

The LMT Report

Terms: A comprehensive report with recommendations to Council of Assembly, March 2012, stating (1) clear options, with theological and legislative implications; and (2) a rationale consistent with the purpose and mission of the PCANZ.

1. A statement expressing the role and relationship of Local Ministry Teams (LMTs) to the mission and purpose of the PCANZ

The role of Local Ministry Teams and their relationship to the mission and purpose of the PCANZ is surely to be found in considering the purpose for which they were established and the context in which they were intended to operate, as envisaged by the 2002 Assembly.

That context is most often the rural congregation, far removed from the formal avenues of power and strategic planning. In fact, most often at a distance from any large centre of population, with few people, and little money, endeavouring, with grace and fortitude, to be the Body of Christ in communities that have, in many places, long since been left to their own devices.

The congregations served by the 16 LMTs listed in the 2011 Year Book provide pastoral care¹ for over 2000 adults from Bluff to the Bay of Islands. They also provide these folk with the full spectrum of worship and ministry.

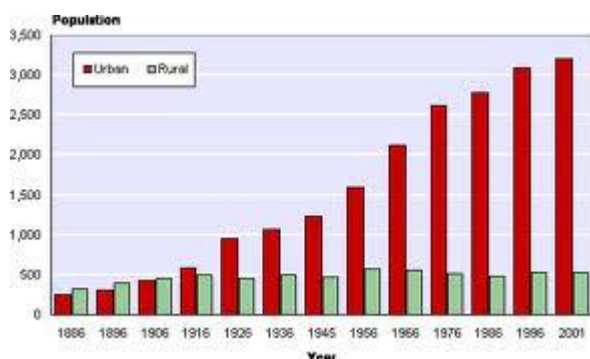


Mossburn Church, Southland

In this, they continue the long-standing commitment of the Presbyterian Church to provide the fruits of ordained ministry to Presbyterian families wherever they may be found; a strong ecclesiology of pastoral care perhaps best exemplified by the first Director of Ministry, the Rev David Bruce (of Auckland). Released by the Assembly from his parish of St Andrew's in 1862, he regularly travelled on foot, by horseback, and by coaster, to places as far afield as Golden Bay, Hutt Valley, Wairarapa, Napier and Poverty Bay, once visiting in the course of a two-month journey 1500 Presbyterians cut off from regular church attendance.²

Of course, regular church attendance assumes a congregation and, according to the Book of Order, the primary function of any congregation is as follows:³

- to worship God,
- to participate in God's mission to the world,
- to provide pastoral care for one another and the wider community,
- to nurture faith within the congregation and the wider community, and
- to provide for the congregation's property and finances.



It has long been the church's expectation that leadership in these areas will be provided by ordained ministers. However, although farming remains a significant sector of the economy, many sociological changes are taking place in the rural scene, fewer people now live 'on the land', and the finance required for full-time ministry in rural communities is increasingly difficult to find. Amalgamation and cooperation have provided partial relief, but in the later part of the last century the mainline churches began to rediscover the ministry of the whole *laos* of God.

Rather than a community gathered around 'a minister', the church can be seen as a ministering community.

2. An overview of LMTs and their current place and function in our church

This growing awareness led to the formation, by the Assembly, of the Lay Ministry Task Group, a group charged with reviewing the role of lay ministry in the church. The Task Group reported to the 2002 General Assembly recommending, among other things, that the Assembly recognise four strands of Ministry of Word and Sacrament in the PCANZ – National Ordained Ministry, Local Ordained Ministry, Local Ministry Teams, and Amorangi Ministry. The recommendation was adopted.

A LMT was defined as ‘a team of people inducted to fulfil the tasks of ministry, recognised through a careful process of discernment at congregational and presbytery level and confirmed through presbytery commissioning as a team ministry’.⁴

Of the 16 parishes listed in the current Year Book as being served by a Local Ministry Team, 2 are in the Northern Presbytery, 2 are in Kaimai, 1 is in Gisborne/Hawkes Bay, 1 is in Taranaki, 1 is on the West Coast, 1 is in South Canterbury, and the remaining 8 are in the Southern Presbytery.

With regard to the regulations under which these teams have been established, 4 operate under Anglican regulations (but in three different dioceses), 5 operate under Methodist regulations, and only 7 (which happen to all be in the Southern Presbytery) are under the regulations of the PCANZ only. In other words, all teams north of the Waitaki River are in Cooperative Ventures.



The members of the review team, all from the Southern Presbytery, are already in a working relationship with the southern LMTs and members of the team personally interviewed 5 of the northern LMTs including the two remaining teams in the South Island north of the Waitaki River. They also had available two significant recent study leave reports dealing with aspects of rural ministry in general and LMTs in particular. One was written by a minister in a southern rural parish and the other by a minister serving as the resource minister for 6 of the southern LMTs. Each LMT was also invited to respond to a brief questionnaire. Thus the workgroup had access to a broad range of data regarding the diversity and effectiveness of LMTs as they are currently represented in our church.

A selection of responses follows:

- ❖ Our team is working well but needs fresh blood.
- ❖ It has taken till now for members of the congregation to become accustomed to the LMT concept, but we are now in a good place and the church is really expecting some real growth in the short term.
- ❖ In combination with MY Tribe and TAG we are seeing amazing growth in the young people.
- ❖ Generally works well.
- ❖ The team is functioning well at the moment.
- ❖ New people attending our church, adult/teenage baptisms.
- ❖ Incorporating a "Galilean Breakfast" as part of our Easter Day service 2011; involvement with the local marae in Waitangi Day celebrations the last two years.
- ❖ Being ecumenical works well for us.
- ❖ Very good at challenging members to serve within the church.
- ❖ A way to have a church presence in an area that cannot afford paid ministry.
- ❖ Sponsoring the three schools in the parish to an adventure day at Camp Columba.

A summary table of statistical data is included and, as an Appendix to the report,⁵ copies of the Methodist regulations and of the regulations used in the Taranaki Diocese (regarded widely as the most developed revision of Anglican practice), as well as an excerpt from The Guide to Procedures in Cooperative Ventures.

Local Ministry Teams				
Presbytery	Parish	Regs.	Team Contact	Notes:
				M W PC (2009)
NORTHERN	Bay of Islands Uniting	M?	Terry Brew	31 22 31
Clerk:		LSM		
Alex Robinson				
	Tutukaka	A	Julie Calton	39 24 39
		LTM		
KAIMAI	Trinity United	M?	Mrs Hayes	82 43 83
Clerk:	(Waikato)	LSM		
Christine Renner				
	Turangi Co-op	A	Joseph Beattie	84 33 84
	(Waiapu)	LTM		
GISBORNE H/BAY	Takapau, Norsewood	A	Donna Akins	66 36 70
Clerk: Prue Neild	(Waiapu)	LTM		
TARANAKI	Opunake Co-op	M		81 33 155
Clerk: Lynette Hodge		LSM		
WEST COAST	Greymouth District Un.	M	Lyn Heine	No figures
Clerk: Helen Mc Millan				
SOUTH CANTERBURY	Waihao Co-op	A	Alistair Young	44 25 127 Youth group 35
Clerk: Judith Begg	(Christchurch)	LTM		
SOUTHERN	Maheno/Otepopo	P	Marion Partridge	60 51 109
Clerk: Zona Pearce		LMT		
	Mossburn	P	Hamish Elder	25 27 92
		LMT		
	Pukerau / Waikaka	P	Alistair Price	22 20 200
		LMT		
	Waiiau Valley	P	Lincoln Moffat	40 22 170
		LMT		
	Knox ~ Invecargill	P	Nardia Livingstone	46 34 70
		LMT		
	St Paul's ~ Invecargill	P	Bronwyn Becker	61 42 252
		LMT		
	St Stephen's ~ In/cargil	P	Christine Gare	90 52 250
		LMT		
	Riverton Union	M	Heather Stuart	111 33 218
		LSM		

Total under pastor care: 1,950 plus

Total members: 880 plus

3. An assessment of the benefits and strengths of LMTs against both the strategic goals of our church and the regulations relating to the functions and purpose of a congregation, along with any specific challenges associated with the training, resourcing and support of LMTs.

It is clear from the visits to parishes and from the reported comments that, in most cases, the LMTs are providing a creative alternative for parishes that cannot afford (or justify) full time stipended ministry. Although it was not the original intention that given sufficient finance a parish would choose LMT rather than NOM or LOM, there is nothing at parish level in principle or performance to suggest that they should not. In fact, the Anglican Diocese of Taranaki has formed what are called regions of collaboration 'with the primary purpose of enabling the local church to be more effective in mission and ministry. In each local congregation the ministry of every person is to be supported by Local Ministry Teams'.⁶ It is their hope, built on experience, 'that all parishes and local congregations will work towards becoming ministering communities'.

The regional Resource Ministry, now serving seven parishes with LMTs in the Southern Presbytery, was set up for a similar purpose. Although operating with different regulations and in a different ecclesiological context, the Presbytery is currently working to expand the concept with the same end in view. There are significant challenges to be met in achieving that goal. Key among these are both 'recognition' and 'resourcing'.

Many members of LMTs working in parishes with a strong Presbyterian element, or those set up under the Presbyterian regulations, report that among colleagues on Session and at Presbytery level there is a lack of acceptance of LMTs as a fully recognised alternative to national ordained ministry. This is particularly so where insufficient attention was given to education and preparation in the process of setting up the team and in the appointing the members. Further, an effective and well-understood process of discernment is crucial to a successful transition to this model of ministry.

At national level the problem of recognition is largely in terms of communication, where correspondence takes no account either in address or content of the fact that not all parishes are served by a national (or local) ordained minister. This has the effect on LMT recipients of apparently 'disappearing' their status and ignoring the work they do. In the early days of cooperative ventures, Union District Councils experienced similar difficulties. It is largely a matter of awareness and sensitivity.

The Council of Assembly's recently distributed Strategic Goals paper contains the following statement:

In enabling each congregation to identify and live its unique mission, the most important thing the institution of PCANZ can do is effectively 'get out of the way'. In reality there are a plethora of guidelines for most situations, but congregations need to discern firstly what God is doing in their community or context and then determine how they will *be* church – to the people inside as well as outside their doors.

While this is undoubtedly true, and LMTs have generally taken the opportunity to do that to the best of their ability and with limited resources, the institution of the PCANZ needs to do more than just 'get out of the way'. The 2002 report contained a raft of recommendations regarding training and support which appear to have been largely relegated to the archives. Again, interviews and received comments indicate little consistency in approaches to the training of teams and no clear guidance for presbyteries or Resource Ministers (Enablers) in carrying out their role.



It is our view that drawing on the experience gained in the 10 years since LMTs were established, the KCML would now be well situated to reassess training needs and work toward a more comprehensive approach, properly integrated with the current training of ordained ministers.

Also needing attention is the provision by parishes and presbyteries of adequate financial resources to ensure that LMTs are well supported in terms of training needs and out-of-pocket expenses. Just as for NOMs, the level of provision for such expenses should be written into regulation rather than be left to a 'request for reimbursement' basis.

It is noted that Question 3 above is framed in terms of ‘the function and purpose of a congregation’. There are at least two important points to be made in this regard:

First, while there is always a complex interrelationship between the life of a congregation and its designated leadership (both ‘ruling’ and ‘teaching’ elders), LMTs should not be judged by a standard higher than that which would be applied to a similar congregation lead by a NOM. Since 2008, all congregations, irrespective of leadership, are required to undertake a five-yearly parish review according to the Parish Development Framework template. It is the place of the Presbytery to judge the degree to which any parish is measuring up to the function and purpose of a congregation, and what action may be appropriate in the light of that review.

Second, in recognising an LMT as one of the four strands of ‘set-apart’ ministry, the PCANZ has an obligation of care to ensure that an equivalent degree of attention is given to this strand as to the others. A perusal of the Conditions of Service Manual reveals a quickly-diminishing degree of specificity regarding the processes and resourcing provisions required of the church under the heading ‘Ministers of Word and Sacrament’. While it may be readily assumed that the general provisions for NOMs also apply as appropriate to LOMs, no such assumption can be made with regard to LMTs; the only requirement other than the limitation on call is that there will be a regular review, and that ‘expectations of the team and congregation will need to be articulated clearly in the terms of call’.⁷

There is also a contradiction between the Conditions of Service Manual and the provisions of the Book of Order over what happens when a member of the LMT resigns. The Book of Order requires that a Ministry Settlement Board must be established, presumably on the grounds that when one member resigns the LMT no longer exists. The Conditions of Service manual allows the congregation to replace the member until the next review of the model of ministry. Both approaches have serious drawbacks. While the approved model of ministry for the parish is an LMT, that doesn’t necessarily imply that the Team must consist only of the members who were initially appointed, nor that a term of appointment for a team should be related to the question of a review of the model. Other denominational processes allow for the appointment of each member for a term and members come up for reappointment on a rotational basis, thus vacancies are filled by the discernment process as and when they occur without a complete disruption of the pattern of ministry. A normal parish review is an adequate instrument to determine the functionality of the LMT model.

Further thought should also be given to LMT as an alternative strand of ‘set-apart’ ministry in terms of the function and purpose of NOM. The preface to the first Book of Order adopted by the General Assembly says that a distinctive feature of the Presbyterian form of government is that it is ‘representative in character, and is in the hands of Teaching and Ruling Elders, duly elected by the members of the church’, and the current Book of Order notes that tradition and continues with the words ‘in the Presbyterian tradition the minister is responsible for preaching and teaching the Word and administering the sacraments. In this tradition, the minister is understood as the guardian of the Gospel and along with the elders is concerned with the spiritual rule and pastoral oversight of congregations, leadership in mission and government of the Church through its courts’.⁸ Another perspective is that the minister provides a trained and authorised theological perspective, a committed and compassionate availability, as well as a non-aligned but relational leadership, as conveyed by the traditional (and gender neutral) term ‘Moderator’.

If a team is appointed to carry out the ordinary functions normally the province of a NOM or a LOM or an Amorangi minister, then the discernment process needs to clearly distinguish either (i) the various roles into which the members are to be nominated, or (ii) the range gifts desirable to be evidenced in the team so as to appropriately share the roles among them. Once accepted as bearing a particular role that member should be accorded the same level of respect in carrying it out as would be accorded to a NOM performing that particular function. The same privileges and responsibilities should also apply.

Appointed as a team, the expectation is that although each member may carry a specific role or function, they will not perform as a collection of more or less gifted individuals but as a group committed to sharing the insights of their respective gifting, so that together they minister as an integrated team.

4. An assessment of the risks in the present structure in terms of both maintaining and strengthening reformed worship and sustaining and developing vibrant, mission-focused congregations.

While maintaining and strengthening reformed worship is a primary task in the leadership of any congregation, developing a 'vibrant mission focused congregation' is much more problematic for a small and under-resourced outpost of our denomination, led by an LMT, but no more than it is for a similarly placed rural parish led by a NOM.

The study leave report by Stephanie Wells, drawing on her own experience, makes clear that isolation, the realities and demands that attend volunteerism, a limited range of expertise, and meagre financial resources are commonplace in rural parishes whatever the form of leadership. However, the financial advantage of an LMT may well be vitiated by the risk of neglect by Presbytery, lack of training, absence of regular mentoring, confusion of role, as well as the strong possibility of financial abuse by unfair imposition on the generosity of team members where appropriate recompense has not been clearly defined. While the Parish Review coupled with a trained and active Resource Minister or Enabler, will go a long way toward mitigating such risks, the prime responsibility rightly lies with the presbytery and much more specific guidance is required for resourcing Presbyterian LMTs than is currently provided (when compared with the more detailed approaches of sister denominations).

5. To identify any specific challenges associated with the training, resourcing and support of LMTs.

While a number of such challenges have already been identified in this report, it can be said that while the training of LMTs was left to the discretion of presbyteries, considerable change has taken place in the delivery of training for ministry and leadership since the 2008 report was penned, and it is now becoming increasingly important for there to be a greater degree of consistency and integration across the recognised stands of "set-apart" ministry. Rather than attempt a piecemeal adjustment to the regulations relating only to LMTs, the workgroup believes that the Knox Centre and its Advisory Board are best placed to ascertain how to most effectively incorporate the training both of LMTs and Resource Ministers into the on-going program of theological education and training for ministry.

6. An assessment of the degree to which LMTs have fulfilled the purposes and objectives expressed in the 2002 report to the General Assembly.

Lay Ministry Task Group 2002 ~ Vision

"Every congregation needs as part of its life a ministry that has the confidence of the wider church (through Presbytery), is credible in the local context, connects the congregation to the wider church through the mutual recognition of the ministry of Word and Sacrament, is credible ecumenically, and is appropriately resourced and supported. This must enable and support the congregation in responding to its ministry context, particularly in relation to rural or strongly culturally-defined communities."

The perception gained from most LMTs is that contrary to their own experience, presbyteries and the wider church show little interest or confidence in this form of ministry. This begs the question of how the PCANZ through its presbyteries would otherwise provide for the pastoral care of close on 1,000 of its members, not to mention nearly another 1,000 listed as being under the care of parishes led by LMTs.

On the other hand it appears clear from the visits and reports that LMTs are providing an enthusiastic approach to ministry, tempered by realism, which has real credibility both in its context and also ecumenically, considering that half the teams serve in cooperative ventures. The model has become widely established and appears well suited to the rural environment, as envisioned by the 2002 report. However, the resourcing and support intended by the Task Group has certainly fallen short of the objectives outlined in the vision statement. Despite the difficulties and lack of support, Presbyterian LMTs are providing a viable form of ministry which can be better resourced if the wider church is prepared to address the issues of training

and guidance intended in the 2002 recommendations but not yet clearly articulated in supplementary regulations, nor readily available in focused training resources.

R.J.Weeks

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23/03/2012

Recommendations:

1. That the report be received
2. That LMTs be reaffirmed as one of the strands of set-apart ministry recognised by the PCANZ
3. That the KCML be asked to review the training needs of LMTs and their Resource Ministers (Enablers) in order to better integrate them into the overall training program for ministry, and to report with recommendations to the 2014 General Assembly
4. That in order to provide continuity of the LMT model of ministry in a specific parish, regulations be drafted in consultation with the Book of Order Advisory Group, to allow for members of the team to be appointed for staggered terms, with the opportunity of reappointment, and the filling of occasional vacancies.

¹ 2009 statistics report PCANZ website

² John Rawson Elder, *The History of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1840–1940* (Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1940), 231.

³ 5.2 Functions of the congregation, Chapter 5, Book of Order 2011

⁴ “Future Ministry Together” Lay Ministry Task Group Report Rec 4(c) Assembly 2002 white Book p F2-15

⁵ Appendices:

1: Questionnaire, 2 : Anglican Regs., 3: Methodist Regs., 4 : UCANZ Guidelines

⁶ “A Regional Approach to Parish Licensed Ministry Teams” The Bishopric of Taranaki, 2011, P3

⁷ “Conditions of Service Manual” 2011, p14

⁸ 6.1(3) Ministers and Elders, Chapter 6, Book of Order 2011