

Green volunteers: a way forward (part two)

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Moderator's Green Paper

Rt. Rev Andrew Norton

February 2016



Green volunteers: a way forward

Anthropologist Margaret Meade once said, “Never underestimate the power of a few committed people to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Change is a people movement, not a head office pronouncement.

This is the good news; the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand is made up of many good people who want to make a difference. We can imagine a more powerful, more spirit-led, more meaningful way to work and witness together.

Will you be a green volunteer emerging from the muddled ground?

If so, start by being the change you want to see in the world.

“Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy; fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope!”

Romans 15:13 (MSG)

Green volunteers: A way forward is a movement of change from the ground up (life never grown from the top down); it is about you and I taking personal responsibility for the Church we love and that causes us so much pain. It is being the change we want to see in the Church.

I received this in a letter:

“So I heartily agree with you that we need to share these matters and face our deep divisions in our church. They are the result of a failure of Christian grace. That involves me. I need to change my attitude to the people in the church who are different from me.”

To honour the efforts of all those who took the time to share their views, I have given priority to reporting back to the wider church, and this is the first time that the paper has been shared beyond the small group of people I involved in peer review. I will also, in due course, submit both this paper and the **Green volunteers: your voice** paper to the Council of Assembly.

Green volunteers: a way forward is movement of change for good, from naming problems to living solutions. You are the solution. Your prayers, your voice and your actions do make a difference! This is far too important to leave it to someone else.

This plan of action is not complete; it is designed as a catalyst for further action. I have not canvassed the ideas in this paper with the Council of Assembly or any other committees of the Church, nor have the ideas been tested or allocated resources.

The ideas contained here arise from my reflection on the feedback to the White Paper, and it is up to you – the Church – to decide what action is best.

You may agree with the ideas contained here or you may not, and that's OK. It's up to you. Whatever your response, I'm putting these suggestions for action in *Green volunteers: a way forward (part two)* "out there" for you – the Church – to consider and take action.

Where further work, resources or authorisation is needed, consider putting a proposal before General Assembly 2016 with your recommendations. However, many of the actions and ideas here don't require permission and they can't wait. Just do them!

You'll see three sections in this document; local, regional and national. This is what change could look like but it will never happen if you leave it to "them". There is no "them"; there is only you and I: because I am the Church, you are the Church, we are the Church together.

Please pray. "God forgive us for our foolish ways. Come once again to reform and renew YOUR church and begin with me."

Ask your imagination to the party. Imagine the possibilities if we began to dream dreams and see visions once again?

Take action; speak up so your voice can be heard. Engage with your session or parish council, ensure your voice is being heard at your presbytery; ask for change. Write to your presbyteries and to the Council of Assembly asking for reformation in the Presbyterian Church.

Participate in ongoing conversation and feedback:

1. Do you hear your voice in the *Green volunteer: your voice (part one)*?
2. Is the *Green volunteer: a way forward (part two)* heading in the right direction?

3. Are you ready to become a *Green volunteer*, a living sign of hope and an agent of change?

"... and then the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom" Anais Nin

*Oh God, take
this muddled ground of brokenness,
cultivate our bruised and weary hearts
with the seed of a green volunteer.*

*A green volunteer
with eyes to see beyond this worlds horizon,
graceful in pain,
defiant in hope.*

*In hope brimming with joy
to be nothing more or less
than all that is contained in your
imagination for us.*

Amen

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Renewal | Spiritual vitality

Imagine what your church could look like if we were once again aflame with the burning bush of the presence of God?

“Without God's Spirit, there is nothing we can do that will count for God's kingdom. Without God's Spirit, the church simply can't be the church.” NT Wright

*“I never, O God,
want to live in complacent sloth,
soggy in religious routine,
smug in pious satisfaction.
I want to be expectant
and ready for the new thing that you are doing today,
and again tomorrow.”*

Amen.

- Eugene Peterson

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down;
fix in us thy humble dwelling;
all thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation;
enter every trembling heart.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee;
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

- Charles Wesley

Renewal | Spiritual vitality

We are a Church of the burning bush; aflame with the presence of God. We experience a God who speaks, creates, recreates, forgives, empowers and sends us into the world as grace agents. We will grow in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ and the mission of the Kingdom of God. Let us be a Church of discernment: listening to the voice of God in the scriptures, in one another and the spirit of God in the world.

The invitation from scripture	Local	Regional (presbyteries)	National
“Unless the Lord builds the house the labours labour in vain” Psalm 127:1	<p>Help congregational members tell stories of life & faith of God at work.</p> <p>Ministers commit to participating in an imaginative preaching group.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for the stretching of faith where reliance on God is experienced.</p> <p>Provide resources for congregational spiritual formation.</p> <p>Demonstrate clear links between process, policies and current behaviour of spiritual discernment.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for ministers to take regular spiritual retreats.</p> <p>Celebrate stories of God at work at presbytery gatherings.</p> <p>Develop a culture and behaviour of prayer and spiritual discernment.</p> <p>Demonstrate clear links between process, policies and current behaviour of spiritual discernment.</p>	<p>Develop spiritual leadership in all activities of the national church based on prayer and scriptural reflection.</p> <p>Demonstrate clear links between process, policies and current behaviour of spiritual discernment.</p> <p>Assembly to give equal priority to spiritual renewal and refreshment as it does to decision-making.</p> <p>KCML to provide resources to equip the Church in spiritual development (e.g. Imaginative Preaching).</p>
Climate for change	Where people feel safe to tell their stories of God at work and an expectation of God-in-action		

Reconnect | Better together

Imagine what your church could look like if it were truly blessed?

*How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!
It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard,
down on the collar of his robe.
It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.*

Psalms 133

*"The whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of
the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part
of one another, and all involved in one another."*

Thomas Merton

A prayer for unity of the church (Church of England)

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace:
give us grace seriously to lay to heart
the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions.
Take away all hatred and prejudice,
and whatever else may hinder us
from godly union and concord;
that, as there is but one body and one Spirit,
one hope of our calling,
one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
one God and Father of us all,
so we may henceforth be all of one heart and of one soul,
united in one holy bond of peace, of faith and charity,
and may with one mind and one mouth glorify you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Reconnect | Better together

Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou ka ora ai te iwi. With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive.

We belong to and with one another; working together for a common cause. We believe we can achieve more together than apart.

The invitation from scripture	Local	Regional (presbyteries)	National
<p>“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. 1 Cor 12:12-14</p> <p>“Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. Luke 9:16-17</p>	<p>Foster a relationship with two or three other Presbyterian churches for learning, support and encouragement.</p> <p>Recognise and value diversity by actively engaging in conversations of difference.</p> <p>Develop a culture of resource sharing.</p> <p>Commit to full participation in the wider Presbyterian Church.</p> <p>Ask who is missing from your church and find out why.</p>	<p>Foster collegial relationships with ministers and elders across cultural, ethnic and theological boundaries.</p> <p>Recognise and value diversity by actively engaging in conversations of difference.</p> <p>Develop a culture of resource sharing.</p> <p>Identify barriers to engagement and remove them.</p> <p>Ask who is missing from presbytery functions and find out why</p>	<p>Develop national projects and resources building togetherness for a common cause.</p> <p>Recognise and value diversity.</p> <p>Develop a culture of resource sharing.</p> <p>Identify barriers to engagement and remove them.</p> <p>Ask who is missing from national gatherings and find out why?</p>
Climate for change	Willingness to engage beyond one's own community: to listen, support and work towards shared goals		

Reconcile | Unity

Imagine what your church could look like if we were reconciled with one another?

How do we pray the Lord's prayer in a divided church?

*Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.*

"When serious people of good faith disagree, they've got to go back into the narratives and come at it again. One of the problems in the church is that people are not willing to do that. People have arrived at a place where they think they have got the answer." Walter Brueggemann

The Place Where We Are Right *by Yehuda Amichai*

From the place where we are right
Flowers will never grow
In the spring.

The place where we are right
Is hard and trampled
Like a yard.

But doubts and loves
Dig up the world
Like a mole, a plow.
And a whisper will be heard in the place
Where the ruined
House once stood.

"We can find common ground only by moving to higher ground"
Jim Wallis

Reconcile | Unity

The message of Jesus is the good news of reconciliation with God and one another. As a Church we seek the reconciling love of Jesus in all our relationships as evidence of the coming kingdom of God.

The invitation from scripture	Local	Regional (presbyteries)	National
<p>“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you; leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.” Mtt 5:23-24</p> <p>“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:20-23</p>	<p>Recognise and value diversity.</p> <p>Provide a safe place for people to share their doubts and struggles in faith.</p> <p>Say NO to spiritual abuse and bullying.</p> <p>Provide a biblical model of reconciliation.</p> <p>Ask, “with whom am I being called to be reconciled?”</p> <p>Include acts of repentance and reconciliation as regular services of worship.</p> <p>Practice radical hospitality across boundaries of diversity and difference in your congregation and community.</p>	<p>Recognise and value diversity.</p> <p>Say NO to spiritual abuse and bullying.</p> <p>Provide a biblical model of reconciliation.</p> <p>Ask, “In what ways do our systems and processes abuse and exclude people?”</p>	<p>Recognise and value diversity.</p> <p>Develop a charter of biblical values for our Church. How we live together.</p> <p>Develop a process of biblical discernment that guides our decision making process for all church courts.</p> <p>Reduce debate; increase discernment.</p> <p>Apply rotation of representation of General Assembly to prevent politicalising of representation.</p> <p>Say NO to spiritual abuse and bullying.</p> <p>Provide a biblical model of reconciliation.</p> <p>Establish a reconciliation commission to seek ways of healing the woundedness of the church.</p>
Climate for change	Forgive and be forgiven: humility and grace		

Rediscover | A Public Voice

Imagine what your church could look like if it were to activate participants in the justice of God?

*"In gloomy times of bloody confusion
Ordered disorder
Planful wilfulness
Dehumanized humanity
When there is no end to the unrest in our cities:
Into such a world, a world like a slaughter house –
Summoned by rumours of threatening deeds of violence
To prevent the brute strength of the short-sighted people
From shattering its own tools and
Trampling its own bread-basket to pieces –
We wish to reintroduce
God."*

Bertolt Brecht "Saint Joan of the Stockyards," 1931

A Prayer for Justice

Grant us, Lord God, a vision of our land as your love would make it:

- a land where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor;
- a land where the benefits of civilised life are shared, and everyone can enjoy them;
- a land where different races and cultures live in tolerance and mutual respect;
- a land where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love.

And give us the inspiration and courage to build it, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

(Anon)

Rediscover | A Public Voice

We are a Church prepared to speak and act for the poor, oppressed, broken and the most vulnerable of our society; a voice for those who have been silenced by the powers of injustice. We believe the greatest evil is silence in the face of injustice. We are committed to developing a sound reputation for intelligent critique and co-ordinated action to challenge injustice consistent with the prophetic heritage of the Presbyterian Church and scriptures.

The invitation from scripture	Local	Regional (presbyteries)	National
<p>"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." Mtt 25:35-36</p>	<p>Engage with "Justice and Action" and develop a local strategy for addressing issues of injustice.</p> <p>Integrate mission of church with issues of social justice eg White Ribbon or Guardian Angel with Presbyterian Support</p> <p>Foster a local relationship with Presbyterian Support.</p> <p>Become a fair trade church.</p> <p>Introduce prayers of lament for local, national and international injustice as part of worship.</p> <p>Form an Advocacy & Action group to explore and act on issues of local injustice.</p>	<p>Engage with the "Justice and Action" booklet and develop a Regional strategy for addressing issues of injustice.</p> <p>Foster a regional relationship with Presbyterian Support.</p> <p>Mission reviews to include social justice.</p>	<p>Engage with "Justice and Action" and develop a national strategy for addressing issues of injustice.</p> <p>Foster a stronger relationship with Presbyterian Support.</p> <p>Review the role of Moderator giving prophetic voice to the Church on issues of social justice.</p> <p>Review how the national church can be proactive and responsive to issues of social justice</p> <p>Membership with NZCCSS (NZ Council of Christian Social Services)</p>
Climate for change	Broken-heartedness, compassion, courage and steadfastness.		

Reform | Leadership

Imagine what your church could look like if the gift of leadership was blessed and released?

But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant.” Matthew 20:26

Grace and diligence working together!

*“For by the **grace given** me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the **grace given** to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; **if it is to lead, do it diligently**; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

Romans 12:3-

*“If a minister wants to be of real help in his / her contact with people, s/he has to be a professional with special information, special training and special skills. But if s/he wants to break through the chains of our manipulative world s/he has to move beyond professionalism, and through self-denial and contemplation, become a faithful witness of God’s covenant.”
Henri Nouwen*

*“The authority by which the Christian leader leads is not power but love, not force but example, not coercion but reasoned persuasion. Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve.”
John Stott*

Reform | Leadership

We are a Church committed to growing and developing the leadership of the whole people of God. Ministry within our Church is exercised by the gifts and abilities of all people (lay and ordained) to fulfil the mission of God.

It is in our genetic DNA right back to our Celtic origins; the Church providing the very best of leadership in civic, educational, social services and religious affairs. The Presbyterian Church seeks to develop, train and release the very best leaders for all sectors of society in Aotearoa.

The invitation from scripture	Local	Regional (presbyteries)	National
<p>“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Eph 4:11-13</p>	<p>Committed to developing the gifts and leadership of all members of the church.</p> <p>Ministers are proactive in supervision, ministry development reviews and personal and professional development.</p> <p>Mission reviews (congregations) and Ministry Development Reviews (ministers) are interconnected to identify mission opportunities and capacity development of both lay and ordained leadership.</p> <p>Mission plans to include the development of leadership within local congregation (the whole people of God).</p>	<p>Strategic framework to include leadership of the whole people of God.</p> <p>Strategic framework to include professional development of ministers.</p> <p>Implement “conversations of discernment” eg beginnings and endings of ministry.</p> <p>Practice presbyterial accountability with respect to isolation of ministers.</p>	<p>Ministry Development Reviews to align with best practice of performance appraisals.</p> <p>Reform of “call system” to reflect best practice HR and streamlined processes.</p> <p>Develop and provide a template for discernment of call “conversations of discernment”.</p> <p>Develop visionary models of non stipendiary ministry.</p>
Climate for change	Empower, value and respect the gift of leadership at all levels		

Reimagine | Mission

Imagine what your church could look like if we believed the gospel to be true?

*(We would as soon you were stable and reliable.
We would as soon you were predictable
and always the same toward us.)
We would like to take the hammer of doctrine
and take the nails of piety
and nail your feet to the floor
and have you stay in one place.
And then we find you moving,
always surprising us,
always coming at us from new directions.
Always planting us
and uprooting us
and tearing all things down
and making all things new.
You are not the God we would have chosen
had we done the choosing,
but we are your people
and you have chosen us in freedom.
We pray for the great gift of freedom
that we may be free toward you
as you are in your world. Amen*

Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth
By Walter Brueggemann

*"Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
No hands but yours
No feet but yours,
Yours are the eyes through which is to look out
Christ's compassion to the world
Yours are the feet with which he is to go about
doing good;
Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now."*

Saint Teresa of Avila

Reimagine | Mission

Imagine the Presbyterian Church as a growing, united and vibrant movement of people who have been saved by faith in Jesus Christ and are wholeheartedly committed to following Him, empowered by the Holy Spirit. As a consequence we see the good news of Jesus heard and new believers disciplined so that individual's lives are transformed, relationships are restored and strengthened, the vulnerable are served, and the Kingdom of God is evident within society and creation.¹

The invitation from scripture	Local	Regional (presbyteries)	National
<p>"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:13-16</p>	<p>Use "Bringing clarity to our mission"² document to assist in mission planning and decision making.</p> <p>Move from mission planning to discernment of mission.</p> <p>Demonstrate link between mission activities and Kingdom of God values.</p>	<p>Use "Bringing clarity to our mission" document to assist in mission planning and decision making.</p> <p>Move from mission planning to discernment of mission.</p> <p>Provide congregations with a "tool box" for mission discernment.</p> <p>Showcase mission in action to inspire other congregations.</p> <p>Develop presbytery-wide mission initiatives that can only be achieved by all working together.</p>	<p>Use "Bringing clarity to our mission" document to assist in policy setting and decision making.</p> <p>Move from mission planning to discernment of mission.</p> <p>Develop a theology for mission within the NZ context.</p> <p>Provide resources for mission discernment.</p>
Climate for change	Listen before loving, friending before serving and being before doing as agents of the mission of God in the world.		

¹See http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/small_file_Strategic_Directions-PCANZ.pdf

² See http://presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/publications/bt/2014/COA-Mission_Clarify2014.Print.booklet.pdf

Rededicate | Stewardship

Imagine what your church could look like if it practiced thanksgiving and generosity

What if we were an Acts chapter two church?

⁴³⁻⁴⁵ Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.

⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷ They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved. Acts 2 (The Message)

*"The power of the future lies not in the hands of those who believe in scarcity but of those who trust God's abundance."
Walter Brueggemann*

Provisions at the door

*"Oops! I forgot,
how peaceful it all is,
looking into the green
of your beautiful world.
The generous nature of your creation,
the joy of morning song
that lightens my world
and sets my heart alive
with thanksgiving*

Brian Hardie

Rededicate | Stewardship

Everything belongs to God! It is God who gifts us life and all the provisions for life. We therefore consider ourselves as stewards of life rather than owners of it. As stewards we seek to practice thanksgiving, generosity and wise investment of all the God-given resources of life.

Regarding church finances and property we renounce ownership and consider ourselves stewards of resources for the sole purpose of the mission of God, to which we will hold ourselves mutually accountable.

The invitation from scripture	Local	Regional (presbyteries)	National
<p>“The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.” Psalm 24:1-2</p> <p>“For everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked,” Luke 12:48</p> <p>See also Mtt 25:14-29</p>	<p>Practice thanksgiving and generosity.</p> <p>Conduct a resource inventory and then ask what are you doing with what you have?</p> <p>Each congregation is to develop financial and non-financial accountability statements linked to their purpose.</p>	<p>Practice thanksgiving and generosity.</p> <p>Demonstrate a clear link between policies and procedures on property and investments against regional and local mission plans.</p> <p>Ask how does your resource management align or not with your theology or “reserves”?</p>	<p>Demonstrate a clear link between policies and procedures on property and investments against regional and local mission plans.</p> <p>Develop and provide resources on biblical stewardship. Including a theology of building and financial investments to inform Presbytery and congregational decision making.</p> <p>Free up “frustrated trusts” and allocate assets to missional purposes.</p>
Climate for change	Discernment and generosity of all God given resources: from “mine” to “thine”.		

Refresh | Rhythms of grace

Imagine what your church could look like if it adopted the rhythms of grace?

What would a church look like if it had a ministry to the exhausted, the burnt out and the bruised?

"The Sabbath is about rhythm, intentionality and expectation. We embrace a rhythm God designed, intentionally setting aside our work for a day so we can rest in the God who created and sustains the universe " Lynne Baab

*"God we have to get away,
To find peace to settle our nerves,
to still our thoughts, to calm our minds,
to sleep, to dream,
and rest, away from the world
God, take us away with you.
Let us eat your bread of peace,
Let us drink your wine of wisdom,
Even a drop of your love would do."
Brian Hardie*

Where words lie down to rest

*Where words lie down to rest
the lion and the lamb are at peace,
the sound of silence;
the place holder of the sky
can be heard.
In this place;
a nearer home of desolate sounds
reveal enough
to frighten even your shadows.
Language will not find you here.
Words, you will let go of
for a lover,
inviting you to lie down
beside a quiet stream.
There, for the very first time
abandon yourself to this moment
and let everything be
for itself alone.*

Andrew Norton

Refresh | Rhythms of grace

We are a counter cultural movement offering spaces of grace and stillness; a cure for the dis-ease of busyness.

We are not afraid of silence; it becomes for us a well of listening from which we draw deeply the words of God restoring body, mind and soul.

“Be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10

The invitation from scripture	Local	Regional (presbyteries)	National
<p>“The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.” Psalm 23</p> <p>“Be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10</p> <p>“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG)</p>	<p>Develop spaces of grace and stillness within all activities of church life.</p> <p>Reduce the number of words on any given Sunday.</p> <p>Learn the life giving practice of Sabbath and stillness.</p> <p>Be prepared to stop ministries.</p> <p>Ask, what kind of church is needed to minister to the exhausted?</p> <p>Introduce an “unplugged month” in your church. Cut back, simplify and if possible do church without turning a switch on.</p>	<p>Hold annual Sabbath retreats for ministers and church leaders.</p> <p>Incorporate “space of grace and stillness” into congregational mission reviews.</p> <p>Ministers are required to have “supervision” AND encouraged to have “spiritual direction”.</p>	<p>Alternate ministers’ study Leave requirements with “Sabbatical” (study leave has a focus on study while sabbatical is restorative).</p> <p>Shift the emphasis from supervision to spiritual direction. Not either or, but both and.</p> <p>Produce resources for the church on the rhythms of grace found in Sabbath.</p>
Climate for change	Value and protect rhythms of grace; stillness, silence and Sabbath		

You've made it, so where to from here?

A friend of mine tells the story of his mother coming into his room saying, "This room is a mess. Tidy it up now!" His reply did not go down too well: "Tell me Mum, could you explain what exactly you want me to do?"

We could call for a committee meeting and come up with all the options, write minutes and then call another meeting!

Friends; you know what to do!

The Church that has nurtured your faith is in need of reformation. Reformation is not something we can do, it is a God thing; the God-breathed life into wearied hearts and tired eyes.

I believe there are emergent signs of God's spirit stirring in our Church. God is calling green volunteers into being. Those signs are in the feedback and conversations I've had over the past year. At times it has been expressed in deep pain and frustration, and in others glimpses of sheer delight in the graces of God.

While we live in rapidly changing times and struggle to adapt our outdated mindsets and systems, it's not too difficult. We start by doing what we know we are being called to do one small step at a time.

Renewal | Spiritual vitality
Reconnect | Better together
Reconcile | Unity
Rediscover | A Public Voice
Reform | Leadership
Reimagine | Mission
Rededicate | Stewardship
Refresh | Rhythms of grace

Green volunteers: a way forward is an invitation.

You'll have to decide if you want this...

Blessing at the Burning Bush

*You will have to decide
if you want this—
want the blessing
that comes to you
on an ordinary day
when you are minding
your own path,
bent on the task before you
that you have done
a hundred times, a thousand.*

*You will have to choose for yourself
whether you will attend
to the signs,
whether you will open your eyes
to the searing light, the heat,
whether you will open
your ears, your heart
to the voice
that knows your name,
that tells you this place
where you stand—
this ground so familiar
and therefore unregarded—
is, in fact, holy.*

*You will have to discern
whether you have*

*defenses enough
to rebuff the call,
excuses sufficient
to withstand the pull
of what blazes before you;
whether you will
hide your face,
will turn away
back toward—what, exactly?*

*No path from here
could ever be
ordinary again,
could ever become
unstrange to you
whose seeing
has been scorched
beyond all salving.*

*You will know your path
not by how it shines
before you
but by how it burns
within you,
leaving you whole
as you go from here
blazing with your inarticulate,
your inescapable yes.*

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