

Asian Advisory Group (formerly Council of Asian Congregations)

Report

In late 2009, the Council of Asian Congregations was disbanded. It was replaced by the Asian Advisory Group (AAG). Ministry to Asian people is no longer simply to Asian ethnic congregations. There are a number of “emerging Christian communities” made up of people of Asian background who prefer to remain within an English speaking congregation. However, it should be clearly noted that Asian congregations remain fundamentally important in the life of the Church. We have around nine Korean congregations or Christian communities, two Indonesian, an English-speaking, Cantonese-speaking and Mandarin ministry, a Taiwanese ministry and an Indian ministry. A significant section of the Indian population in New Zealand in fact comes from Fiji.

Because a significant percentage of the Asian population lives in Auckland (70-75 percent), the Asian Advisory Group is under the Presbytery of Auckland. The biggest single Asian congregation is in Christchurch – the Korean Presbyterian Church of Christchurch. We can expect Asian people to continue to spread throughout New Zealand and this situation will change.

1. The AAG organised a forum for Korean ministers and elders on the 27 March at St Columba at Botany, Pakuranga. This was an introductory day for Korean ministers, elders and congregations that have applied to join the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. The Right Rev Dr Graham Redding and the Rev Martin Baker attended and this was much appreciated. We now potentially have a smooth process for assisting congregations to join which allows for a “get to know you period”, during which both the presbyteries and the applicant churches can understand the benefits and responsibilities of being part of the Church. There was a follow up day on 17 July to carry this process forward.
2. The AAG commissioned the Rev Kim Yong Hwan to act as interim Asian Liaison Officer to facilitate this process. His task, which is for six months, will be to assist these congregations and ministers to join the Church. His work will primarily be in the greater Auckland area, but there are applicants in other presbyteries as well. Much of his work involves explaining how the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand works.
3. The members of the AAG are the Rev Dr Stuart Vogel, Rev Kim Hyeon (South Auckland), Rev Seo Jangwon (South Auckland), Rev Mark Wun of the Auckland Taiwanese Church, Ms Christy Leow (Auckland), and the Rev Kim Yong Hwan (North Shore). The Rev Choi Junghun of Greyfriars was a member but has recently returned to Korea. We are looking for a presbytery appointment.
4. In 2011 a full time Asian Liaison Officer will be appointed. We are in negotiation with the Presbyterian Church of Korea about the possibility of a jointly funded appointment. We are anticipating the person will continue Rev Kim Yong Hwan's work and will also focus on the “1.5” generation. These are younger Asian leaders who are emerging. They arrived in New Zealand roughly between the

ages of six and 17 and are at home in two cultures. There are needs and opportunities with this group as well as continuing with the first generation migrants. There is a need and desire to provide training for future leadership. We are working with the Knox Centre for Christian Leadership on this. We have already very capable Asian leaders in our ministry and more will come.

5. *Some very satisfying developments are:* the growth of the Mandarin Ministry in Central Auckland. This ministry reaches out to Mainland Chinese people living in the Central Business District. The establishment of a new Indonesian ministry on the North Shore; the growing involvement of Asian congregations with the presbyteries (and we thank the Lord's Church, Auckland and the Full Love Church on the North Shore for hosting their respective presbytery meetings); and for emerging Christian communities in a range of English speaking congregations around the country; growing understanding with the Presbyterian Church of Korea and the Presbyterian Church of the Republic with regards to the exchange of and care for ministers and congregations.

Stuart Vogel
Secretary