

Bishop's Chaplains: Exploration of WW1

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Introduction

Bishop's University was founded in 1843 and was well known for its theological studies. It was small but well established when the First World War broke out in 1914.

Many students of Theology enlisted alongside their fighting friends. Chaplains would play a critical role in helping support the troops.

Canon John McPherson Almond was one such Bishop's man who followed his comrades to the trenches of Europe.

What are Chaplains?

The Royal Warrant created The Army Chaplains' Department in 1796. Chaplains were religiously trained administrators who acted as advisers and friends to the soldiers at the front. They were also responsible to keep the army's morale high. Although at first the Army Chaplains were Anglican, many other faiths were soon allowed to serve. Roman Catholic chaplains in 1836 and Jewish chaplains in 1892. In World War one, 4 400 Chaplains were recruited. From the 10 Canadian Chaplains at the outbreak of war, 8 came from Bishop's, including Canon Almond.



John McPherson Almond

Canon Reverend J.M. Almond

B.A. Bishop's University, 1894

M.A. Bishop's University, 1911

While at Bishops he was a member of the Churchwarden club. In 1894, he was Associate Editor for the *Mitre*, the regular news and creative paper of the campus. He also took alternate studies at Megantic where he later continued his religious practices. In 1895, he was the captain of the rugby team and assistant editor of the *Mitre*.

His training and positions of leadership all helped him serve as Chaplain during the war. After graduation he was an active alumni being President of the Alumni association in 1911, then the Chairman in 1912. He was among the first from Bishop's to enlist in the war in 1914.

He joined the Royal Army Chaplains and followed the 189th Canadian Regiment – where many other Bishop's students enlisted. Almond was promoted to Major for the Canadian Field artillery in the 1st division. Later, he became a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Canadian Army Medical Corps for the Canadian Corps unit in the company A.D.S.C.

He often met with other Bishop's students and Alumni once enjoying a lobster barbeque organized by Canon Scott. He finished his services as a Colonel for the Canadian Chaplain Service in the company of the directors.

Useful vocabulary

Canon: Priest with special duties in the church appointed by a Bishop.

Reverend: Priest

Colonel: Highest military rank



They gave me this name like their nature,
Compacted of laughter and tears,
A sweet that was born of the bitter,
A joke that was torn from the years

Of their travail and torture, Christ's fools,
Atoning my sins with their blood,
Who grinned in their agony sharing
The glorious madness of God.

Their name! Let me hear it -- the symbol
Of unpaid -- unpayable debt,
For the men to whom I owed God's Peace,
I put off with a cigarette.

[Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy](#)
British Chaplain during WW1

Almond received decorations and awards during his military service. He was named Commander of the Order of the British Empire; he received the Companion of the Order of St-Michael and St-George and was mentioned in Despatches & 'A' List twice. On his safe return to Canada he was designated Director of Chaplaincy in Canada (1917)

Conclusion:

Chaplains during the Great War were essential in keeping the soldiers' spirits up. Like Canon Reverend J.M. Almond, they offered support and provided theological guidance and services to the soldiers as they fought and died.

Canon J. M. Almond worked with fellow Bishop's students and Alumni in the trenches and was a remarkable leader and scholar.

His recognition through the medals and awards he received are clear indications of his remarkable skills. He was a notable Bishop's member.

