David Last, Royal Military College of Canada, Chaplaincy, Ethics and Social Cohesion.

This proposal for international online workshops and a panel at ISMS in Amsterdam, 13-15 October 2025, emerges from discussions at ISMS Stockholm in September 2024. It draws on discourse over many years about the role of chaplains in the ministry of reconciliation, both within the military community and by engaging key religious leaders in society. Religious leader engagement emerged from expeditionary peace support and stability operations, including those in the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. More recently, questions of moral injury and healing have entered the discourse of chaplaincy tasks. Religious leaders can change how people think about things—the third face of power. This has fallen out of fashion as a military function but is alive in many groups within society. The power of religious ideas to heal but also to disrupt and damage bears examination. **The Inner Ministry**: Ministering to Military Members and their Families Western military forces and societies have become more diverse and less religious. At the same time, other caring professions have emerged to share many of the psychological and social support functions formerly the preserve of the chaplaincy and its special relationship with commanders. Ministering to members of the military and their families has become a boutique retail occupation, less supported by collective expressions of faith. Religious involvement in public events such as change of command parades, memorials, anniversaries, and consecrations has diminished. Has this left a gap in the collective lives of units and formations and in the individual lives of soldiers and their families? Are Military chaplains necessary or useful? Can they support recruiting and retention? Are they good for morale and unit cohesion? How are military chaplains developed, employed, and perceived by enthusiasts and skeptics in their military constituencies? **The Outer Minister**: Interpreting Schisms and Healing Social Fragmentation
Many countries have a religion as part of their identity, but few invest in supporting, expanding, or proselytizing, and doing so is generally frowned on in open societies espousing liberal values. Low natural birthrates and high immigration are causing rapid social change with attendant frictions. Some tensions are actively manipulated by parties hostile to the state and its values, including foreign states, ideological networks, and religious groups. These forces can combine to weaken social cohesion. Toxic polarization reduces the capacity for governance and security in the face of natural challenges and enemies of the state. Can chaplains support community outreach, analyzing and exploring schisms, and information campaigns to build social cohesion? Are religious leaders appropriate champions to combat extremism and social fragmentation? How can they work most effectively with other sources of security expertise and leadership? How do they contribute to ritual and public ceremony that builds a cohesive sense of national identity?