

That the General Assembly now rule, in accordance with the Supreme and Subordinate Standards of the Church, and with previous Assembly decisions, that this church may not accept for training, license, ordain, or induct anyone involved in a sexual relationship outside of faithful marriage between a man and a woman. In relation to homosexuality, in the interests of natural justice, this ruling shall not prejudice anyone who, as at the date of this meeting, has been accepted for training, licensed, ordained or inducted. Note: "the date of this meeting" is 23 September 2004.

- 2.2 Assembly adopted the rule ad interim which means it became effective immediately.
- 2.3 The voting to approve or not to approve was as follows (presbytery voting numbers in brackets):

Approve – Ashburton, Auckland (49/32), Bay of Plenty (37/3), Clutha (12/0), Manawatu Wanganui (26/12), Nelson Marlborough (22/8), Matura, Northland (14/13), South Auckland (22/4), Southland, Taranaki (13/1) and Waikato (26/15). **[12]**

Not approve – Te Aka Puaho (27/26), South Canterbury (16/12), Christchurch, Central Otago (8/8), Dunedin, North Otago (8/0), Gisborne-Hawke's Bay (15/14), North Shore (17/12), Wairarapa (11/8), Wellington (39/15). **[10]**

One presbytery – West Coast Uniting – did not send a response.

- 2.4 As a majority of presbyteries voted in favour of the proposal, Assembly has discretion to enact it.
- 2.5 If the rule is not adopted it lapses, in which case the most recent interpretation of church policy was outlined in the 2003 decision of the Judicial Commission chaired by Sir Duncan McMullin. That Commission determined that, at that time, there was no expressed objection in principle to the licensing, ordination or induction of homosexual persons.

3 Administering Baptism

- 3.1 The 2004 General Assembly referred the following Act of Modification to presbyteries and union district councils to approve or not approve:

Assembly, in view of the Church's right in dependence on the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit to modify its Subordinate Standards, always in agreement with the Word of God and the fundamental doctrines of the Reformed Faith contained in its Subordinate Standards, hereby modifies its standards by falling from those phrases in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Larger Catechism that state it is the function of the ordained minister of the Word and none other to dispense the sacrament of Baptism (Westminster Confession, chapter XXVII (iv); Larger Catechism, answer to question 176) and instead recognises, as part of its Subordinate Standards, that the Sacrament of Baptism is normally administered by ordained ministers except where, at the discretion of the presbytery or union district council, certain elders may be authorised so to do, but always under the authority of the minister or interim moderator and of the session or parish council.

- 3.2 Assembly affirms that the understanding set out in Appendix B-4 of the Book of Order in relation to the sacrament of Communion applies also to the sacrament of Baptism, namely:
- a) Assembly affirms the Reformed understanding of the essential relationship between Word and Sacrament, and the need for Baptism to be dispensed with understanding in the context of the preached Word.
 - b) Assembly affirms the biblical principle of the sacrament of Baptism being administered decently and in order.
 - c) Assembly affirms the true significance of the sacrament of Baptism depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit and the command and promise of Christ.
- 3.3 The subordinate standards of the Presbyterian Church are the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. They provide that only ministers of word and sacrament can administer the sacrament of Baptism.
- 3.4 To allow elders to conduct the sacrament of Baptism, the subordinate standards need amending. This is done by Assembly passing an Act of Modification of the subordinate standards.
- 3.5 The voting was:

Approve: Auckland (87/0), Bay of Plenty (40/0), South Canterbury (29/0), Christchurch, West Coast Uniting (15/0), Central Otago, Clutha (12/0), Dunedin (52/0), Manawatu Wanganui (21/6), Nelson Marlborough (21/5), Maitua, North Otago (6/2), Northland (27/0), Gisborne Hawke's Bay (14/8), North Shore, Southland, Taranaki (13/0), Waikato (55/0), Wairarapa (18/1). **[19]**

Not approve: Wellington (25/18) **[1]**

Three presbyteries – Te Aka Puaho, Ashburton and South Auckland - did not send a response.

- 3.6 As a majority of presbyteries voted in favour of the proposal, Assembly has discretion to enact it.

4 Recommendations for Moderator Designate

- 4.1 The recommendations received for Moderator Designate of the General Assembly are set out below. These will be considered by the Nominating Committee which will report to the Assembly with a recommendation.

The Rev Peter Cheyne: Recommended by 6 presbyteries and 91 sessions/parish councils (97 recommendations in total)

The Rev Dr Graham Redding: Recommended by 12 presbyteries and 92 sessions/parish councils (104 recommendations in total)

- 4.2 To ensure my approach to the recommendations was robust, I referred the process I had followed to the Hon. Laurie Greig, a retired High Court Judge, who was advised by an advisor from the Book of Order and Judicial Reference Group.

5 Commission of Assembly

- 5.1 The Commission of Assembly acts in place of the Assembly to approve property and financial transactions involving presbyteries or church-related institutions other than parishes.
- 5.2 It also acts under Part 1 of the Presbyterian Church Property Amendment Act 1996 whereby trustees may apply for the conditions of Church trusts to be varied where their original conditions have become obsolete or unworkable.

6 Other

- 6.1 The records of presbyteries and Assembly groups have been audited as required by regulation 381.

7 The End

- 7.1 There is much to say - above all, thanks. Thanks:
- To my colleagues, past and present, capable and committed.
 - To Council conveners and deputy conveners, with whom I have interacted most days – and Council members, and the many committees with whom I have worked
 - To people who have served the church professionally, many without pay, including conveners and members of the Book of Order Reference Group, lawyers and other advisors
 - For being drawn among Te Aka Puaho, Pacific Islands and Asian communities
 - For ministers and elders, clerks and members and many others
 - For my peers in New Zealand and for warm friendships with peers world-wide in the Uniting Church in Australia, and from South Africa to Scotland, and for insights into life from Tokelau to Limpopo.
- 7.2 I feel blessed by God to stand within the Reformed tradition with its sense of the sovereignty of God, its valuing of heart and brain, of collaborative leadership, and its commitment to human and worldly wellbeing. I have been shaken by remarks expressed to people who have offered their gifts for the sake of the Church. I pray for us a heartening, which comes from the theological convictions our tradition upholds and the enlivening of God's Spirit.
- 7.3 I am indebted to the Church for the privilege of being AES for ten years.

Kerry Enright

Assembly Executive Secretary

