here.

Lest we forget.

Rev Chris Purdie

As someone passionate about God's heart for mission it reminds me also of those who have answered a call to go and serve in another culture and context, not all came back home. Our early missionaries who left by ship with all their belongings, including a coffin. Our more recent ones who continue to go to the hardest places, including war zones and places of persecution and immense danger.

As I stand before dawn, and lead others in prayer and reflection, my heart is we would remember. Remember those who died, those who served, those who are forever affected. Remember those not just in military service but in many other fields who give themselves with the hope and commitment to making the world a better place and to ease the suffering of others.

As we remember, give thanks, pray for those who grieve and prayerfully long for peace in our broken world.

May we commit ourselves again to following the example of Jesus who gave himself for the world he loved. Even if it costs us everything.

Rev Paula Levy

