

## Council of Assembly

### Recommendations

1. That presbyteries (those still operating within 2008 boundaries) actively and constructively move towards reformation following on from the decision passed at GA08, with the aim of being established and set up by GA12.
2. That the AES and the Presbytery Reform Team become active agents in this process to facilitate and encourage those presbyteries in this transition process.
3. That a task group be set up to facilitate discussions with interested parties to consider the possibility and feasibility of forming an "Auckland Hub", in consultation with the Greater Auckland Presbytery Reform Team.
4. That the General Assembly urges the Government to implement all the recommendations in the Law Commission's "Alcohol in our Lives" report.
5. That the General Assembly endorses the "5+ solution" being recommended by Alcohol Action New Zealand which proposes:
  - a. Raise alcohol prices
  - b. Raise the purchase age
  - c. Reduce alcohol accessibility
  - d. Reduce marketing and advertising
  - e. Increase drink-driving counter-measures
6. The General Assembly urges the Government to provide increased treatment opportunities for heavy drinkers.
7. The General Assembly conveys

to the Government that a total ban on the marketing and advertising of alcohol would be more effective than a reduction in these activities.

8. That the procedure for dissolving a congregation be amended by replacing existing regulations 5.9, 5.10, 5.10(a) and 5.12 of the Book of Order with the new regulations as detailed in the body of this report.

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## Report

### 1 Role

Council is tasked with carrying out the decisions of General Assembly, giving oversight to all national functions between General Assemblies and bringing to Assembly proposals for future direction.

### 2 Meetings

As a Council we meet together for two-three days at a time. Between GA08 and GA10 we met in full on eight occasions: in Wellington, Knox College Dunedin, Maungarongo Marae, Ohope, and in Auckland. We also held several telephone conference calls to decide urgent matters in between meetings.

### 3 Context

The Presbyterian Church is moving through a time of transition as we grapple with what it means to be church in an environment that is rapidly changing both internally and externally. This has been challenging as we have moved into uncharted territory, but it is also a great opportunity for us, at a critical time in our history to re-shape, re-think, and re-form.

Author Brian McLaren speaks about the distinction between an institution and a movement; an institution being an organisation which conserves the gains made by a past movement, and a movement being a process that calls the institution to make progress towards new gains.<sup>1</sup>

Both the institution and the movement need each other and both are frustrated by one another. The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand is both a movement and an institution and we hold the characteristics of both in tension. In this time of transition there is a sense of opportunity and hope as this new

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<sup>1</sup> Brian McLaren: Seminar in Auckland on Mission for Church Leaders. October 2009.

movement begins to take shape. Without leaving the institution behind we need to keep our eyes open for the new gains this will bring.

As we embark on this journey we need to be asking the right questions. Instead of “*what needs to change in order to grow*”, perhaps we should be asking “*what kind of church is God calling into being*”?<sup>2</sup> This is the missional question, the movement question.

Nelson Mandela dreamt about a movement and asked a missional question; even behind bars he saw a future for South Africa. Imprisoned for 29 years on Robben Island, instead of becoming bitter and resentful, he formed what he termed the “school of democracy.” In this school they would talk about what this new country would look like, what it would be founded on. They came up with the “seven pillars of democracy” which described all that they stood for and hoped for, in this new country... freedom, democracy, equality, diversity, reconciliation, responsibility and respect. These pillars can be seen outside the Museum of Apartheid, etched in stone, reminding us of the power of a dream. One man dreamt about a movement and asked a missional question. We need to do the same in this time of transition as a church.

As this movement takes shape, the Assembly Staff have continued to be the glue that holds us together in this time of transition. As a Council we recognise their hard work and appreciate their willingness to work in sometimes difficult and challenging times. As things are re-structured and re-shaped we rely heavily on the expertise, wisdom and institutional knowledge they hold. The Assembly Executive Secretary, Rev Martin Baker, is critical to this and his input and leadership have been invaluable.

Council’s work, together with that of its committees and task groups, can be reviewed in the various reports before the assembly.

- Leadership (report D2)
- Resource (report D3)
- Focal Identity Statement Task Group (report D5)
- Presbytery Reform Task Group (report D7)
- Press Go (report D8)
- Knox Centre For Leadership and Ministry (report D4)
- Nominations Committee Review Task Group (report D9)
- Strategic Planning Task Group (report D10)

You will see from these reports that there is a real sense of expectation as stories of a movement are uncovered.

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<sup>2</sup> Graham Redding: “*Thinking About National Mission*”. August 2009.

## 4 Stories of a movement

### 4.1 Presbytery reform

The GA08 agreed to the formation of Presbytery Reform Teams to consult with other presbyteries to establish a reconfiguration of presbytery boundaries; as well as new resourcing groups and governance structures by the beginning of 2009. The new presbyteries would begin operating within the new Presbytery Structure as soon as is practicable and once established be formally recognised by the General Assembly. (08.040, 08.041, 08.109, 08.043, 08.044[a])

This decision was a major one. The enormity and the implications for us as a Church are only now being realised. This decision was not just to do things on a bigger scale, to replicate what we did before. This was a decision motivated by the desire to become a more missional church; a church that was not just an institution, a church that was a movement as well. This is our opportunity to re-structure and re-frame and re-form and ask the question at a presbytery level; *“what is God calling into being?”*

A movement is not something that is imposed institutionally; it grows close to the people at a grass-roots level, where it is fostered and owned. We have great expectations that this re-forming will re-focus things missionally creating a movement at a regional and local level.

We celebrate the formation of the Kaimai and Southern Presbyteries. Although it has not been without difficulties, they have led the way and shown that it is possible, that it is worthwhile, that it can really work.

In the Southern Presbytery at the inauguration of the new moderator Rev Richard Dawson stripped down to shorts and t-shirt stressing the need to *“strip off the pretence and unhelpful traditions we sometimes carry as a church institution and to trust God for the future.”*

In the Kaimai Presbytery they report of significant advantages as a result of the changes already made. Decisions are being made more efficiently and a greater range of competent people are coming forward to share tasks. As a result more time and energy can be given to resourcing and releasing for mission, discerning *“what is God calling into being”*.

A special combined event in March this year for the Greater Auckland Presbytery region<sup>3</sup> articulated a real desire to shift the focus from inward looking governance to outward focused missional concern. This would be based around three key words... **Relate**, **Release** and **Resource** (the 3R's). The guest speaker, Sam Chapman, reminded the gathering *“its not so important how we do it, but why we do it.”* The “why” is the missional question and should be a guiding question for all of us as we continue on in this process.

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<sup>3</sup> This includes South Auckland, Auckland, North Shore and Northland.

As new presbyteries are formed each one will look different, reflecting the mission challenge and context of each region. We will need skilful people willing to step out and move forward to ensure that this transition takes place in a positive and constructive way. It will be critical to the success of this reformation that the transition be as smooth as possible. Council recognises that resourcing for mission is done most effectively at a regional level and we want to facilitate this as much as possible.

Whilst every presbytery has a unique context and particular issues to deal with we recognise that there are particular challenges and opportunities facing the Greater Auckland Presbytery region. The complexity and the scale of the change required demands an incredible amount of time, input and focus in an area that is already struggling to meet its demands. In discussion with the Presbytery Reform Team the Council will be looking at ways to best facilitate and resource this in order to enable transition to occur.

Council acknowledges Garry Marquand and his reform team, who have worked with presbyteries, offering advice, support and encouragement as reform has progressed. Garry's leadership in this has been crucial and as a Council we say: "thank you".

A critical question which will need to be addressed is cost of Assembly Assessment and the contributions made by each parish to support the things that we have agreed to do together. As the new presbyteries take shape some of these things will become regional rather than national responsibilities and an adjustment maybe necessary. Currently the total amount paid by each parish includes contributions to the Beneficiary Fund and it may well be that the first step is to separate this out for greater clarity. This will need careful consideration, research and debate.

## **4.2 Auckland Hub**

Council recognises that the greater Auckland area, as our largest and most multi-cultural city, is an area of great opportunity for us as a Church. As the "Greater Auckland Presbytery" takes shape, it would seem reasonable for us as a Church to look at ways to consolidate our presence in this region.

We would like to encourage the formation of an "Auckland Hub" to facilitate this. This could possibly consist of the Pacific Island Synod office and reflection centre, the Asian Advisory Group who are already significant stakeholders in this region, as well as the already existing Kids Friendly office, and the Auckland Coordinator for the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership. Then as presbytery roles are established their offices could become part of this, as well as any other Auckland based national roles in the future.

## **4.3 Mission resource review**

With the Presbytery Reform taking place, we needed to consider whether our current structures would serve us well into the future. As a result a review of our mission-resourcing structures was commissioned in 2009 and Murray

Robertson and Garry Marquand were asked to consult and report back to Council.

This review made a number of recommendations, some of which Council is still working through. One of the comments made was that the Church needs structures that are empowering rather than controlling. *“In a society where decentralised innovative organisations with high levels of trust are valued, traditional controlling church structures with ponderous committees are increasingly seen as hopelessly outdated and ineffective.”*

If such a change in culture is to be embraced, as we attempt to reach future generations, then the national staff we have will play a key role in encouraging that change. As the review pointed out, they will lead this transition rather than merely enable it.

The role of the Assembly Executive Secretary is key to this. As a change agent he/she leads the transition to ways, cultures, forms and processes for engaging in mission today. On top of an already full-time administrative/managerial role this has become a tension point. The expectations on the Assembly Executive Secretary to fulfill both change agent and administrative tasks has proved difficult. The review recommended that the role be split around two functional areas and Council supports this recommendation and will be looking at this possibility in the future.

#### **4.4 International mission**

We are committed to supporting a wide range of international mission engagements and the recent restructuring of the Global Mission Office has made it possible to ensure that funds will continue to be available to support both our traditional relationships and those to be formed in the future. It is important to acknowledge the many ways Presbyterians connect with missional activity outside of our shores. Not only do we have relationships which are nationally fostered such as Vanuatu, Jagadhri, North India and Myanmar; but many Presbyteries and congregations also have extensive and historical international mission relationships. In addition, individual church-goers support a vast range of missions, para-church agencies, aid workers and mission and development agencies. All of these are part of Presbyterian International Mission.

Following the restructuring of the Global Mission Office in late 2009, the Very Rev Pamela Tankersley was appointed to the role of Overseas Mission Co-ordinator. Based at the Assembly Office, Pamela will make sure that all our current obligations to partner churches are respected and affirmed. This appointment will ensure that the families that we currently support continue to receive assistance and that donors who support our overseas commitments are assured of the on-going importance of their gifts. Pamela will function as the contact person for all enquiries regarding our overseas mission work. Part of her role will be to make contact with those who have a special involvement with our historical engagements in Vanuatu, Jagadhri and the Church of North India, as well as our more recent work in Myanmar.

Council would like to acknowledge the valuable work of all those involved in the former Global Mission Office. Rev Andrew Bell's passion and dedication for mission was especially appreciated. He did much to ensure that mission was a crucial and central part of our gospel call... making Jesus Christ known all over the world.

We recognise that the Global Mission Office restructure was difficult for many people and as a result of concerns which were communicated to Council, we sought an impartial review of the process utilised. This review revealed areas where Council could have handled things differently and we have accepted the recommendations of this review. This will inform future processes where change management is required.

#### **4.5 Press Go**

Press Go is unashamedly about growth and promoting an attitude of true stewardship in releasing God's resources for his purposes. Key to this is the work of the Press Go board, chaired by the Rev Ray Coster, in getting alongside congregations and presbyteries and discerning with them just which projects and initiatives have within them the potential for growth – always conscious that it is God who gives the growth. ("I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow" - 1 Corinthians 3:6).

The Press Go initiative is committed to making sure the Presbyterian Church is a movement focused on mission and growth for God's kingdom, by creating a mechanism to collectively fund the most promising growth ideas.

There are some great examples in the Press Go report of how this new initiative is working from the grass roots up and Council encourages each congregation, presbytery and individual to consider how they might best contribute to this new work of hope.

#### **4.6 Strategic Planning Task Group**

The strategic planning team has been working throughout 2010 consulting around the country, seeking to put into words the hopes and dreams of a Church on the move, balanced by the knowledge that we are facing serious issues of membership decline. This is an ongoing process that seeks to build on what has gone before<sup>4</sup>. Dialogue groups at this Assembly will hopefully crystallise things further and sharpen our focus and direction for the future.

As the new presbyteries come into being we will need to consider which tasks and roles, currently carried out nationally, can be undertaken regionally or even locally. In the future the Presbyterian Church will be smaller and structures that have served us well for many years will need to be simplified to become more effective. As we respond to both the internal and external demands for change on our Church, it is clear that sustainable structures are those which are located as close to the grassroots mission of the local congregation as possible.

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<sup>4</sup> The "Healthy Congregations" and the "Directions" papers form the backdrop to this consultation.

We do not intend to produce a prescriptive strategic plan because the pace of change is such that it would be of little assistance to the Church. The outcome of this work is more likely to be a document that sets some strategic directions and enables a variety of responses depending on the context of the change.

However, some clear trends have been noted by the Group and will be brought to this Assembly such as the need to: re-emphasise evangelism and the proclamation of the Gospel, work within clear boundaries and flexible structures, establish clear guidelines and strategies relating to the closure of a parish, and to focus on mission at a regional/local level, among other things.

#### **4.7 Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership**

The Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership forms ministers and leaders for service in the Presbyterian Church and partner churches. As in other parts of our church and as part of the de-centralisation process, Knox Centre has undergone some major changes over recent years.

Preparation for National Ordained Ministry now includes completing an approved three year degree in theology followed by a two year internship. This process began in 2008 and incorporates seven two-week residential ministry schools in Dunedin, in conjunction with two years of internship placements in parish settings leading to a Diploma in Ministry. It seeks to integrate theological understanding with personal development, ministry skills, leadership gifts, Christian discipleship and spirituality.

In the move to a more mission focused Church we recognise that there is no longer one kind of minister, no “one size that fits all” approach. To be relevant and able to connect to the next generation in different contexts, we need a fresh approach, a new form of leadership and the changes in the Knox Centre led by the Right Rev Dr Graham Redding reflect this.

#### **4.8 National Mission office**

In his role of the National Mission Enabler, the Rev John Daniel supports and facilitates mission throughout the Presbyterian Church at a local, regional and national level. This is a wide ranging and demanding role and since he began in 2005 the “mission possible” vision has unfolded. His emphasis is on “enabling” leaders involved in missional projects; identifying, supporting and resourcing local, regional and national leaders during the development phase of projects, and then supporting the projects as appropriate.

A good example of this has been the ‘Student Soul’ movement established initially in Dunedin and now in Auckland. This ministry aims to bridge the gap between youth ministry and church. As young people leave home and go to university or begin work there was a sense of disconnection that the Church struggled with. Student Soul was an opportunity to think outside the square and establish something that would reach the younger generation rather than simply wishing things could be different.



The National Mission Enabler has also facilitated and coordinated the development of the Parish/Congregational Reviews and the training of appraisers, after the 2008 General Assembly adopted this new approach. Facilitated by presbyteries on a five-yearly basis, this system has replaced the quinquennial visitations. This system uses the "[Parish Development Framework](#)" based on the five dimensions of Healthy Congregations.

Once again the emphasis is clearly on building and growing mission focused; mission minded congregations. Congregations are encouraged to purposefully and deliberately evaluate where they are at and set goals for the future. These reviews are challenging, they hold parishes and ministers accountable for progress and, when done well, they will enable, enrich and empower churches to better live their vision and mission.

The National Mission Enabler has done some work on "wellness" for ministers and encouraged us to consider how our pastoral oversight might best be carried out in the future. Pastoral care of ministers is sometimes an aspect of presbytery responsibilities that slips between the cracks, so it will be an issue for the enlarged presbyteries to grapple with. How to best care for our own ministers is becoming a critical issue in a climate of rapid change, declining numbers and challenging missiological challenges.

As the new larger presbyteries continue to form other questions of how best to equip and encourage mission will have to be addressed and the current model of mission enabling will be reviewed.

#### **4.9 Nominations Committee Review Task Group**

At the request of Council a widely representative group has been working on a number of issues relating to how we nominate and appoint people to various tasks within our church structure. They have sought feedback from the Church. With the changing shape of presbyteries and the growing multi-cultural makeup of our Church, Council is concerned that priority be given to competency and suitability for any role, as well as fairness, independence and transparency throughout the whole process.

The task group has spent many hours dealing with some difficult issues, collating a vast quantity of feedback and as a Council we are greatly appreciative. Thank you for your service and commitment to see this task through.

#### **4.10 Kids Friendly**

Kids Friendly is now a recognisable "brand" and an integral part of our Church. It has created a solid foundation, leading the way by encouraging churches to embrace children and their families. The question we need to ask now is, "*where to from here?*" As a model, Kids Friendly has been very successful and has been replicated throughout the country. How might this inform other areas of the Church? How can we, as a Church, continue to breathe life into what was dying, as Kids Friendly have done?

#### **4.11 Presbyterian Youth**

Dr Carlton Johnstone leads our Church's national commitment to young people. His primary role is to engage with presbyteries and congregations, providing resources and encouraging them to sustain and develop mission and ministry relevant to younger people. As an increasing number of our congregations now have no youth presence, part of Carlton's work involves supporting a cultural change in the way that congregations and presbyteries understand the diverse opportunities for youth ministry and the need to place a real priority on this commitment, for not only the benefit of young people but also the opportunities this creates for the rejuvenation of the Church. The second person on the national team is Gordon Fitch. Gordon's primary focus is to strengthen the networks and support for those currently involved in youth leadership. The success of their work would not be possible without the support of a core of experienced youth leaders supported by presbyteries and regions who work closely together to facilitate youth ministry within and beyond our Church.

#### **4.12 Amorangi ministry/Te Aka Puaho**

2010 has been a landmark year for Te Aka Puaho, as they have focused their energies and resources on building up the Amorangi ministry. There are now 28 ordained Amorangi ministers resourcing 14 pastorates. In addition, another 10 students began training in June this year. The intentional development of leaders for the next generation is encouraging and inspiring.

New developments are shaping a new landscape for Te Aka Puaho as they move forward. Not the least amongst these is the establishment of a new pastorate in Northland. Rev Judy Te Whiu was inducted as the Amorangi minister this year, bringing the number of pastorates within Te Aka Puaho to 14; a great reason to celebrate.

With the addition of a Kids Friendly Coordinator, an Administrative Assistant, as well as numerous literary projects on the go documenting the history of Te Aka Puaho, things are really moving.

The Council is grateful to Rev Wayne Te Kaawa and Mrs Millie Te Kaawa, (Moderator of Te Aka Puaho), for their faithful service and commitment to mission both within Te Aka Puaho and throughout the Presbyterian Church.

#### **4.13 Pacific Island Synod**

The Council has fostered a positive working relationship with the Pacific Island Synod. We met with the Synod in March 2009 at a special meeting held in Auckland to hear from all their Fonos. Through this, we gained an appreciation of the different Pacific voices that make up the Pacific Island Synod.

In July 2010 the Council attended the Pacific Island Synod's AGM and this was another opportunity to come alongside each other, to listen and at the same time build stronger relationships.

With the possibility of an “Auckland Hub” being suggested, the Pacific Island Synod is considering their involvement in the establishment of an office and a reflection centre of their own. This could well be a real connection point and herald a new way of working together.

The Pacific Island Synod representative on Council, Mrs Olinda Woodroffe, resigned in November 2009 and was later replaced by the Rev Asora Amosa.

## **5 Council composition**

The change from a pastoral to a missional church is hugely significant at every level and this includes the Council of Assembly. As policy decisions are made with mission in mind and then implemented throughout the church the culture of our church begins to re-form.

The Council of Assembly has worked diligently over the last two years, during this time of transition. This has not been an easy time and the demands placed on Council members have been high; met with a willingness to serve and a commitment to grapple with the hard issues.

Rev Rhys Pearson was appointed as Convenor in 2006 but, due to ill health, suddenly stepped down in November 2008. As a result Rev Emma Keown became Convenor of Council. Council is thankful that Rhys is well on the way to a full recovery and wishes him all the best for his retirement.

Rhys worked very hard in his time as Convener, his passion for the Church was evident in his commitment to the role and his deep desire to see it filled with life and hope for a new generation.

Some members of Council will be stepping down as their term has come to an end. New appointments will be made by the Nominating Committee and will take effect immediately following this assembly.

Those stepping down are:

- Mr Neil Walker
- Rev Richard Dawson

Mrs Lisa Wells has completed her four-year term but was re-appointed as Deputy Convenor earlier on this year and as a result will remain on Council. The Rev Ian Guy (Leadership Sub-Committee) and Right Rev Dr Graham Redding (retiring Moderator) will also be completing their terms.

You have all contributed so much to the Council and to the wider Church. You have served sacrificially and with much personal cost. There have been times when a great deal has been required and each one of you has stepped up without question. Thank you.

As a Council we would like to make special mention of the wonderful contribution made by our outgoing Moderator, the Right Rev Dr Graham Redding. His wisdom and insight has been greatly appreciated. Our incoming Moderator, the Rev Peter Cheyne, has been attending our Council meetings

this year in order to familiarise himself with the work of the wider Church and we are looking forward to a close relationship over the next two years.

## **6 Judicial commissions and disciplinary processes**

Council has been asked to approve the membership of judicial commissions on a number of occasions over the last two years. While the work of these commissions is extremely time consuming and very expensive much of the work is of a sensitive nature requiring strict confidentiality. Council is very grateful to the number of lawyers and highly qualified people who generously contribute to the resolution of difficult issues.

## **7 Concluding comments**

There are many ways to serve the Church and many ways to bring glory to God. Serving on a committee, task group, commission or on the Council itself is just one way. Our Church is richer for all your involvement and we say thank you.

### **As a Church and as a Council we acknowledge your contribution...**

*Ephesians 4: 1-6... I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

**Rev Emma Keown**  
Convenor

## **Appendix 1 – Matters from the 2008 General Assembly relating to the Council of Assembly**

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1. That the proposal to recognise Presbyterian Church Schools as faith communities be referred to the Council of Assembly and the Book of order Advisory Committee for consideration, and reporting to the 2010 General Assembly. [08.084]

*This was discussed and it was recommended that the matter be raised at the annual Church School's conference in August 2010, and for them to report back to Council at their November meeting following GA10.*

2. That the General Assembly appoint a widely representative Commission to:

- a) Review chapter 15 of the Book of Order in light of [the presbytery's concerns]; and,
- b) Propose to the next General Assembly regulations by which a Session / Parish Council and/or a Presbytery / District Council may hear and determine appropriate complaints and exercise appropriate discipline;
- c) Or as the Assembly in its wisdom may decide. [08.069]

*This is currently in process*

3. Invite the Trustees, in consultation with the Council of Assembly, to develop a process whereby a congregation or presbytery can lend or gift its funds for the use of another congregation or presbytery, and that the Council has the authority to approve this process. [08.018]

*This has been completed*

4. That the General Assembly pass the following resolution:

“Pursuant to Chapter 3 of the Book of Order adopted by the 2006 Assembly, the General Assembly delegates to the Council of Assembly the power to issue supplementary provisions pursuant to Chapter 3.3 of that Book of Order.” [08.055]

*This is noted.*

5. The General Assembly requests the Council of Assembly to expand the membership of the Confession of Faith (FIS) Task Group [08.080]

*This has been completed.*

6. That Chapter 14.13(3) of the Book of Order be amended by adding “Any member’s term of office may be extended for a further two-year term.” [08.093]

*Noted*

7. That Assembly request Council of Assembly to bring to Assembly 2010 a proposal to include a representative from Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand (UCANZ) on the Council of Assembly. [08.102]

*This is currently being addressed by the nominations Task Group convened by Neil Walker and Ann Owen*

8. That the Assembly refer the issue of the status, membership, and reporting relationships of the Doctrine Core Group to the Council of Assembly. [08.112]

*We have affirmed the role of the Doctrine Core Group as a reporting body*

9. That the Council of Assembly be requested to establish an advisory group to meet with the five negotiating churches and the Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New

Zealand (UCANZ) on the future directions of co-operative ventures, to bring recommendations to the 2010 General Assembly [08.106]

*This is happening and is currently a work in progress. Those involved in the advisory group are Rev Martin Baker (AES), Rev Dr Graham Redding (Moderator and KCML Principal) and Rev Peter Dunn (Council Member). There are two other representatives on the Standing Committee of UCANZ; Helen Bichan and David Ross.*

10. That the Council of Assembly oversee the implementation of those tasks being vested in national bodies as outlined in Section 5.2 National Functions of the (Presbytery Task Group) report. [08.043]

*This is a work in progress.*

11. If a presbytery considers a candidate's situation to be exceptional they may request the Council of Assembly, through the Leadership Sub-committee, or equivalent, to grant a waiver of this requirement. Such a request must be made at the time the presbytery assesses the candidate, and before his or her name is forwarded to the National Assessment Work Group. [08.025]

*Noted*

12. That aspects of the Leadership Sub-committee Report regarding remuneration be removed and referred to the Council of Assembly for clarification. [08.028]

*This matter was referred to the Book of Order Advisory Committee*

## **Appendix 2 – Alcohol in Our Lives**

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In October 2009 the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand made a submission to the Law Commission on its “Alcohol in Our Lives” discussion document. This submission was produced after consultation within the Church, with input also invited on the final document before it was submitted to the Commission.

### **Recommendations**

1. That the General Assembly urges the Government to implement all the recommendations in the Law Commission’s “Alcohol in Our Lives” report.

2. That the General Assembly endorses the “5+ solution” being recommended by Alcohol Action New Zealand which proposes:

1. Raise alcohol prices
2. Raise the purchase age
3. Reduce alcohol accessibility
4. Reduce marketing and advertising
5. Increase drink-driving counter-measures

3. The General Assembly urge the Government to provide increase treatment opportunities for heavy drinkers

4. The General Assembly convey to the Government that a total ban on the marketing and advertising of alcohol would be more effective than a reduction in these activities.

### **Our previous submissions**

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand has a history of concern over the impact of alcohol. For example, in 1980, General Assembly endorsed submissions made on the Sale of Liquor Amendment Bill, particularly in terms of opposition to alcohol advertising. A position paper had been circulated in 1979 that opposed the extension of drinking hours and suggested that individuals needed to evaluate their own drinking in the light of alcohol as a cause of social harm. Again, the Church opposed the liberalism proposed for the Sale of Liquor Bill 1989, believing the minimum drinking age should remain at 20 and that bars should be closed on Sundays.

According to a report to General Assembly 1998, “We consider that the proposed legislation would create a ‘climate of demand’ for liquor without giving sufficient regard to the damage to health and well-being of individuals, family and community”.

### **Social impact of alcohol intake in NZ**

The Church today is united in its concern over the negative impacts that alcohol is having in contemporary society.

The preparation of our submission was informed by “Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of policies and programmes to reduce the harm caused by alcohol” (*Lancet* 2009; 373: 2234-46) and the resource material provided by Alcohol Action NZ, to which the Church also lent public support. The British Medical Association’s “Under the Influence” (September 2009), which was published during our submission’s consultation and revision period, also proved instructive.

Our submission is summarised below.

### **Points of particular concern**

We believe that the level of alcohol-related harm in our society more than justifies a new approach to the law. It's unnecessary to repeat the litany of negative effects detailed in the Law Commission report; but their extent should shock all New Zealanders.

We do not believe that the risks associated with heavy drinking are sufficiently well known. Greater promotion of the crime- and accident-related repercussions could be helpful. We suggest a promotional campaign that relies simply on the facts, through a variety of media, with messages like "30 percent of people arrested have been drinking" or "30 percent of fatal car crashes are alcohol related" or "30 percent of suicides involve alcohol". Messages targeting drinking behaviour appear to have been ineffective; we suggest that a more widespread appreciation of the problem is needed to shift societal attitude. Alcohol is associated with fun, socialising and celebrations; we'd like to see other associations built up around risks. We are also concerned that heavy drinking fuels antisocial behaviour that leaves many in our society intimidated or in fear of their environment, to the detriment of community cohesiveness.

The risks of a lifetime of drinking are even less well known than those associated with heavy drinking. Very few people are aware of alcohol's carcinogenic implications. We suggest that most people attribute positive health implications to "moderate" drinking, not realising that the level of drinking needed to have less than 1/1000 chance of an alcohol-related death is surprisingly low. We would like to see much greater emphasis placed on the cancer risks, through a public education campaign; this is of particular concern given the rising rates of some alcohol-related cancers, such as breast cancer. We wonder whether product labelling conveying the cancer risk should be made compulsory.

We are concerned at the excessive amount of time the Police spend dealing with alcohol's consequences. We would like to see enforcement made easier so that their job focuses more on crime prevention. This means much more responsible behaviour by liquor licence holders. If the current system is unable to develop the needed level of responsibility and accountability, we suggest that it should be tightened, as discussed below.

### **Problems with the current situation**

We don't believe that the current law has the balance right between individual responsibility and regulating the drinking environment. The Law Commission report quotes the Treasury (10:2) as stating that the majority of associated costs fall on the minority who overconsume, with the majority experiencing alcohol as beneficial. Putting aside the question of whether this assumption of benefit is correct<sup>5</sup>, we suggest that the majority have a responsibility to reduce the burden on the minority. We believe that it is wrong to cause someone else harm through our own actions (as Paul says in Romans 14:13, "let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another... If your brother and sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what

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<sup>5</sup> Researchers in the *Lancet* say, "doubt remains about the effect of confounders" in terms of the cardio protective effect of low amounts of alcohol. Furthermore "at high doses, especially when consumed irregularly, it is cardiotoxic". (*Lancet* 2009: 373: 2236).



you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.”) Our society can be most accurately judged by how it treats those most vulnerable to harm. Our responsibility to prevent and heal this harm has greater weight than the right of “moderate” drinkers to have access to relatively cheap alcohol. Similarly, we argue that the public good aspect far outweighs the commercial considerations of the liquor and entertainment industries. Higher prices for alcohol and tighter restrictions on its availability, as we detail below, are natural consequences of our argument. Our view is informed by the comments of researchers in the *Lancet*: “Systematic reviews and meta-analyses show that policies regulating the environment in which alcohol is marketed (particularly its price and availability) are effective in reducing alcohol-related harm” (*Lancet* 2009; 373: 2234).

We are concerned about the level of drinking among young people, fuelled by cheap alcohol. Brian Easton says those most sensitive to changes in price are the young, binge drinkers and heavy drinkers. We argue that other drinkers should accept a small price increase because of the benefits this will accrue in terms of a reduction in consumption by these at-risk groups.

We’re also concerned about the strong association of drinking with sporting events, and the culture that this creates. Whether it is provincial sports clubs operating bars, or alcohol-soaked metropolitan events like the Rugby 7s or international matches, our sporting culture and its relationship to alcohol is extremely problematic and has a significant effect on young people.

We also suggest that to comment that harm should be targeted “without damaging the interests of the reasonable drinker” fails to appreciate the benefits that would accrue to the reasonable if alcohol harm is reduced. These benefits are in terms of lower levels of social fear in the inner city, leading to an improved sense of community; lower overall health and crime costs for New Zealand; and improved outcomes for their friends and family who fall into the harmful drinking category. We suggest that policy makers often underestimate the extent to which individual New Zealanders want to improve the health and safety of their community.

Furthermore, as argued in the British Medical Association’s “Under the Influence” (September 2009: 3), “an evidence-based policy should aim to lower total alcohol consumption in the population”. This is because as overall alcohol consumption increases, so does alcohol-related harm (Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems, cited in “Under the Influence”, 3). If we are serious about reducing the amount of alcohol-related harm in our society, we must consider the totality of alcohol use rather than just targeting problem drinkers. As the BMA says, “the response has to be as much about drinking in general as it is about harmful drinking” (“Under the Influence”, 3). During our consultation process to produce the submission, Presbyterians expressed disbelief and shock at the amount of money New Zealanders spend on alcohol - \$85 million a week.

Our submission also expressed a number of particular points on which we agreed with the Law Commission’s recommendations for tighter regulation.  
In summary

The Church’s submission endorsed the “5+ solution” being recommended by lobby group Alcohol Action New Zealand (headed by Professor Doug Sellman), which proposes:

1. Raise alcohol prices
2. Raise the purchase age
3. Reduce alcohol accessibility
4. Reduce marketing and advertising
5. Increase drink-driving counter-measures

PLUS: Increase treatment opportunities for heavy drinkers

The Church's submission further suggested that a total ban on the marketing and advertising of alcohol would be more effective than a reduction in these activities.

### **Further developments**

In April 2010, the Law Commission produced its final report, which urged sweeping alcohol law reforms. Its 153 recommendations included: raising the price of alcohol by an average 10 percent; regulating irresponsible promotions; returning the minimum purchase age to 20; strengthening parents' rights and responsibilities in terms of the supply of alcohol to minors; introducing national maximum closing hours for on- and off-licences; increasing the ability of local people to determine where alcohol is sold in their communities; increasing personal responsibility for unacceptable or harmful behaviour induced by alcohol; and moving over time to regulate alcohol advertising and sponsorship.

The Government is considering these recommendations.

## **Appendix 3 – Council of Assembly Recommendation on Congregational Assessment**

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### **Introduction**

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand exists to participate in God's mission. In recent years it has provided Healthy Congregations material and introduced Ministry and Parish Reviews to help ministers and congregations take stock and review their effectiveness in serving this mandate. However, one of the sad realities of the steady institutional decline experienced in recent decades is that an increasing number of congregations have reached or are reaching the point at which their future viability is in question.

While there will probably be widespread agreement that something ought to be done in these situations, finding a universal measure of non-viability will be a far more difficult exercise. After all, our Lord said, *"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am also."*

Nevertheless, despite that theological truth, certain judgments need to be made on an institutional level, especially where issues concerning the stewardship of resources are involved and/or the ability of the congregation to function as such is in question.

The Council of Assembly believes that existing procedures for dissolving a congregation need to be simplified and include a more clear-cut trigger for instigating a review by the presbytery.

It is also important to note that when we talk about dissolution, the reference is to the end of a congregation's life as a separate, self-managing entity. The presbytery's responsibilities to those who have been part of this congregation remain.

To this end, we propose the following:

**Recommendation:** That the procedure for dissolving a congregation be amended by replacing existing regulations 5.9, 5.10, 5.10(a), 5.12 with new regulations as detailed in the body of this report.

***A presbytery will appoint a commission to review the future of a congregation, with an option of dissolution, where: (a) the total number of adults attending public worship falls below an average of 40 per week for three consecutive months; and/or (b) the presbytery has reason to believe that a congregation is no longer fulfilling the expectations for mission contained in 5.2.***

### **Comment**

Why 40? The Council of Assembly is not suggesting that a congregation of less than 40 people is automatically non-viable; nor is it suggesting that congregations of more than 40 people are automatically viable. It is merely suggesting that this be a trigger for instigating a review of this nature. When regular attendance at worship has fallen to this level, chances are the question of institutional viability will have become acute. The review will test the logic of this in a given situation. It will take into account contextual realities at the same time as it asks the hard questions.

**Procedures to be followed in a situation where a presbytery initiates the review of a congregation:**

A Presbytery Commission directs the session or parish council to call a congregational meeting in accordance with regulations 5.4. The meeting will be chaired by a member of the commission.

The purpose of the meeting will be to inform that a review of the parish's future is being initiated by the presbytery, and that one option being considered in the review is the dissolution of the congregation. The reasons for the review will be given.

The commission will outline the expectation that the Presbyterian Church has of its congregations, and ask the congregation to give an account of its life and work in meeting the criteria under 5.2. This account can be in both verbal and written forms and will be presented to the commission within three months of the congregational meeting.

In its consideration of the report the commission may conclude:

1. That the congregation is fulfilling the function of a congregation under the criteria of 5.2, and encourage it in its life and mission; or
2. That although some of the criteria of 5.2 are being met, the viability of the congregation is still marginal, and a further review will be undertaken within a defined period; or
3. That the congregation should be dissolved.

In the case of (3) the presbytery commission will inform the AES and the Council of Assembly. The Council of Assembly will appoint a Congregation Evaluation Commission, which will act as a Commission of the General Assembly. This Congregation Evaluation Commission will receive the report of the presbytery commission, together with a written submission by the congregation.

In considering this material, the Congregation Evaluation Commission will follow the guidelines for the appeal process outlined in regulations 14.23.9 and following.

After considering the material, the Congregation Evaluation Commission will determine whether the dissolution will proceed and make any other decisions concerning regarding the future of the congregation that it deems necessary.

The decision of the Congregation Evaluation Commission will be final.

Should a session or parish council fail to call a congregational meeting in accordance with the presbytery's request, or should the congregation fail to report to the presbytery commission on the required date or fail to make a submission to the Congregation Evaluation Commission, then these failures shall not stall or invalidate the deliberations of the presbytery commission and Congregation Evaluation Commission.

**Procedures to be followed in a situation where a church council has initiated action to dissolve a congregation:**

- (1) If a church council makes an application to presbytery to dissolve after gaining the approval of at least two-thirds of the members of its congregation present at a duly called meeting of the congregation. Then,
- (2) A second congregational meeting will be held with a commission of the presbytery to discuss the consequences of dissolution and to provide congregational members an

opportunity for expressing their concerns and hopes should a decision to be dissolved be finalised.

(3) At the conclusion of this meeting a final congregational decision will be made to dissolve requiring approval by at least two thirds of the members of the congregation.

(4) In a situation where the congregational meeting fails to gain the required two thirds' support, the presbytery will determine whether or not to initiate the procedure to dissolve the congregation.