

## **User's Guide to 2006 Assembly**

In the name of Jesus Christ, WELCOME to all participants in the 2006 General Assembly at St Kentigern College, Pakuranga, Auckland.

### **What is the General Assembly?**

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand has a hierarchy of governing bodies - session (local), presbytery (regional) and Assembly (national). Assembly is the top governing body of the Church. All parishes are entitled to send representatives (commissioners) to Assembly. The commissioners discuss and vote on the recommendations and proposals brought to Assembly. This participatory style of decision-making is a feature of the Presbyterian Church.

The Book of Order describes Assembly's functions as:

- **Legislative** – making the regulations that give order to the life of the Church
- **Administrative** – exercising general oversight of the Church. Assembly is the major policy-making body of the Church. It establishes and develops the basic beliefs, overall strategies and direction for the whole Church
- **Judicial** – deciding appeals and complaints. Assembly delegates its judicial function to Judicial Commissions. Reports from Commissions may be lodged with Assembly, but Assembly does not debate them.

One of the General Assembly committees, Council of Assembly, has a major responsibility for implementing General Assembly decisions.

### **Who are the key people and what are their roles?**

#### **Moderator: the Rt Rev Pamela Tankersley**

Pamela will be installed as Moderator on Thursday afternoon. Her role is to preside at the Assembly, to help us deliberate, and to lead us in worship. She may be assisted by the immediate past Moderator, the Very Rev Garry Marquand and others.

#### **Assembly Executive Secretary: the Rev Dr. Kerry Enright**

Kerry is Clerk of the Assembly and gives advice regarding procedures and rules with the convener of the Book of Order and Judicial Reference Group John Marshall, and keeps records. Heather McKenzie will assist him.

**Business Work Group Co-Conveners: the Revs David Coster and Don Hall: David and Don** and their team manage and guide Assembly business.

#### **Local Arrangements Convener: Mr Forbes Worn**

Forbes and his team are responsible for venue matters, catering, accommodation, and transport, plus a host of other essential items to keep us working comfortably.

#### **Co-ordination Team: the Revs Sandra Warner and Brett Johnstone**

Sandra and Brett coordinate the various practical aspects of the Assembly meeting.

## **Enhancement Team:**

A change to this Assembly is that a number of organisations that normally make presentations have instead been given opportunity to have displays during the Assembly, and during the Ministry Expo.

The Ministry Expo will be held on Sunday afternoon. Please take the opportunity to visit the displays, ask questions, and to better inform yourself of the wider work of the church.

## **Guest Speakers - Voices in our Church:**

At this Assembly our key-note addresses will be given by leaders within the Presbyterian Church:

- **The Rev Dr Kerry Enright** [retiring Assembly Executive Secretary]
- **The Hon Luamanuvao Winnie Laban** [Elder, Member of Parliament, Minister of the Voluntary and Community Sector]
- **The Rev Martin Baker** [minister First Church, Dunedin, member of Council of Assembly, Co-convener Leadership Sub-committee]

## **Te Aka Puaho**

Te Aka Puaho (the Maori Synod) has a special place in our church. Te Aka Puaho may choose at any time to address the Assembly on matters that affect their life and spirituality. At times the Moderator of the Synod, Mrs Millie Te Kaawa, may be seated beside the Assembly Moderator.

## **Assembly Chaplains**

The Moderator has asked Prue Neild and Emily Wotton, Te Aouru Biddle and Te Whare Turuwhenua (from Te Aka Puaho), Paul Kim (from the Council of Asian Congregations), and Ere Talagi-Ikitoelagi and Asora Amosa (from Pacific Islanders Synod) to be chaplains to the Assembly. The chaplains are available to support people spiritually and pastorally. Please feel free to contact them.

We aim for all voices to be heard equally and without prejudice. The Moderator will ask the chaplains to advise her and the Assembly as to how well we are achieving the aim.

## **Music and Worship Team**

The Music and Worship Co-ordinator for the Assembly is the Rev Dr Sarah Mitchell of Dunedin.

## **Kids @ General Assembly ([K@GA](#))**

The co-ordinator, Jill Kayser, and a team of Kids Friendly leaders will offer a programme for 20 children to explore what it means to be a Christ-centred Community-facing church now and in the future.

## **Communications Team**

Amanda Wells and her team will be managing media enquiries, updating the website, sending out e-newsletters to those who can't attend and taking photographs.

## **Who will be at Assembly?**

There will be approximately 500 people attending, including commissioners, youth representatives, observers, associates and overseas guests. There will also be volunteers and Assembly staff assisting.

## **Your Responsibilities as a Commissioner**

You have been commissioned by your presbytery or union district council. You bring your own gifts, informed by the views of others, to build up the body of Christ. You are not a delegate so you do not necessarily represent the views of your presbytery, union district council, session, parish council, congregation or anyone else. The views of others may inform yours, but they cannot direct you.

## **Worship**

Each day there will be worship at points during the Assembly. Each morning at 7.30 a.m. (from Friday to Monday) a communion service is offered at the St Kentigern Chapel.

## **How Does the Assembly Work?**

### **Standing Orders**

On Thursday afternoon, the Assembly will be asked to adopt a set of rules for conducting its business, called the **Standing Orders**, in the front section of the *Assembly Reports*.

There are different ways and stages in how Assembly considers matters - including dialogue groups, facilitation, and the full Assembly. The Business Work Group will make it clear which process is being used.

Only matters that require a decision will be referred to dialogue groups or dealt with on the floor of the Assembly.

### **Full Assembly**

The full Assembly meets together to hear matters introduced for debate, to hear from the Facilitation Group as to the mind of the dialogue groups on certain matters, and to make decisions.

When the full Assembly meets commissioners will be asked to sit in the front section of the auditorium and associates and observers (non-voting) in the back section, or upstairs.

In full Assembly there may be debate on recommendations followed by voting or discussion that does not have to result in a decision.

### **Dialogue Groups**

The dialogue group process is a way of seeking the mind of the Assembly before it is presented for debate. The response may be questions, statements or new or amended notices of motion.

Each commissioner at the Assembly will be a member of a dialogue group, (comprising 15-20 members) to discuss the matters that need to be studied in depth. Information about which group you have been allocated to will be included in the pack you receive on the first day of Assembly.

At the end of the discussion time, the dialogue group moderator will check to see if the group is in agreement on what feedback it wishes to give to the matters being raised, to be reported to the Facilitation Group (see below).

### **Facilitation Group**

The Facilitation Group, which comprises nominees of the Moderator, the immediate Past Moderator, the Assembly Clerk and the Business Work Group, will monitor the progress of matters, especially those being *considered* by dialogue groups.

Sometimes they will arrange a meeting between those presenting reports and commissioners who have raised issues, in order to facilitate a resolution or ascertain a common mind. After each dialogue group meeting, they will report back to the full Assembly on all the issues raised and resolved, before debate and decision resume.

### **Voting**

If you are a voting member you will have received two "indicator cards" – one for "yes" and one for "no". The Moderator will ask you to show one of these to indicate your mind both in formal voting and in gauging the mind of the Assembly informally (eg. "Are you ready to vote?") Keep your cards with you at all times.

If you feel you have heard enough debate on a particular matter, you may indicate your desire to move on by holding the cards in a cross formation across your chest. This will indicate to the Moderator the mood of the Assembly.

The cards are for your use only.

You will also be issued with a set of ballot papers that will be used when the Moderator agrees to a request from the floor "that a decision should be made by secret ballot." These are for your use only, and you need to keep them and the voting cards with you.

Occasionally cards and voting papers are lost. If this happens then please see the Assembly Executive Secretary.

### **The Processes for Dealing With Matters Before the Assembly**

The ***Standing Orders*** agreed to at the start of Assembly set the rules for conducting Assembly business, so please read these thoroughly. In the meantime, a brief overview is provided here.

Before the Assembly meets, the Business Work Group will identify the appropriate process by which business will be considered.

Reports that do not require any decision other than "the report be received", will not receive speaking time at the Assembly and will be included in the comprehensive motion.

Most matters will follow the procedure of:

- (a) **Presentation.** The business is presented to the Assembly. The timing of the business, and time for presentation are set by the Business Work Group.
- (b) **Clarification.** This is a time to seek clarification by asking questions of the presenter(s) of the item of **business**.
- (c) **Debate** (*Standing Orders 15.3*). The Assembly follows the normal rules of debate, on matters presented by notices of motion. They will be introduced briefly and seconded, and debated until such time as the Moderator asks the Assembly if it is ready to vote (ie. move to a decision).

If the vote is unanimous it is declared **agreed**

If it receives support of at least 60% of those voting it is declared **carried**

If it receives less than 60% support it is declared **lost**.

There are a number of procedural motions (see Standing Orders, 15.3) that apply during debate. They require 60% to pass.

- (d) **Decisions by Comprehensive Motion** (*Standing orders 15.4*). Matters that are considered to need no debate or study will be offered as part of a “comprehensive motion”, which is a collection of recommendations that will be considered en bloc.

In dialogue groups, or by notifying the Business Work Group on the appropriate form, any matter in this category can be removed from the comprehensive motion for debate, study or discussion.

Those matters left in the comprehensive motion will be put to the full Assembly as one motion, on which there will be no debate.

Some items of business may need additional steps in the process.

### **Matters for Study (Standing Orders 15.2).**

Other items may be referred for study. This is time made available for talking together, either in Dialogue Groups or the full Assembly, without any decision being made.

### **Matters to be Processed by Consensus**

At the 2006 General Assembly the Moderator, in consultation with the Assembly Business Work Group, is expected to seek leave of the Assembly to trial making decisions by consensus in accordance with the procedure outlined in Appendix 1 of this Users' Guide to the Assembly. Please read the attachment as this process requires a different approach to making decisions.

Consensus is a process of seeking the common mind of a meeting without resort to a formal vote, engaging in genuine dialogue that is respectful, mutually supportive and empowering, while seeking to discern God's will. Consensus is used in dialogue groups.

## **Notices of Motion**

Any voting member can move a notice of motion, as long as it is seconded. If your notice of motion does not arise from the business of the Assembly the Business Work Group must receive it by **9pm, Thursday 28 September 2006**.

Other deadlines will be clearly given to the Assembly by the Business Work Group.

## **Timing**

Presenters of reports will have had time allocated to them by the Business Work Group.

Presenters of overtures and notices of motion will have a total of four minutes to speak, move and second a motion. Other speakers will have two minutes unless the Moderator decides otherwise.

Though presenters of reports will speak from a lectern at the front of the auditorium, during discussion and debate "roving microphones" will be used. These will be handed to commissioners in their seats when the Moderator indicates that they have right to speak.

During debates lights to indicate speaking time will be visible to all in the auditorium. The green light will turn to orange when there are 30 seconds left and red when time is up.

## **Arriving at Assembly**

### **Before Assembly**

Towards the end of September you will receive a second pack of papers. More papers will be distributed at Assembly. You may wish to bring a ring binder to enable you to keep the papers together.

### **Registration**

You need to register at the help desk in the foyer of Elliot Hall (the assembly hall of St Kentigern College) on Thursday, 28 September. Registration will begin at 9am.

On registration, you will be given an assembly pack that includes your name-tag, dialogue group number, voting papers, a map of the venue, and other sundry items. Please take time to read this material.

### **The Venue**

The plenary sessions of the General Assembly will be held in Elliot Hall.

A few of the staff of the College will still be in residence, and you are asked to keep to those areas allocated to the Assembly. Please do not enter the school office. Contact a member of the Local Arrangements Committee if you need assistance.

The dialogue groups will be held in classrooms, some of which are upstairs, so if you have mobility needs please advise the Local Arrangements Committee, if at all possible before you arrive.

Commissioners are reminded that this is a school, and as such no smoking is permitted anywhere on St Kentigern College buildings or grounds.

### **Powhiri and Opening Service**

Auckland Presbytery representatives, led by the Auckland Maori Pastorate, will welcome the Assembly. People are asked to gather outside the St Kentigern Chapel at 1 p.m. The opening service will be held in the chapel at 2 p.m.

### **Meals**

Meals will be served in the St Kentigern sports centre. Some transport will be available.

Morning and afternoon teas will be served continuously in the foyer of Elliot Hall. Please be mindful of the Assembly meeting next to the foyer. Please organise your leaving of the Assembly auditorium so that it is during a less significant moment in the business.

### **Transport and Parking**

Commissioner parking is only available in the school car-park (300 cars) on the right as you enter the College grounds. Parking in other areas will be restricted to officials of the Assembly.

### **Safe Environment**

The Assembly would wish to be a safe environment for all who come to bring their concerns. We ask that you be respectful of all people, and keep to the "ground rules" that will be issued at the Assembly.

It is not appropriate to make personal remarks during debates or to applaud.

Though these days the Assembly is more relaxed than in earlier years, it is still the highest court of the Church, so appropriate standards in discussion, debate and dress are expected.

The Church has for some time chosen to use inclusive language as it addresses the people of God. We invite you to do so wherever you can.

The Moderator has appointed Assembly chaplains to be available to anyone who finds the matters discussed or the process of the Assembly distressing. The Rev Margaret Ann Low will be available as contact person for matters of sexual harassment.

### **Attendance**

The Assembly will open with a powhiri at 1.00 p.m. on Thursday 28 September 2006 and conclude at 1pm on Monday 2 October. You need to be present for the whole Assembly.

If for some urgent reason you need to be absent, you must seek permission from the Business Work Group. Please speak to or contact the Rev Edwin Clarke – 027 275 4283 [elclarke@inspire.net.nz](mailto:elclarke@inspire.net.nz).

## Daylight Saving

Please note that daylight saving starts on Sunday 1 October. Remember to put your clocks/watches forward one hour by 2 am Sunday morning.

## Communications

Please be aware that only the Moderator has the authority of the Assembly to speak to the media. If you are asked questions, please refer them to the Media Office.

A timetable will be printed for each day so that you know what issues are to be dealt with at what times.

There are no pay phones at St Kentigern College. If you need to make an **urgent** call and do not have access to a cell phone, then please go to the help desk or contact a member of Local Arrangements.

## Help is Always Available

Even "seasoned" Assembly attendees need help from time to time. Those responsible for various parts of the Assembly are keen to discuss questions with anyone. They are a friendly lot!

On matters of procedure or wording for notices of motion and guidance on the church's regulations see the Assembly Clerk (Kerry Enright), the Assistant Clerk (Heather McKenzie) or one of the Assembly Business Work Group.

For questions on the order of business see one of the Assembly Business Work Group.

On matters relating to the buildings, the facilities, accommodation or transport, see the Local Arrangements Committee, who will have a "help desk" staffed all of the time, in the foyer of Elliot Hall.

## Emergency Numbers

The emergency contact phones for the Assembly are:

<b>Don Hall</b> 021 676 147	Co-convener Assembly Business Work Group
<b>David Coster</b> 027 220 5765	Co-convener Assembly Business Work Group
<b>Trevor Mosley</b> 0276 247 108	Auckland Presbytery Clerk and Help Desk
<b>Forbes Worn</b> 021 300 013	Local Arrangements Convener
<b>Sandra Warner</b> 0275 794 400	Co-ordinating Committee Convener

Please Note

There is no free time scheduled during this Assembly.  
Business is scheduled for each day and will follow worship on Sunday.  
The Ministry Expo is scheduled for Sunday afternoon.  
Business will be conducted Sunday evening.  
Meals are planned accordingly.

## Appendix

### Consensus Decision Making at GA06

#### Understanding Consensus

As a result of the review of the 2004 General Assembly meeting, it has been decided to trial consensus decision-making during one aspect of business at this year's Assembly.

It is a process of seeking the common mind of a meeting without resorting to a formal vote. It is characterised by engaging in genuine dialogue that is respectful, mutually supportive and empowering, while seeking to discern God's will. Consensus is reached when one of the following occurs:

- all those entitled to make decisions are in agreement about an outcome (unanimity)
- most are in agreement and the few for whom it is not their first preference nonetheless accept that they have been fairly heard and could live with the proposed outcome, and so agree to consensus being recorded as the mind of the meeting.

Consensus procedures assume commissioners are eager to listen to insights from others that may help in the search to discern God's will for the way forward. We hope there will be an attitude of respectful anticipation as all commissioners work towards the common goal. Rather than striving to succeed by "winning" a debate, commissioners are encouraged to submit to one another to find the common mind, so that God's way may be the "winning" way.

Agreement on an outcome is not limited to approving the wording of a proposal. That may be what is agreed, but it may also be that consensus is reached about a modified proposal, or in agreeing to reject a proposal, or to send it back to the group presenting the issue for further work. It might be that we agree to hold a variety of positions that are not reconcilable.

By promoting collaboration, consensus procedures help the Assembly seek the mind of Christ together. Consensus encourages prayerful listening to one another and growth in understanding. It also requires discipline on the part of all the participants (and the Moderator) as we abide by its rules. The aim is to arrive at a common mind rather than simply the will of the majority, so that we can confidently say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (Acts 15:28).

Consensus decision-making assumes each commissioner has God-given gifts and insights and that all contributions are worthy of consideration and respect. As we acknowledge the Lordship of Christ in this way, we can build *koinonia* (fellowship), and a climate of trust is able to be developed.

Your feedback to the trial of consensus will be sought in a post-Assembly review to determine whether it becomes standard procedure for other church meetings. We have modelled the consensus process we'll be using on that used by the Uniting Church of Australia.

## **Making Decisions by Consensus**

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### **A The Information Session**

#### **1 Presentation of the Issue**

- 1.1 The aim is to resource the Assembly with information from the range of possible perspectives so that an informed way forward may be discerned.
- 1.2 This resourcing includes a written report and verbal presentation about the matter being considered.
- 1.3 Questions of clarification are also asked at this point.

### **B The Deliberative Session**

#### **2 Open Discussion**

- 2.1 Discussion of various viewpoints and vigorous debate around the different.
- 2.2 As an indication of opinion that the Assembly should move on to the next step in the procedure, commissioners may display their orange and blue cards crossed, so the Moderator can see them both together. (This can happen both during and after speeches.)

#### **3 Developing Proposals**

- 3.1 As the discussion proceeds as above, several specific proposals may emerge, or the Moderator (in consultation with the Assembly Business Work Group) may decide to refer the issue to dialogue groups. The dialogue groups may make recommendations for a way forward, raise issues or signal agreement with the proposed way forward or some other action. The results of this discussion are sent to the Facilitation Group, to draw together responses, and assist in negotiating an agreed form of words as a firm proposal for the Assembly to consider.

### **C The Decision Session**

#### **4 Discussion of Specific Proposals**

- 4.1 The proposal will be written up for all to see. Minor changes of wording will be able to be incorporated as the discussion proceeds.
- 4.2 The benefits and disadvantages of the proposal are now canvassed by various speakers, both those for and against. Commissioners indicate their agreement or disagreement with cards during and after speeches.
- 4.3 From time to time the Moderator may sum up where it seems the Assembly is heading, and check whether the Assembly is nearing consensus with the question:

**A:** "What is your response to this proposal?"

- 4.4 When the Moderator believes that consensus has been reached (whether to support the proposal or not to support the proposal) the Assembly will be asked to confirm this.
- 4.5 If there is no strong response to this check, discussion may continue.
- 4.6 If there is unanimity, then the Moderator declares that consensus has been reached.
- 4.7 However, if after a thorough sharing of ideas, there is strong but not unanimous support for the proposal, the Moderator may ask such questions as:
- B:** "Who supports this proposal?"
- C:** "Who does not support this proposal as a first option, but is prepared to accept it?"
- D:** "Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?"
- 4.8 If there is no response to the last question the Moderator may ask the Assembly
- E:** "Is further discussion needed?"
- F:** "Are you prepared to have the issue declared resolved by consensus?"
- 4.9 If all agree, the Moderator declares consensus has been reached.
- 4.10 But if the response to question D that indicates there are those who cannot accept the proposal, the Moderator may ask them to express their concerns. When they have spoken the Moderator asks them:
- G:** "Do you believe your point of view has been listened to?"
- and asks the Assembly:
- H:** "Have you heard what others of our Assembly are saying?"
- 4.11 Given the assurance that dissenting voices have both been expressed and understood, the Moderator may ask for an indication of viewpoints on the following questions.
- I:** "Are those in the minority on this proposal prepared to live with the majority view and allow the Assembly to record consensus?"
- J:** "Does the Assembly therefore wish to record agreement on this proposal?"
- 4.12 If there is no person indicating against these two questions, the agreement is recorded.
- 4.13 If there remains one or more commissioners indicating against either question, the Moderator will ask the Assembly if it wishes make a decision by formal majority (by vote). (60 % agreement needed for this decision).
- 4.14 If this procedural motion is lost, the Moderator will ask the Assembly

**K:** "Do we need to make this decision now?"

- 4.15 If the commissioners indicate support for this, then the process of making the decision by consensus continues.
- 4.16 If the procedural motion is lost, then the Moderator declares that no decision has been made.
- 4.17 The Moderator may ask the Group presenting the issue or some other relevant person, to clarify what other options are available to deal with the issue: for instance; the issue may be sent back to the group or to the Council of Assembly for further consideration, or no longer be considered.

## Consensus Flowchart



