

Service Team Report

Highlights

Over the last two years, the Assembly Service Team has:

- Worked to support the Assembly's mission focus, priorities and direction as stated by the Council of Assembly
- Adapted to reduced financial and human resources, redistributing responsibilities and concluding services
- Put priority on rebuilding confidence in the Assembly Office through improved accuracy, reporting, responsiveness, transparency and timeliness
- Shifted offices in Auckland and Wellington
- Sought to encourage and build positive relationships with and among the different parts of the Church, especially face-to-face where possible and by taking a "can-do" attitude
- Continued to work as a collaborative team.

Decisions made regarding staffing as part of the 2004/05 Assembly budget process together with Assembly-driven to develop a sustainable financial operation, focus on core services, and increase communication with the wider church, supported by the Team, has determined much of our emphasis.

This led to:

- Concluding regionally based Mission Resource Team positions and the Pacific Islands Co-Director position
- Appointment to new position of National Mission Enabler
- Appointment to new position of Human Resource Manager
- Global Mission Team being developed led by part-time GM Enabler, in partnership with St Andrew's Otahuhu
- Improved financial management
- Communications focus on internal audiences
- Shift to electronic communication, maximising use of the website
- Concluding of payroll services and outsourcing of Beneficiary Fund and Presbyterian Investment Fund
- Concluding provision of worship and study resources
- Revising Youth Ministry leadership from a National Youth Ministry coordinator to a team approach
- Shift from Laughton House to Terralink House
- Recognition that objectives in *Directions* not able to be achieved and needed revision
- School of Ministry teachers more actively resourcing wider church, as well as students for the ministry
- Stalling of some projects like introduction of the ministerial and congregational appraisal processes

Funds provided by the Council for World Mission, the Synod of Otago and Southland and the Presbyterian Savings and Development Society have

enabled continuing with core services and fresh initiatives, such as the nationalising of Kids Friendly project.

A summary of initiatives and future focus from the core Assembly functions are detailed here.

Assembly Executive Secretary team and legal

The AES helps facilitate communication among key leaders and groups in the Church to achieve the direction set by Assembly and stated by Council. Together with the administrative team, the Council and its sub-committees are also supported.

Assembly and presbytery committees, ministers and others seek advice on a diverse range of procedural, legal, theological and relationship issues. The AES helps to communicate the Church's understanding of itself to itself, and to bring to particular events and issues theological reflection, past experience, contemporary emphases, and Assembly's stated policies. The AES also provides support to the other leaders of the Service Team, encouraging cooperation and prioritising projects.

Partnership with other churches, in New Zealand and overseas, has also been facilitated. The AES presently convenes the New Zealand Church Leaders' Group gathering leaders from 17 denominations for twice-yearly meeting and interacts with other NZ and overseas General Secretaries. Legal issues required care and expertise relating to discipline and congregational developments, on which the AES has worked with the Book of Order and Judicial Reference Group. The Synod of Otago and Southland has given its clerk, Heather McKenzie, to provide Book of Order advice to the Church, for which we are very grateful.

National Mission

The National Mission enabler role has been in operation for just over a year. The key thrust has been transitional, relational and intentional/strategic in enabling the Church to be effective in domestic Mission, in making Jesus Christ known in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The year has been packed with some outstanding achievements including strategically extending Kids Friendly into a national project with funding and support from outside the General Assembly budget; the youth focus group establishing continuity of leadership of Presbyterian Youth Ministry and sharing national tasks through appropriately gifted people; the development of a strategic mission planning process available to presbyteries and parishes; statistical/demographic profiles of all presbyteries and regions now completed and available to assist with mission planning; the effective piloting of a presbytery appraisal/review process; identifying and initiating key projects with champions/teams/networks to resolve issues facing the church.

The National Mission Enabler role, as with the face of domestic mission locally and globally, continues to evolve. Next steps include

- Identifying champions and resources for approved projects from the remaining list of issues and concerns.
- Partnering presbyteries in their mission planning and resourcing, intentionally utilising the community profiles/analysis and the strategic mission planning process
- Formalising a taskgroup on national mission that helps inform and support the NME activities and role

Strengthening presbyteries, healthy congregations and leadership development continue as key thrusts in ordering priorities, with the focus of healing and helping our communities and building our nation through making God's love in Jesus Christ known to them.

Some key issues for the PCANZ

1. The need for consistent quality supervision for ministers
2. Support for ministers and ministry spouses
3. Stress, burnout and self-care – wellness in ministry
4. The future of rural ministry, especially small rural congregations
5. The struggle of presbyteries to resource mission in their areas
6. The need for strategic mission planning - regionally and locally
7. The need for a national support/resource framework for children, youth and student ministries – especially considering our nation's high rates of child abuse, youth suicides
8. The opportunity to orient our activities, resources and structures to a missional focus ie to the wellbeing of our communities.
9. Identify and communicate benchmarks and best practice examples of missional leadership and missional communities
10. The leadership of change
11. The vital role of the School of Ministry in leadership development
12. The rise and role of regional churches
13. The importance of local congregations
14. Trust

Financial services

The last two years have been characterised by changes in financial services team. Since July there has been a change of Finance Manager and Chief Accountant. The workload of the accounts payable clerk was absorbed into that of other FSD staff, reducing the resource from five to four full time units

The primary focus has been on improving management information systems and overall financial reporting. Monthly reporting has been enhanced to include forecast profit and loss and statement of cash flows and profit and loss reporting by cost centre.

There has also been an improvement in the Council of World Mission project reporting. Project cost and activity reporting to CWM is now meeting their criteria and funds held for various projects have been released.

Review Service Level Agreements with Church Property Trustees

The SLA between CPT and FSD has been redefined because of the outsourcing of the Presbyterian Investment and Beneficiary Funds

In order to reduce Financial Services costs and improve services to parishes a strategy of outsourcing non-core functions is being implemented. So far, the General Assembly payroll management has moved, and centralised parish payroll was discontinued from August this year.

The CPT also decided to outsource the management and reporting of the Presbyterian Investment fund to a third party supplier with a phased implementation commencing 1 July 2006.

In future, there will be an increased focus on monitoring and managing debtors, to help ensure that General Assembly has funds to which it is entitled: unpaid levies, and management of \$1m trade and other creditors.

The focus on reducing operating costs will also continue. Reduced staff numbers during the last two years have presented an opportunity to review and reduce operating costs, particularly regarding the telecommunications and IT functions.

Human Resources

The move from the Ministry Resource Team to a dedicated human resource function was consolidated during the last eighteen months. New team members were appointed – Fiona Stenhouse (Human Resource Manager), Juliette Bowater (Personal Assistant/Human Resource Administrator) and Trina Lake (Office Coordinator), which enabled a greater focus on human resource advisory services. Turnover of the Human Resource Manager role in less than twelve months, and with the appointment of a new Manager, Marilla Hood, in May 2006, has meant that staff are still in a settling in phase.

During the last eighteen months focus has been on increasing the quality of information provided to parishes and improvement in processes around legislative compliance. Briefing sessions were held around the country and, in partnership with Aon Insurers, a compliance tool checklist, known as PACT, was developed. It will be accessible to all parishes on line after the trial period with three presbyteries is complete and any amendments made. This process will simplify the role parishes have to undertake in reporting and addressing compliance matters. Human resource information available on the website has been enhanced, and various process improvements have been initiated resulting, for example, in improvements to police checks and marriage celebrant processing and recording of applications for receptions to ministry from other denominations.

Going forward the focus will be on implementing ministry appraisals and supervision, along with continuing to enhance and provide relevant employment legislation on the website. An operational plan will be developed, outlining goals, measures and risks. Strategic planning, for a way forward that reflects the direction of the Presbyterian Church, will also be explored. Enhancing office systems will continue.

Communications

The focus for the Church's two-person communications team over the last two years has been on improving communication between different bodies of the

Church so that parishes, ministers and others have better access to information. One of the key aspects of this programme has been to increase transparency around information about General Assembly's financial performance.

Other major initiatives have included making improvements to the website, which have resulted in consistent, strong growth in visitor numbers. The number of pages viewed in March 2006 was up 166 percent on a year ago, while the number of visitors was up 48 percent. During April, May and June of 2006, around 150 leaders attended workshops held around the country to equip them to use the media as a tool in outreach programmes, and production of magazines like *sPanz*, *Candour*, *Bush Telegraph* has continued.

Providing communication advice to parishes, presbyteries and General Assembly staff is the other major part of the communication team's work. Requests for advice on how to manage unexpected media interest are among the most common enquiries from parishes along with how to get the best out of parish newsletters, how to publicise events, and queries about website development.

In future our focus will be on continuing to equip and resource church leaders, including the Moderator of the General Assembly and others, to help build a profile for the Church among the wider community. This will involve an increased presence in the media at national, regional and local levels. Taking advantage of technology to disseminate information is also expected to continue.

Archives

The Church's essential mission to work with others to make Jesus Christ known draws the Archives attention to the important work of outreach and faith re-building in our communities. The Archives engages in this work by supporting the evolving conversations confronting the Church as it fulfils its five faces of mission. We undertake our task by gathering, mapping and communicating resources that broadens and authenticates our understanding and interpretation of our Presbyterian heritage.

Archives activity is about information and records management and central to this activity is education. Therefore, two related challenges face us in the coming years:

- properly caring for our manuscripts, photographs and audio objects through the provision of improved environment and physical facilities.
- the digitisation of records with the increase of on-line usage is an issue that will require a decision in the long term as technology continually expands that demands information to be readily accessible.

A professional service is provided to the Church and the research community, both onsite and through the Archives website. In particular

- all School of Ministry ordinands made use of the church collections;
- a record number of University students have undertaken research;

- a number of searchable databases now on-line and the photo gallery have resulted in dramatic increase in research and reference queries;
- the electronic catalogue is growing with the goal that part will be on-line in the coming year.

Our records are our *taonga* and have lasting value and relevance to future generations of God's people. *Remember the days of old; consider the years long past; ask your father, and he will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you.* Deuteronomy 32:7

School of Ministry Report

The School of Ministry has undergone significant changes since the 2004 General Assembly. In 2005 the School was asked to operate with a reduced budget. In line with this Mary Huie-Jolly was not replaced when she resigned to move to the USA, and Elaine Wooliscroft was not replaced when she retired. On top of that Neville Emslie resigned as Principal in September and Kevin Ward has been Acting Principal since. Leadership in the School was further unsettled by Kevin's study leave in early 2006 and to ill health preventing Alistair Rae being able to serve as Interim Principal as was anticipated. However, John Roxborough provided excellent leadership during this period. The one addition to staff has been Lydia Johnson as a half time associate lecturer, funded by the Foreign Missions Board of the Disciples of Christ, USA.

There are 15 fulltime residential ordinands, 9 of whom will complete the programme this year. In line with the policy adopted by General Assembly in 2002 a distance programme has been commenced and currently there are an additional 3 ordinands in that. The School is involved with the training of 8 Local Ordained Ministers, and has responsibility for the training needs of the significant number of ministers transferring into the denomination from overseas or other denominations. In terms of our programme we moved to splitting the year so that the first semester is spent mainly in more classroom based learning and the second semester basically in fulltime field education.

Currently the School is in the process of the Review being carried out by the church. This will have considerable implications for the way in which the School operates if the recommendations are accepted by the General Assembly in September. While this has produced a considerable degree of uncertainty and has been unsettling for some, the School has fully engaged in this in a cooperative manner, seeking to work for the best outcome in training future leaders for the Church within the constraints of the financial situation. Currently a major focus is working on how we can make the best transition into the envisioned future. There has been an excellent and cooperative atmosphere within both the student body and staff over this period of change and transition which has maintained good morale and positive outcomes in the present.

The review presents significant challenges for the future but will also create new opportunities for providing training for the wide range of leadership needed by the church as it moves into the future.

