

Composition of Council of Assembly

Terms of Reference

- In early 2005, Council sought input from the wider church through the Focus on the Future gatherings about what our future direction and priorities should be. Feedback from these meetings indicated that the Church sees a leaner system of governance and management as a priority.
- Subsequently the Council reached consensus that the size of Council was too large and needed to be reduced, and it is proposing to do so. This is after debate at Council itself, and then followed by feedback sought from stakeholders being, presbyteries, Te Aka Puaho, Pacific Island Synod, Council of Asian Congregations, Church Property Trustees and the Synod of Otago and Southland. The time available for the feedback process was approximately 11 weeks from mid February to end of April 2006.
- Council is recommending changes to the number, type and mix, of the make-up of the Council. The make-up of Council is governed by regulations in the Book of Order, so any proposed membership changes need to be put before General Assembly 2006 for consideration and decision.

Executive Summary

1. Council membership be reduced from 23 members plus two associates (25 in all) to, 14 members, including two sub-committee conveners, plus four associates, (18 in all).
2. This is a one third reduction in Council and a different mix of members and associates from the existing Council - a decrease in members and an increase in associates
3. New forms of engagement between Council and presbyteries and vice versa, will be required
4. Greater and more direct engagement amongst all partners in the Church, emphasising our multiculturalism
5. Maintaining the key Moderator role and synergy with Council and the Church, whilst changing the ways in which the designate and immediate past, relate with Council
6. Involving directly for the first time with Council, the Synod of Otago and Southland

Recommendations

1. That the membership of the Council of Assembly be made up of 14 members, 12 to be appointed by the General Assembly plus the two sub-committee conveners, together with four associates, a total in all of _____

18, as follows:

Members:

- Convener (x1) – Assembly appointee
- Deputy Convener (x1) – Assembly appointee
- Moderator General Assembly (x1)
- Te Aka Puaho nominee (x1)
- Pacific Islanders Synod nominee (x1)
- Council of Asian Congregations nominee (x1)
- Six Assembly appointees (x6)
- Conveners of sub-committees (x2)

Associates:

- Te Aka Puaho Moderator (x1)
- Synod of Otago and Southland nominee (x1)
- Assembly Executive Secretary (x1)
- Church Property Trustees nominee (x1)

Term: Four years (as at present) with half of the members being replaced at each General Assembly.

2. That the Council of Assembly engage with the presbyteries to agree and expedite acceptable and effective communication between them and the Council.

3. That the Council of Assembly formulate an appropriate form of liaison between the Council, the Moderator Designate, and the immediate past Moderator.

Note: The primary difference between members and associate members of the Council is that members may vote on proposals, while associate members may not. Both associates and members may speak to proposals and raise and second motions. While the Council may associate additional individuals with its meetings for specific purposes, the membership of the Council, including both associates and members, may not be changed without the approval of General Assembly. Appendix E-20 of the Book of Order stipulates current membership and Council's accountabilities and responsibilities.

Report

1 A number of principles have guided the Council in the development of this proposal. These were identified to aid the Council in its consideration and evaluation of proposed membership and for the purposes of the subsequent feedback process (refer later).

2 Guiding Philosophy

2.1 Factors relevant to the operation and membership of the Council include:

- Discernment of God's action and leading
- Proven mission leadership
- Development of vision
- Governance skills
- Breadth of experience and perspective, including theological
- Consideration of age
- Engagement with presbyteries
- Geographical spread
- Time and energy commitment
- Mission, financial, management, pastoral skills
- Effectiveness and efficiency.

2.2 An additional factor is the opportunity to include new voices around the Council table, in the form of the Council of Asian Congregations and the Synod of Otago and Southland. Working smarter and ensuring effective liaison with regional and other interest groups will need to be hallmarks of the proposed changes.

3 Engagement with Presbyteries

3.1 Engaging presbyteries remains crucial. Trust and confidence are built through a positive relationship with presbyteries, and of presbyteries with congregations.

3.2 At the time the Council was restructured in 2000, it was thought members designated as regional representatives would help to engage and communicate with presbyteries. It appears that because of the spread of presbyteries, the ideal has not been achieved for either presbyteries or the Council. With a smaller Council, it will be unrealistic to expect councillors to liaise/engage in this way.

3.3 In recent times the Council has engaged with the wider Church by:

- Reporting to and receiving feedback from Assembly
- Questionnaires to presbyteries, groups and individuals
- Regional meetings with presbyteries, groups and other individuals
- Receiving verbal reports from councillors at the Council meetings
- Exchanges of correspondence
- 'News from Council' communicated to presbyteries and parishes ahead of, and following, the Council meetings.

3.4 These will all need to continue and improve, and other means developed. One option is to identify a person in each presbytery who would be the point of contact for exchanges of information with the Council. This approach would be characterised by two-way communication and the values of openness,

transparency, proactivity and accessibility – all of which are important to the relationship between presbyteries and the Council.

- 3.5 Over the last seven years since the present structure was approved, communication processes have changed. There is extensive use of electronic communication including website and email. Many more people are accessing the Presbyterian website. There is considerable potential for this to develop further. The communications team will continue to enhance the means by which the Council, for its part, interacts with the wider church.

4 Ethnic Diversity of Our Congregations

- 4.1 A developing dynamic in the Church is recognised ethnic cultural groupings – Te Aka Puaho, the Pacific Islanders' Synod and the Council of Asian Congregations. These have a place in the way the Assembly and Council operate.
- 4.2 Te Aka Puaho is a particular partner of the whole Church and with whom there is a covenant in the context of the Church's commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. It is essential that the Council continues to give its expression to that commitment on behalf of the Assembly, and with a smaller Council ways will need to be found to strengthen and maintain the partnership. The Pacific Islanders' Synod is well established and the Council of Asian Congregations is increasingly recognised. As stated in the report of the Council to GA06, these relationships are communicating on a regular basis with Council representatives
- 4.3 Networking and engagement with the ethnic diversity of the Church will continue to be important for the effectiveness of the Council. At present ethnic groupings are represented by a Moderator and others, and it is inherent in the recommendation in this report that Te Aka Puaho, the Pacific Islanders' Synod and the Council of Asian Congregations each nominate one person to be a member of Council. As part of the Council's ongoing discussions with Te Aka Puaho, it has been mutually accepted that the Te Aka Puaho Moderator be an associate member, in addition to having a Te Aka Puaho nominee as a member.

5 Involvement of General Assembly Moderators – Past, Present and Designate

- 5.1 The Moderator of the General Assembly is a significant figure as an Assembly appointed spokesperson and contributor to mission leadership and policy development for the whole Church, including ethnic cultural groupings. No change is recommended for this membership.
- 5.2 Traditionally, the Moderator Designate has been involved in the Council based on the need for the appointee to prepare for their term of service. That can be addressed in other ways through personal briefings, attendance as an associate when considered helpful (say up to two meetings before commencement of term), and in the circulation of minutes.
- 5.3 Immediate Past Moderators have added perspectives from their period of service. Again that can be addressed in other ways through an "exit interview" and concluding report to the Council of Assembly.

6 Conveners of Council

- 6.1 It is proposed that both the Convener and Deputy Convener be specifically appointed, as is currently the case, rather than elected from within Council's membership. Appointment allows the Nominating Committee to take account of the specific skills and qualities needed for these positions.

7 The Synod of Otago and Southland

- 7.1 The Synod of Otago and Southland which currently does not have membership, has requested two seats on the Council. The Synod is a significant partner and contributor to the life of the Assembly, both financially and in mission. The Act that established the Synod gives it certain "ecclesiastical authority" south of the Waitaki River. As a result of the feedback process Council again considered this request and recommended no change to the original proposal for the Synod to have an associate seat on the Council.

8 Synopsis of Feedback

- 8.1 From Council's analysis of, and discussion on, the feedback received from various stakeholders, it was agreed at the July 2006 Council meeting that no changes be made to recommendation no. 1 (see earlier in this report) as distributed for feedback. It was agreed that recommendations 2 and 3 be added (see earlier in this report)
- 8.2 Generally the feedback accepted the need for some reduction in the size of the Council. There was no disagreement with the need for some reduction.
- 8.3 Feedback about relationships with presbyteries and the Moderator Designate and Immediate Past Moderator, emphasised Council's view in the paper issued for feedback, around the need to establish effective communication and liaison. To bring some prescription to these matters recommendations 2 and 3 have been added and agreed by Council.
- 1.1 There was also some emphasis in the feedback, on the needs for cultural balance and skill based selection. These are matters already covered in the explanatory content of the Council's proposal, and inherent in recommendation 1.

For the Council of Assembly
Kerry Stotter
Convener

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