



## Ministry paradigms and hats

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## About Candour

*Candour* is a monthly magazine about ministry and leadership. For more information, contact:

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The articles in *Candour* reflect the views of individual ministers or contributors writing in a personal capacity. They are not representative of the Church's official position. Please approach the author for permission if you wish to copy an article.

### Contributions

We welcome responses to published articles. If you would like to write a piece replying to any of this month's featured articles, please contact:

Amanda Wells (editor) on (04) 381-8285 or [candour@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:candour@presbyterian.org.nz)

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The next deadline (for the October issue) is **30 September 2009**.

### Glen Innis Vacancies

September 7 - 14	Homestead/Cottage
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September 28 - October 5	Homestead/Cottage
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Bookings for the summer school holidays are open to all ministers, regardless of whether they have school-aged children, from November 1.

To enquire about vacancies, please email [glen.innis@xtra.co.nz](mailto:glen.innis@xtra.co.nz) or telephone 06 855-4889. Ministers are welcome to inquire regarding vacancies due to cancellations.

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## Ministry Exchanges

I have received expressions of interest from overseas Ministers wanting to either exchange charges with Presbyterian Ministers or serve in Presbyterian parishes.

Please contact Juliette Bowater for an updated list of the opportunities available, or for further information: [juliette@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:juliette@presbyterian.org.nz).

### New opportunity:

#### United Church of Canada – Nova Scotia

A minister of a historic church in Halifax seeks a six month exchange from September 2010. The church has an average attendance of 150 and serves a range of people. The church is known for its music and preaching as well as its social justice work. The minister also lectures in preaching at the local ecumenical theological school. The minister would be accompanied by his wife and seeks an urban or suburban setting.

# Making sense of multiple hats

Amanda Wells

In the previous issue of *Candour*, some contributors explored the stereotypical ministers of contemporary culture. Most of these characters are fairly one dimensional and far from the reality of the multiple demands placed on clergy today. In a time when keeping your congregation numbers stable may require significant effort and many volunteers lack the availability of previous decades, ministers have taken on more and more “hats”.

Whatever job you have, it encompasses multiple expectations and areas of focus. Not all your “key performance indicators” will sit logically together, but they should be components of a relatively unified whole. The difference with a ministers’ role is that many of these expectations seem far from complementary. Being a good pastoral listener can be at odds with being a dynamic preacher; providing bold leadership can conflict with nourishing the spiritual gifts of others. Sometimes it might seem like more of a wish-list than a job description for a human being.

It seems obvious that no one will excel at all the aspects of a ministers’ role. Whether you choose to focus on the things with which you struggle or on those that you do well is down to your personality and to the modes of thinking that your life has inculcated. It’s worth remembering that no matter how successfully you reprogramme yourself, your default setting will seem inexorably correct in times of difficulty.

Inevitably others will have a view on your performance, and perhaps not shirk from sharing it. It always puzzles me that people seem to feel more free to criticise in a church context than they do in the context of paid employment or social circles. Criticism can be delivered in a constructive and helpful way but this skill is rare.

But the breadth of a minister’s job description means there will always be holes unless you develop a team mentality. If other people are effectively doing the things that you’re not naturally gifted at, the criticism will dry up. Your job satisfaction, and sense of facilitating your church’s mission, will increase – as long as you can put that work ahead of your own sense of importance. It’s not always easy to ease back on that control, and requires a significant change in perspective.

As a journalism student I spent a lot of time sitting in on

Christchurch City Council community board meetings, listening for local stories. The walls of meeting rooms featured colourful posters of Edward De Bono’s hats system, which is the idea that you can adopt different hats (or mindsets) as a method of problem solving. It’s about trying to get out of your own perspective and see a problem from a different angle (at least that’s my considered interpretation of the posters).

Getting out of your own perspective is far from easy. By definition, you’re embedded there. To imagine the world through another’s eyes is to imagine how you would see the world through another’s eyes. Remember how annoying it can be when someone says “I know what you’re going through/what you mean”? Using De Bono’s terminology, I’d suggest that mostly we try to put on a new hat without taking off the one already in place.

Every meeting or group you’re part of will throw up a different set of participant roles. You might notice that if the “critical person” on your church council is away, another will smoothly step into the role. If you have more than one “view-on-every-issue person”, your meetings will inevitably run way over time, unless there is strong chairing. (Why is it that 95 percent of the talking always seems to be done by three or four people?).

Part of the drain of modern life is that set of expectations that we place on ourselves, fuelled by messages from TV and film. Here we learn that everything should be efficiently completed in an easy-going manner; an interesting but unquestioned contradiction. Unless we’re prepared to have a more team-focused approach to our roles, and share out tasks, stress will inevitably increase.

In this issue of *Candour*, several contributors talk about the role of elders in the church and the leadership they can (or should) exert. The observation that, unless you outlive your elders, your church will revert on your departure to being what it was on your arrival, is telling. It’s the collective memory and will that trump the efforts of any one individual.

The October issue of *Candour* has the theme “Calvin’s influence” and the deadline will be 30 September. Soon we will be planning the themes for 2010 - please email any suggestions you have to [candour@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:candour@presbyterian.org.nz)

# Rediscovering a prophetic ministry

Howard Carter, *studentsoul*, Auckland

*“We believe that the prophetic ministry of ordained pastors as prophets is not merely an option, still less an idle curiosity; it is incumbent on them as an important feature of their role and identity.” (Shelp and Sutherland 1985:8)*

What does it mean to have a prophetic ministry in the church today? Hopefully there is not a comprehensive shrug of the shoulder and an “I don’t know” in response to that question. Many of us have seldom, if ever, met what we would recognise as a Christian prophet (Yocum: 1976:29). While we may have a great idea of what the classical prophets were doing when they prophesied, we find ourselves wrestling to understand what New Testament prophets were doing when they were prophesying (Hill 1977: 108). We are comfortable with terms like “Minister of Word and Sacrament”, and are coming to terms with phrases like “change agent” and “servant mission leader” but it is harder for us to identify with the list of gifts Paul says are needed for building up the church in Ephesians 4:11.

I know of no-one who wants to step up and claim a title like prophet or apostle! And they are not titles in the Biblical passage - they are gifts given by the Spirit for the building up of the church. We are somewhat comfortable with “evangelist” and more so with “teacher” and “pastor”. However, I believe to give hope to the church in decline, we need to rediscover what these gifts mean for us today. In this article, I will wrestle with the idea of a prophetic ministry in a church in decline.

John Calvin shaped our thinking on this matter. He addressed the list in Ephesians and split it into two arbitrary categories. First the ministries “that the Lord raised up... at the beginning of the Kingdom, and now and again revives them as the need and the times demands” (Calvin cited in Peel 200:42). Into this category, he placed apostles, prophets and evangelists. The second group and only permanent gifting in his opinion were those of pastor and teacher (Peel: 2000:242-243).

Here are some understandings and misunderstandings of what a prophetic ministry is...

**Weird guru type person:** When we use the word prophet, we often have in our minds the picture of the desert fathers or similar hermit-like figures, with the long beard

and wild eyes, clad in animal skins. If that is the reality of what a prophet is then, “it is no wonder there are so few” (Yocum: 1976:29).

**A seer:** In first century near eastern religious prophets and oracles were the equivalent of clairvoyants and the psychic hotlines of today. They gave spiritual advice to people with questions and concerns. There are many who still have this picture in their minds. They focus on prophecy as foretelling rather than the more Biblical understanding of one who tells forth God’s word; who brings the timeless word of God to bear, in a timely manner, to a specific time and place.

**The social justice activist:** James Glasse sees the pastor as prophet when they are concerned for social change and reform outside of the congregation they work in. I guess Martin Luther King Jr would be the primary example of this understanding. Glasse’s main concern is ministers who want to be prophetic without being professional. They did not spend the time encouraging and building up the church or as he puts it “paying the rent” (Glasse: 1972:35).

While this is one understanding of a prophetic ministry and reflects a kingdom concern for justice and mercy, it does not reflect the Biblical understanding of the prophet primarily speaking to the people of God and ministering within the faith community so they may together become a prophetic community; a people who reflect God’s new way of living to the world around them.

**Acts of divine utterance:** the Charismatic and Pentecostal understanding of prophecy is as divine utterance. It starts with an understanding of who God is. That God is a communicative God. “All through the Scriptures, God tells us that he desires to speak ever more intimately, evermore frequently, with those who follow him” (Yocum 1976:11). In the Old Testament, God chose to speak to specific people but in the New Testament the Spirit is poured out on all who believe. In this respect, all God’s people can hear from God and tell forth what God wants to say. Neither this understanding nor the Scriptures connect this activity with any office or position in the church. Gordon Fee maintains that as with all prophecy, there is the need for discernment. Any such utterance needs to be weighed and the community needs to wrestle with what is said to see if it is from God. The Spirit provides the

gift to do this as well. Fee cites 1 John 4:1 as evidence for the connection between discerning spirits and prophecy (Fee 1994:171). 1 Corinthians puts the context of the use of this gift in public worship and shows Paul's Presbyterian roots (or more truly our Presbyterian roots in Paul) by insisting that it be done in order.

**Inspired exegesis and interpretation:** There is the hope that each time we faithfully expound Scripture, that prophecy happens. The reformed ideal is summarized by JI Packer "...it appears that New Testament prophets preached the Gospel for conversion, edification and encouragement... by parity of reasoning therefore, any verbal enforcement of Biblical teaching as it applies to one's present hearers may probably be called prophecy today, for that in truth is what it is" (cited in Turner 1996:187). Of the reformers, Zwingli seems to have articulated this most. His daily bible studies in Zurich were called the *Prophezei* or prophecy: Scholars, clergy and students would gather in the cathedral choir for an hour of intense exegesis and interpretation. Zwingli's emphasis was on the role of the Spirit in interpreting the Scriptures to people. He established some rules for interpretation to ensure Biblical fidelity: putting texts into context and comparing them with other texts in different literary genres (Stephens 992: 38-39). There is an essential element of the scriptural understanding of prophecy here in that the word of God, through the Spirit, is understood and able to be interpreted and applied to the present situation.

***I want to suggest a different way of looking at what a prophetic ministry is...***

One of the most useful and challenging books I have read on this subject is *Pastor as Prophet* (1985). It is a collection of essays re-examining the role of the pastor. It was written in response to the move to see pastoral ministry primarily as a "helping profession" and is a clarion call to rediscover what it means to have a prophetic ministry. It includes some material from Walter Brueggemann who I believe gives us important insight for ministry today.

The book affirms some of the basic roles and tasks of pastoral ministry as being prophetic. Preaching the word and administering the sacraments are prophetic because

they constitute us as the people of God in the world (Hauerwas 1985: 43). In public prayer there is space to fulfil a prophetic ministry. In prayers of confession, we confront evil in the world. In giving absolution, we declare the Gospel truth of forgiveness and proclaim the possibility of new life and transformation. In prayers for others, we are able to speak prophetically to governments and power structures. In asking God to give guidance to these institutions we, as the church, are acknowledging their accountability to a higher power, which will ultimately have the say over what is done (Migliore 1985: 128). Likewise pastoral visiting and identifying with the hurting and oppressed is prophetic in that it shows God's concern for the pain and suffering in the world. Developing and encouraging leadership and pastoral visiting teams further is prophetic in that it shows God's call for his people to be active in God's mission.

The thing that challenged me the most is Walter Brueggemann's idea of the pastor having prophetic imagination. Having a clear and biblical understanding of what it means to be God's people or, as Andrew Stanley puts it, seeing God's preferred future (1999: 17) and then working to see that alternative reality come into existence.

Brueggemann sees the prophets' role in this as critiquing the way things are and to energise people for the way they can be. Not innovation but calling for faithfulness to God's original vision, for Israel and for the church in Jesus Kingdom of God.

I spoke this year at the Connect youth event and I asked the youth leaders present to raise their hands if they had a vision of what they were wanting to achieve in the ministry they were doing with young people. I was shocked to see only a few hands go up. There was little prophetic imagination happening. I fear it reflects the state of the Church.

In the book *Leading Congregational Change*, Jim Herrington et al present a process for a church community to work through. This starts with developing a vision community to begin the process of looking at what it is God is calling us to be (2000:41). While he is a Southern Baptist, his process fits well with us, with the need for a great diversity to be represented in that group. The process is to capture the imagination of the congregation in order

to bring changes at a practical and paradigm level (Herrington 2000:62-63). Even to get to the level of changing the metaphor we use to construct our reality. It involves a careful and well thought out process of bringing that change and seeing that vision coming to fruition.

Herrington also maintains that for this transformation to happen there needs to be an ongoing process of learning; unlearning old paradigms and being willing to explore new ones. We often think of our role as teaching elder as being confined to our preaching and Christian education, but an important element of that is resourcing leaders and elders and congregations so they can develop a prophetic imagination in order to look beyond the way things are to the way they can be. While you may not agree with all of Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Church*, it is an example of a clear vision of what church is about. When I gave it to my elders to read, I found that for many it fuelled their imagination as to what the church should and could be.

We use the term "leadership" to cover a lot of this. Often people talk about this process of change agent as bringing business models into church life. But in essence I believe it is what it means to have a prophetic ministry in a church in decline. The Biblical models for the prophetic are Moses and Jesus, who had clear God given visions for an alternative community of faith and both spoke and worked to see it come into being. They gathered a vision community around them and infected them with the possibility.

I have sat through a lot of good teaching, even sometimes prophetic preaching; I have received and hopefully given good pastoral care. But I fear that as a church we have taught and pastored our way to decline and even death. We have not encouraged or prayed for the Spirit to give us the prophets and prophetic ministries we need for the church to be built up again, to rediscover the Biblical vision for being the people of God. We need leaders who will have the courage to speak the truth about the way things are and about the way they should be, who have that Spirit given prophetic imagination. Hopefully we can pack our suitcases and head to this new kingdom.

*You're packing a suitcase for a place none of us have been*

*A place that has to be believed to be seen*

-Walk on U2 Lyrics by Bono (dedicated to Aung Suu Kyi)

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# Rural parishes mean multiple hats

*Stephanie Wells, Maniototo Presbyterian, Central Otago*

The life of a rural minister is, in my experience, a juggling act with many roles often jostling for position at any one moment. Often it seems like my calling to be a minister of the Word and Sacrament is swamped by the many other demands of such a parish. Take the last week. At the beginning of the week I was a student at the Calvin Conference in Dunedin. It was a rare chance to stretch the brain cells into areas that didn't pertain to the immediate demands of sermon or community needs. It was also a chance to enjoy some collegial interaction which, as sole Presbyterian minister in my area, I do not enjoy without some planning. I also took the opportunity to gather some information from the archives for an upcoming service to acknowledge the APW, which has just gone into recess. So three roles; student, colleague, and researcher.

I returned to Ranfurly to catch up on the office work; another role. The emails required me to put on various "hats"- presbytery moderator, trustee of the Community Radio Trust, member of the presbytery reform team, and chair of the local social services network group. Various phone calls during the day also required this changing of roles; from pastor, to almoner (to allocate money from the Combined Churches Welfare Fund), to researcher as I collected more information about the history of APW and its predecessors in the district. At the same time I was also organising the service; choosing the music, planning the structure and writing the prayers, etc, doing the roles akin to an events planner, negotiator, creative writer, and master of a three-ringed circus!

Yesterday I managed to put on my hospital chaplain hat and visit the long-stay patients at the local hospital, but I still have several more on my list; a follow-up visit to family whose brother's funeral I took recently, a parishioner who is in the middle of a family crisis, and a newcomer to church who I haven't visited yet. Yesterday I went to the local book store to photocopy the pewsheets for Sunday and spent some pastoral time with the owner. This is an occupational hazard for all rural clergy.

Add to all those roles the fact that I've got a wedding to take next week, which has meant organising the cleaning of the church, the writing of the service, and the formal preparation of documents. On the day I will also be transporting and placing the flowers, as a favour to the local florist, taking the service, and ensuring that the le-

gal details are attended to. There are certainly a few hats involved there.

The list of roles seems to multiply every time I contemplate the last few days and you may well ask where the Word and Sacrament fits into this messy world. I believe, as does this parish, that the minister is here to serve the entire Maniototo community; that my role is not confined to a church building for one hour on a Sunday morning. My job is to take the living Word out into the ordinary world, and bring a touch of the sacramental into everyday life.

This ethos is best described by the "Christ-centred, community-facing" slogan that the Very Rev Pamela Tankersley had while Moderator of Assembly.

This thinking is seen strongly in the work of the local church leaders and members as well, even if they don't recognise it sometimes. We spent one parish council meeting recently simply listing the various community activities that each was involved in and giving thanks. It was an impressive list. Two councilors are the local area school and St John's Ambulance chaplains. Many volunteer at the local hospital and rest home; providing baking and music, reading, doing administration, fundraising, driving residents to the shops or running their errands themselves. One leads the church-sponsored pre-school music group, while others provide the morning tea. We have people in leadership roles in Lions and Pakeke Lions, Playcentre and Plunket, Red Cross and Alcoholics Anonymous, the Masonic Lodge and Evergreens Women's Group, golf and bowling clubs, among many others. We have people volunteering in information centres and museums, and working behind the scenes at most local events.

Without the community involvement of church members many of these activities would fold. But such involvement comes with a cost. As our church membership ages, the commitment the church has given over so many years is being placed under strain. Some of our 80- and 90-year-olds are finding they have to cut back a bit and are pulling out of making morning tea for the pre-schoolers and their mums, or digging manure from under woolsheds for Pakekes. The mainly elderly APW members recently decided that their energy would be better spent helping the many community groups they

belonged to so they went into recess.

The many hats church members, and minister, wear in such a community certainly take Christ out into the world but can produce something like “role fatigue”. As the various demands of people’s lives pile up, something has to give and one of them is the ability to take on the church roles of previous generations. I have supervision and spiritual direction to try to ensure I don’t get over-loaded. The members of the church do not have this luxury, therefore one of my other roles is to provide oversight on workloads within the church. This often means accepting less than ideal coverage of tasks, or even not doing some things at all because to ask for more would over-burden those who least can handle it.

To be the people of God in the Maniototo is an amazing privilege as we do not, probably could not, live

our lives as a separate people. This means we have the chance to really be salt in this community. However, as I watch many of this congregation becoming older and more tired, I wonder what will happen when their influence is no longer here. Will the community be the same? Who knows - but what I do know is that somehow there will be a God presence. I don’t know what form it will take, but right from the time this area was settled, the Christians here sought to worship and live their lives according to God’s ways. I can’t see that changing, and that will include trying to make this community a better place through their involvement in its affairs.

*\*Stephanie Wells has been the minister of the Maniototo Parish in Central Otago for nearly three years. Before that she was, among an eclectic range of roles, a farmer’s wife and teacher. She is still the mother of two daughters who have long left home.*

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# How not to run a meeting

Brett Johnstone, Somervell Memorial, Auckland

These meeting sins and others, I have committed at various stages of my ministry.

## The Seven Deadly sins (there are ten)

**1. Have the meeting with no particular purpose.** This is one of the worst: it’s the third Wednesday of the month and its Christian Education/Outreach/Social/Worship committee. Everyone has arrived but no one knows why we are meeting, in fact there doesn’t appear to be any purpose in meeting, so everyone turns and looks at you. The mistake to make at this point is to think up a reason for meeting and end up committing yourself to another study series on post-modernism or street evangelism or a toga party. Best advice: Head for the nearest pub for some team building.

**2. Don’t have a written agenda.** If you don’t have a written agenda at the start of the meeting, three things are likely to happen. You will spend half the meeting de-

terminating what the agenda is, and once you have an agenda, the focuses will be on the most trivial item (can the PowerPoint background colours be in the colours of the liturgical year) or the most powerful/dominant person at the meeting will set the agenda themselves and if you are not them you will end up committing to: see examples in 1)

**3. Don’t know your role in the meeting.** What are you – moderator, chair, facilitator, participant, enthusiastic participant, or the clown. Choose one, you can’t be them all. Other people in the meeting may want one of those roles. If they are better at that role than you, then let them. Ministers find this one hard, as often they want to be them all at the same time.

**4. Don’t shut up.** Best way to make a good meeting turn to custard is for the moderator to do all the talking, to each point on the agenda, to each piece of correspondence, to each point made by someone else, to each item in the previous minutes, to each point made in the devotions, to the quality of the cup of tea, to the appalling

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Best advice: Head for the nearest pub for some team building

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chairs and then to cap it all off, praying far too long.

**5. Don't keep records.** Records come into their own during visits from presbytery commissions or special visitations wanting to know what did happen to that \$300,000, or why you went ahead and burned the pews on Guy Fawkes night. Incidentally the best way to avoid sin 6 is to keep the records. I've always found it handy to record some simple things in the minutes, like who was there, and what decisions were made and why. An added bonus is who takes the actions needed to get the decisions done, but don't hold your breath about that one. (or do hold your breath or you end up committing your self to: see note 1)

**6. Don't stay awake.** The moderator at least should stay awake, but the way to avoid this sin is to sleep at other times of the day - during sermon preparation, catching up on theological reading, during devotions, or during pastoral visiting.

**7. Don't read the background papers.** By not reading the background papers it is much harder to appear cool, suave, and the master/mistress of the universe, and tends to mitigate against the impression you were trying to create by bringing your new laptop (equivalent to pow-

er dressing). In fact you appear as someone who hasn't read the background papers. On the other hand being the only person in the room who has read the background papers.....

**8. Keep digging when you should stop.** See no 4 with bells.

**9. Engage in petty histrionics.** One high school teacher I knew stormed into the rector's study every Friday and resigned; to his surprise the rector took him seriously one day. Always write your letter of resignation after the meeting so your spouse can rip it up the next day.

**10. Don't follow the Book of Order.** If you really want to make your mark and tie up the Assembly Judicial Commission, don't follow the BOO if you are selling a building, building a building, sacking the Session Clerk, introducing drums into worship, or dissolving a congregation. The Book of Order is not that hard to follow, it just requires reading. (See note 7)

If you don't do any of these things, the meeting should run smoothly (that is, if you remember to tell the others you are meeting.)

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# Our elders need more attention

*Ray Coster, St Andrew's Mt Maunganui, Bay of Plenty*

It never ceases to amaze me that the most distinctive thing about Presbyterian governance is also the thing that we most neglect, or at least fail to invest significantly in – our elders. They may only be a small part of the church numerically, but their influence, power and authority is huge and important.

Elders are to the church what the keel is to a boat; what the rudder is to a ship. They are the story holders. They set the ethos of a church. They are, in my mind, a hidden gift in the church that needs to be unwrapped. They are to be honoured for the role they play and the office they serve in.

In my 30-plus years of parish ministry, I have seen ordained ministers come and go from a congregation. Most make changes during their time of service. Mostly their impact is good. But I have also noted that when they go,

the default button or reset button is usually pushed and the parish reverts to what it has always been. Why? Because the elders generally determine the ethos of the local church, not the minister. The exception to this rule is where ministers stay a long time and outlive the majority of the original elders and train new ones!

We as a Church must invest more in training and resourcing our elders as we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most elders have grown in, and been trained in, a settler model of church. Much of their decision making is therefore inward, rather than looking outward to the community. The basic ethos of our policy setters is church-centric. A quick look at our church statistics shows the frightening outcome of this model. Unless we help our policy setters through sound training and investment, we will be in trouble. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need policy makers who will be far more community centric in their decision-

making, and entrepreneurial in their outlook. We need people of faith who will take risks. We need people who are prepared to sacrifice what has always been for the greater cause of the future.

We invest heavily in training and resourcing ordained ministers – and rightly so, for they are full-time servants and live and breathe the Church every day of their life. Our elders are all volunteers, carrying many other responsibilities in life and the community. If they are like the rudder of the ship, then we need to encourage them in their policy making at local parish level to make some fine adjustments.

We need to consider our models of eldership and governance in a pioneer church setting. I believe our new Book of Order has made a great start in helping us to think more missionally at governance level. I warmly embrace it and the greater freedom it gives the local church. But we still have a very church-centric mindset. Part of the reason for this, I believe, is the way we choose elders to lead and govern the church.

As I look at the five-fold ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11 - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers - I see that the Presbyterian Church has been predominately lead and governed by pastors and teachers. This is true of both elders and ordained ministers. When we look for people to govern, we tend towards the pastor/teacher end of the spectrum. The core value *tendencies*<sup>1</sup> of the pastor teacher gift are:

- Right/wrong orientated;
- Church-centric;
- Either/or orientated;
- Maintainers and developers;
- Priests;
- Safety and protection.

As our values and beliefs determine our behaviour, the policies the teacher/pastor sets and decisions the teacher/pastor makes will look for unity over growth; safety and security over faith and risk. The teacher/pastor will often try to maintain the status quo rather than set sail on a new adventure unsure of where it will take us.

The core value *tendencies* at the other end of the spectrum of the Ephesians 4 Ministry Gifts (apostle and prophet) are:

<sup>1</sup> These are core value tendencies only – we cannot generalise and say they are true in all cases. They are mostly true. Tendencies refer in this case to values – what we do and how we behave – not beliefs – what we mentally agree with.

- Life/death orientated
- Community-centric
- Both/and orientated
- Builders and entrepreneurs
- Opportunity seekers
- Risk takers

In other words, the most right-or-wrong orientated, church-centric, either/or orientated, and maintainer/developer orientated office has determined much of the Church culture and ethos.

Over the years, I have learnt to really value and honour our elders. Time and again I have seen how God has used them in great ways. Let's help them even more. It's time for us to invest in them and resource them as we move the Church into this new century. Our elders are not only holders of the story; they hold the purse strings too. Let's encourage our elders to exercise faith and take risks for the King and the Kingdom. Let's look for people with the apostle, prophet or evangelist gift to join our policy setting and governance body.

### Free volunteering conference for churchgoers

If you would like to send a (Presbyterian or Uniting) churchgoer to an expenses-paid volunteering conference in Wellington? If so, please enter the draw to attend '**Volunteering Unleashed**' - the biennial New Zealand National Volunteering Conference at the Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington, 28-29 October 2009. We are making nine free places available and we will pay an allowance towards travel and accommodation.

Participants at the conference will explore new ways to inspire people to volunteer, and how to develop successful volunteer programmes at their church.

To enter, email the name of your church and churchgoer to:

**angela@presbyterian.org.nz by 30 September**

# Ministers available for call

The Assembly Office maintains a list of ministers who have signaled their availability for a call. This list is circulated to Interim Moderators and Convenors of Ministry Settlement Boards who, in turn, request the Minister's Information Form for those ministers they think are suitable for their vacancy.

If you would like to be included on this list you need to:

1. Check your Minister's Information Form and written references are current
2. Check your contact details are correct in the Yearbook
3. Prepare a brief paragraph on you, focusing on the ministry context(s) you seek and any particular ministry experiences or skills that you may have
4. Send your updated Minister's Information Form, corrections for your contact details and ministry bio to the Personnel Administrator.

Please send your information through by the 25th of the month to ensure it is included in the next Ministers Available for Call list to go out, to:

Clare Morrison, Personnel Administrator  
PO Box 9049, Wellington 6141  
Email: [clare@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:clare@presbyterian.org.nz)  
Telephone: (04) 801-6000

## Commonly Asked Questions

### What happens to my information?

Minister's Information Forms and references are filed on the minister's personal file. A copy is emailed to an Interim Moderator or Convenor of a Ministry Settlement Board on request. Once the Interim Moderator or Ministry Settlement Board has considered the minister they destroy or delete any copies of the minister's information that they still have.

### Who has access to my Minister's Information Form?

You do. Also, Assembly Office staff, Interim Moderators and Ministry Settlement Boards.

### Why can't I find the Ministers Available for Call list on the Presbyterian Church's website?

Information on ministers available for call is not made available publicly. This is to ensure ministers are only contacted by people who have the authority to initiate meaningful discussion about a potential call.

### What if I am available but I don't want to put myself on the list?

You need to speak to Clare Morrison, Personnel Administrator, about ways the Personnel Team can facilitate this.

# What we need to understand about elders

Bruce Fraser, Mission Advisor, Synod of Otago and Southland

The 2002 General Assembly said:

*(02.165) That Assembly affirms the centrality and significance of the role of eldership and reminds Presbyteries to take up their responsibilities for the ongoing training and support of elders.*

We have a leadership source in our church that, from my observation, it seems is not really understood nor appreciated for its possibilities. However, having made that generalisation, there are always the exceptions to the rule.

Elders are not being trained sufficiently in the understanding of their function in the Body of Christ. The Synod of Otago and Southland, in conjunction with the National Mission Office, commissioned the Rev Dr Lynn Baab to conduct a survey on how elders see their role and their needs. (Check it out at [www.synod.org.nz/resources/downloads](http://www.synod.org.nz/resources/downloads)) My own experience, as an elder training elders, has verified her findings.

In November 2007 I was sent, along with people from North America and Scotland, to a “Colloquium of Writers and Trainers of Training Resources for Ruling Elders” held at the Elders’ Institute at the Vancouver School of Theology, Canada. The matter of training is something that is occupying the minds of many within the Western Reformed tradition, if this event was anything to go by. The Elders’ Institute does good work in North America, but by and large it would appear that little is done in other places. One of the things we did was look at a draft elders’ handbook that John Roxborough and Mary Jane Konings were/are working on. (Check it out at <http://www.roxborough.com/elders/>) A recent conversation with a leader from the URC in the United Kingdom led to his observation that, in their context, eldership is highly underrated and he now sees the need to address that.

Elders are the one function that continues through both Old and New Testament as a means of leadership for God’s people. Priestly orders do not continue from one Testament to the next. Jesus, as the Great High Priest, now fulfils that role. Instead, the New Testament has every believer as being a priest. That is, one who mediates between God and people who, as yet, do not have a relationship with God through Christ. This involves pleading for them and sharing God’s grace with them.

These priests also pray and support fellow priests. This is the calling of all followers of Jesus.

Within the Body of Christ God, has called some to be “overseers” or elders. Many elders that I meet have little understanding of their call or their function, nor of the variety of expressions used in the New Testament to describe this function. Some see themselves as lackeys to the minister, some as a goad to the minister, others holding as some sort of exalted office in the church, and most as seeing themselves as apart from the minister. None of these are right. Mind you, it is not only elders who have a misunderstanding of their function in the church; many ministers and many congregations also lack understanding.

Presbyterianism is based on a model that, among other things, seeks to discover the mind of God through the collective wisdom of his people anchored in his Word as revealed in Scripture. We do this through a series of courts made up of those whom God has called, and the Church recognises, as having gifts in leadership. Ministers and elders together make up these courts. After all, that’s the meaning of our denomination’s name: Presbyterian = elders.

In earlier days, we had more helpful terminology to describe these functions: the terms “teaching” and “ruling” elders. This clearly stated that all were elders but within that eldership, there were different functions. But now, using the terms “minister” and “elder”, we have in effect separated the two into two distinct functions. (Notice the use of term “function” as opposed to “office” – office has that thought of some status involved, whereas function suggests service; and while we’re at it, let’s change that “ruling” to “overseeing”, as the former suggests power and status while the latter has a more “service” feel to it and is in line with Paul’s instructions to Timothy - 1Tim.3:1). A rediscovery of the collegiality of eldership, both teaching and overseeing, is the first step towards allowing what we have to function as it should. Where this happens, life flows and there are examples of this within our denomination.

Both teaching and overseeing elders have been ordained to their task, both for the duration of their life, and both have signed the same formula. Teaching elders have given additional undertakings because of their particular

function as teachers of God's people. In the end, that is the major difference between the two aspects of eldership. It is institutionalism that professionalises ministry, which in turn highlights the perception that one is more important than the other.

Just look at the ordination services for starters. Teaching elders (active or not): laying hands on teaching elders but excluding overseeing elders – a presbytery event. Overseeing elders: laying on hands by other overseeing elders as long as one teaching elder is involved – a congregational event. Somehow it seems that the laying of hands by a teaching elder gives greater validity! Or again, if an overseeing elder moves to become a teaching elder, then the institution says they have to be ordained again. Where in New Testament teaching and practise do we see these distinctions? What was wrong with the original ordination if both are to eldership? What's to stop any practising elder being able to administer the sacraments? Perhaps the real question is related to our understanding, or lack of, of ordination and/or ministry.

A large part of the problem is that elders, both teaching and overseeing, do not understand the nature of eldership as outlined in the New Testament. There are clear characteristics in the pastoral epistles that provide principals by which we can measure ourselves. I find that as elders begin to come to some understanding of these characteristics, plus the collegial nature of their calling and the duties that the New Testament also outlines, then there is a greater understanding and sense of ownership of the call. There is a growing realisation that overseeing and teaching elders are a real team. Also, as elders come to understand something of Paul's model of ministry in Ephesians 4, there is amazement when it is discovered that all five of these ministry callings are more often than not manifested among the elders gathered, and reflected in the wider congregation, even though in most cases there has been no understanding of these ministries and how they function in the body of Christ or interact with each other. This lack of understanding therefore often leads to misunderstanding and strife through ignorance.

In rural parishes, elders provide the potential for life to continue in places that will never again be able to support, nor even need, a resident teaching elder in the traditional sense. In reality, elders should be the core of any Local Ministry Team. The function of teaching elder can well become a resource person who works with a number of congregations to equip and resource the leaders of those congregations. After all, the Assembly of 2002 also said:

*(02.055) That Assembly affirm the ministry of the laos (the whole people of God) as the core of ministry within the Presbyterian Church, and the equipping of the laos for ministry as a priority for the Church*

That same Assembly also said:

*(02.056) That Assembly affirm the importance of a well trained ordained Ministry of Word and Sacrament to resource, enable and empower the ministry of the laos.*

The core of this decision is that the teaching elder is to resource, enable and empower the ministry of the whole people of God, not to be the professional ministry person in any one place. The teaching elders need to be freed by the institution to do this.

We have a long way to go in many parts of the church to begin to fulfil these resolutions of the Assembly, let alone the teaching of Scripture. The training and freeing of elders (both teaching and overseeing) to their function, based on a clear understanding of their Scriptural call, is vital in this. Also the training of our congregations in their understanding of eldership is vitally important.

It is the eldership with which we have been gifted by God that will increasingly provide the means whereby communities of faith within our Presbyterian system are able to continue to be a witness to God's grace. Elders are often ones who have lived and committed to their congregations for many years. The difficulties that some ministers and parishes experience with some elders is most often the result of a lack of understanding of the function of the elder by all parties. Included in this is the perception of some teaching elders that they are the CEO or board chair in their (possessive) parish. I have come across elders who were surprised to find that they could actually work through things and then make decisions – they had never known they were allowed!

It is a joy to see the excitement and growing sense of mission that has resulted in training sessions where both teaching and overseeing elders have come to a better understanding of the Biblical principles of eldership. In some cases, initial training on the theology of eldership has led to other training sessions on Paul's Ephesians ministry leadership model and modernism/post modern worldviews, including Apostolic/Christendom/emerging models of church, thus working towards the call of the 2002 Assembly for the ongoing training of these God-given people to the church.

# Evangelism in contemporary society

David Balchin, St James' Waihi, Waikato

Before talking about being an evangelist in a small local community, I really need to say a word about being an evangelist full-stop. I believe that to be a Christian is to be an evangelist. Jesus' words to his disciples to "make disciples by going, teaching and baptizing" are surely for every one of his followers. Everyone who has received the words that have given them new life into a living hope is also the recipient of his commands. Paul tells us that "ours is the ministry of reconciliation", and enjoins us to be ambassadors for Christ, by reconciling people to God through the power of the Gospel.

I believe also that "the Gospel" means a message that has a certain content, and is not infinitely elastic in meaning. The words may vary, but the message needs to conform in essence to Paul's words in Romans 3:22-24: "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ." It is this that is the essence of the Gospel, and this is the message that is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe (Rom 1:16). It is surely true that the gospel has a certain content that must not be distorted, because Paul warns that "if anyone preaches a gospel other than the one he is preaching, may they be eternally condemned".

I believe also that evangelism, however it happens, must contain within it, for it truly to be evangelism, the utterance of the words of the gospel. Julian Batchelor<sup>1</sup> helpfully distinguishes between the "works of the Gospel", the "effects of the Gospel" and the "words of the Gospel". The works of the Gospel could be befriending, helping, meeting felt needs, praying, being signs on earth of the peace and justice that obtain in heaven, and other things. The effects are the fruits we know so well: regeneration, transformed lives, transformed communities, hope, joy, grace, peace. The works of the Gospel are invaluable and wholly necessary, but we will never enjoy the effects of the Gospel if the words are absent.

If we wax agricultural for a moment, we could say that

the church's mission involves ploughing, sowing and watering (and, please, reaping). Most churches are brilliant at ploughing: setting up ministries that bring about that vital interface between the church and the community. Mainly Music is a big example of "ploughing" these days. "Watering" is the nurturing of the new and established life. Most churches are brilliant at watering too: worship, prayer meetings, bible studies, home-groups. Some of these, such as home-groups and youth groups, double as ploughing and watering, depending on the mixture of people going along. But how many churches are good at sowing? And horticulturally, it is not possible for a plant to grow if a seed hasn't been sown first. And the seed is the message of the kingdom (Mat 13:19; 1 Cor 1:18) – the words of the Gospel.

The challenge, then, is not how to plough and water. We already know how to do that. It's not even terribly difficult. The challenge, once we've got our ploughing and watering going, is how to sow. It might just be me, but over and over again I have seen superb instances of ploughing happening in any number of different churches, but not one of these ministries had any sowing going on.

Some years ago I suggested in conversation with a Mainly Music worker, that a young mum could come along to Mainly Music for three years, and then leave when her toddler was too old to attend, without once having heard the words of the Gospel. "Maybe not", came the reply, "but at least she will know that the church is a friendly place now". That's very lovely and true, but the action in the book of Acts – the earth-shattering dynamics that were happening in the heavenlies, as the world was being

turned upside down, people being saved out of the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God, and the believers being beaten and nearly lynched

– weren't happening because the apostles were going around being friendly to people. They were happening because the words of the Gospel were being proclaimed.

I needed to say all this before I turned to the topic I was asked to write on, "being an evangelist in a small local community". Because of the above – that the essential in-

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**The challenge, once we've got our ploughing and watering going, is how to sow**

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gradient of true evangelism must be – however we bring it about – sowing the words of the Gospel – I find that in one big sense, being an evangelist in a small local community is no different from being an evangelist in a large, anonymous metropolis. It is the existential struggle of how to be true to the Lord’s command to sow, when there is so much within me, and without me, that is making it difficult. It is even a struggle to write this, as I sense the possibility of incurring an antipathy in some readers at my very thesis. But I am encouraged to continue for a moment because of this magazine’s name: Candour. I’m being candid here, and trust that at least some people are able to identify with what I’m saying.

On the one hand I have all the irresistible force of the Lord’s command to go and teach, coupled with the dreadful burden of seeing everyone I meet as a soul for whom Christ died, a “sheep without a shepherd”, and one who will either have his/her name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, or not. These are terrible immensities. And on the other hand I have the giant of my fearful nature, my shyness, and dread of rejection, and even my plain old laziness. Thus, for years now I have felt myself to be between a rock and a hard place, caught up between an irresistible force and an immovable object. But I live in hope, and trust that God is moving, both in my life and in the world, as he brings to birth something greater than I could ask or even imagine, both within me, and in the world. So I box on.

Now that I’ve said all that, it only remains to relate how we in Waihi and Waihi Beach seek to evangelise, bearing in mind my thesis that we don’t view evangelism as having happened if the seed of the words of the Gospel have not been sown in a person’s life. So we have, as so many churches do, our ministries which bring unchurched people together with the church. And withal there is the incessant exhortation from me as pastor (coupled with the feeble yet on-going attempt to lead by example) that all our believers who rub shoulders with those who have not, as yet, given their lives to Christ, should be “praying that God will open a door for our message”.

Waihi is the sort of place where you can go to the mechanics and see the librarian there, and then go to the library and bump into the mechanic borrowing a book. And on Saturday morning you will be standing with both on the sideline cheering for our kids’ rugby team. So our

evangelism is, perforce, relational. We trust that as we get to know a growing number of people, with ever increasing warmth and intimacy, the Lord will use these very relationships to effect the salvation of those we are getting to know and love – and pray for. But again, we endeavour always to maintain an intentionality with regards to sowing the seeds of the Gospel into our friends’ lives. Otherwise it is all too easy to lapse into default mode, and never witness at all.

The Lord has enabled us to bring on board a full-time children and families worker, whose basic brief is to be talking to as many people as possible as much as he can. He’s a black-belt judo instructor, and on Thursday evenings we have around 18 teenage boys and girls come along to do 25 minutes judo training with Pete (our full-time guy), 25 minutes

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### It is all too easy to lapse into default mode, and never witness at all

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with Cade (a wonderful adult helper) learning boxing, and 25 minutes with me (for my sins) bench-pressing. Then it’s a 20-minute bible

study, a 10-minute cup of milo and home. Apart from my two boys, none of the other lads and lassies come to church. But they’re hearing the Bible read and discussed, and have heard the Gospel, and the Lord is blessing the work. Peter and I have shared our testimonies, and the Gospel, with all the parents who drop their kids off. And not only has it not scared them off, we have found that our intimacy with them is deepening, and half a dozen have started coming to church.

I should mention that on Wednesday afternoons, as soon as school’s out, around 30 children at least charge down to the church hall from the adjacent Central School, and have games and a Bible story, led by Peter and his team. Two weeks ago, a five year old went home and said to his mum, “mum, I want to learn more about Jesus. Can you take me to church?” So we had the delight of a mum and her child at church that Sunday.

Sow sow sow. Make sowing the end to which everything else is the means. Pray for the opportunities to be sowing. He will send them. And the Lord will bring the increase.

1Evangelism: Strategies from Heaven in the War for Souls, Julian Batchelor, Proclaim the Gospel International Publishing, Auckland, 2006.

# To those growing older and soon to part

*Jim Battersby, Minister Emeritus, Auckland*

Dear Jack and Grace,

In a recent phone conversation, Jack mentioned that as you are now both in your 80s, you have been talking about the inevitable parting that is ahead of you. That's good. It is realistic. Sooner or later one of you is going to be left. I recall only one occasion when husband and wife died together, and that was in a car crash. Although my parents died within a few weeks of one another in their late 80s, both my grandfathers outlived their spouses by some years. In my years of ministry, I have met many "relicts" as they used to be called.

I myself have been "solo" since I was 72 – more than 11 years. I know something of the pain of parting, and the change of circumstances that follows. Of course, nothing can really prepare us for this eventuality, but I think something could be done to temper those agonising bewildering months and years that follow. Finding out the hard way of the many things I was faced with when my Barbie died, I have tried to leave information that may be of ready assistance to my children when my time comes to die.

I think the most important first step is for couples to talk about the inevitable parting, each explaining to the other what their wishes are about such things as content of funeral services, burial or cremation, and where ashes should go. Not all couples are equally familiar with financial arrangements about the home, where important documents are kept, what bills have to be paid and when, where family records are kept, where the record of Christmas cards exchanged is (useful for notifying friends of the other's death), the addresses of close friends of one that may not have been close friends of the other. (A good idea might be to keep a notebook "Where to find" you could each enter such things in.) Often the husband or wife has handled such things by him/herself. It is often the husband who has attended to the outside chores. He knows from years of practice where the lawn mower is, how to start it, whether it uses petrol or petrol and oil; where seeds are kept and when they should be planted, what are all the gadgets he keeps in his workshop, and so on.

On the other hand, it is often that the wife has done the shopping, cooked the meals, done the housework, leaving the husband ignorant of such arts. If you haven't worried about meals much, you need to know your way around a

supermarket, what cuts of meat there are etc, how to plan meals, how to cook them - at what temperature and for how long. These are mysteries that many men have not been let in to, or have not seen fit to be concerned about.

Then the awful day arrives without warning!

In latter years, my wife used to ask me to take a turn with the cooking. My usual reply was that in our generation the women looked after the indoors while the men took charge of the outdoor tasks around the home. I don't quite know what prompted my change of heart, but while we were overseas my wife took ill. Some time after, I promised her that when we got home, that for a start, once a week, on Wednesdays, I would plan the evening meal, buy the necessary ingredients, prepare and cook the meal, and wash up afterwards. We got home on a Thursday, and she died very suddenly the following Tuesday morning. So my promise was never fulfilled.

But I had all the shopping and cooking, washing, cleaning and so on to do on my own, thereafter. One unexpected help to me was memories of my mother or wife's house-keeping that I had unconsciously recorded. Another help I received at first was "my Little Red Cookbook" - a recipe book I started when my wife was ill about 10 years before she died. This was a compilation of basic meals and at what temperature to cook them, and how much is a "little of this, and a pinch of that", and "how long until it looks cooked" etc. I nearly drove my wife (and also my sister) mad getting precise details. Soon after Barbie died I went to a night school nearby to try to enrol in a basic cooking class. Only cooking classes for Italian and Asian foods were available! So I learnt a lot by trial and error, augmented by advice from my sister and some friendly ladies.

Another helpful thing would be to make a list of whom you want to have your very personal possessions (like jewellery or tools etc), and if you have any requests about the disposal of other personal possessions.

One of the best things I ever did (and it was in our 70s), was to raise a matter that had for years been between us, undiscussed. With trepidation I slowly raised this (after a couple of stumbling attempts, I admit), and we talked it out. Each was able to explain to the other his/her situation way back, the circumstances, attitudes, understandings

## Reflection

and misunderstandings at the time and over the years. It was a tremendous relief to both of us. One of the unexpected spin-offs was that we fell in love again, and I had the good fortune in our last few months of taking her into my arms daily and more, and saying, “I love you so much my darling”. Barbie echoed this in her own words. We knew that when the time came for parting, there would be no regretted “unfinished business” of this nature. This proved most significant to me.

I learnt from this, how important it is for couples at any age, but especially if they are growing older, to make the opportunity to discuss things previously left unsaid, but which are at the back of their minds. Such things may be in the nature of confessions – or perhaps even more importantly and easily overlooked, expressions of how wonderful the other is, how much is owed to that person, the depth of one’s love, and similar endearments. Even to say often, “I love you” is important at the time, and vital in memory. All this kind of thing, if left undiscussed, features later as unfinished business, and “the book once closed cannot be re-opened”.

It is also important to talk about, or even record for the other, what you remember about your ancestors, and maybe your own back ground. This can be done via a tape recording. While your spouse may value this, your children and grandchildren will probably value it even more.

It could be that with the years, your spouse has developed infirmities of some kind – e.g. loss of sight, hearing, mobility, and has become quite dependant on you. Have you ever thought of sharing ideas of how you spouse could best cope without you – what alternative aids could be available, what kind of care might be best, how you could avoid if possible, putting a burden on your children, especially on the only one who is nearby? One often has better insight into the other and his/her “quirks of character” than the person him/herself, and may be able to suggest inner strengths not yet tapped, and better attitudes of coping with difficulty.

One of the things I have missed most – and I don’t know the answer for it, is the opportunity to talk over with Barbie everyday things, and to recall together special memories, little intimacies, and personal jokes. There is simply no other who can fulfil this role, and it is a pain that just has to be borne.

On the other hand, I recognise in my “going solo” for nearly 12 years, there have been some gains. I have discovered new insights into myself, gained new interests,

new activities, new skills, new friends. I am still discovering what I don’t really want to; the strength of independence, standing on my own feet without the lifelong love and support of the other very special person. Sometimes, but not so often now, I cry in my loneliness, which no other can assuage – I suppose it is self pity, but I excuse myself by saying it is natural and understandable. If it is a weakness, I accept it, and don’t beat myself.

Well dear friends, I hope you read and digest this, and make some use of it in pondering any ideas from it that sound useful to you. It is only one person’s point of view. But he wishes he had had as long a partnership as you two have.

God Bless, and loving regards,

Jim

## We want your study leave reports!

Rather than spending months on a document that will sit on a shelf, why not make it available at [www.presbyterian.org.nz](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz)?

We’re trying to collect as many study leave reports as possible; check out what’s there so far at [www.presbyterian.org.nz/for-ministers/study-leave-reports](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/for-ministers/study-leave-reports)

Please email your report to [amanda@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:amanda@presbyterian.org.nz)

*Kowhai and orchid: Life on two islands – the life of a Kiwi Presbyterian minister in New Zealand and Indonesia* Robert Paterson, Dunedin, 2009

Reviewed by Helen Thew

Robert Paterson's memoir begins in provincial New Zealand in the 1930s where his father, the Rev Theodore Paterson, served the parishes of Kirwee in Canterbury and St Pauls, Oamaru. He was part of a church in which overseas mission featured large. India, China and the then New Hebrides and the New Zealand missionaries who worked there were familiar to adults and children alike in the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. Sunday School and Busy Bees were active and well-informed mission supporters.

He was also part of a church that had a high profile in the community. Much of the cultural, social and sporting life centred around the church, and numerically it was strong. It also suffered. From St Paul's Oamaru, while his father was minister there, about 160 men and women served overseas during World War 2. Fifteen lost their lives - a reminder that such bereavements and uncertainty took their toll of a community and particularly of those who exercised crisis ministry.

Secondary education at St Andrews College was followed by linguistics and classics at Canterbury University and training for the Ministry at the Theological Hall, Knox College. Awarded the Begg Travelling Scholarship in 1958 Robert went to Princeton Theological Seminary where he furthered his interest in Old Testament translation and exegesis. Critical of the somewhat restricted scope of the lectures offered then, he notes, "it is my conviction that a Biblical interpreter must attempt to find the significance of a book or passage within it for the author and the first readers, and then to meditate on its meaning for the present day." This conviction would inform his later prolific production of Old Testament commentaries for use in Indonesia.

Parish ministry at Pukerau was followed from 1965 to 1971 by a lecturership in Old Testament at the Theological Hall. Robert's strong belief is that the aim of Biblical Studies is to understand the meaning and significance of the Biblical texts: texts must be read in the original languages and alongside these must be information about their historical, religious, political and cultural background.

A period of "waiting" culminated in 1974 with an invitation to succeed the Rev Jim Veitch who had been lec-

turing in Biblical Studies at the Theological College of Eastern Indonesia (STT INTIM). This was to be Robert's major and most fulfilling ministry.

STT INTIM was founded in 1948 in Ujung Pandang (Makassar) with the purpose of providing indigenous leadership for the Indonesian churches. New Zealand's involvement began in the 1950s when the Rev Ian Cairns became the first ministerial appointee, along with Dr David Gray, a medical missionary. Unlike the missionaries in India, China or Vanuatu those in Indonesia were not permitted to set up their own institutions and worked within existing churches. Robert was the only New Zealander at STT INTIM while Simon Rae was serving the Karo Batak Church in Northern Sumatra and Ian Cairns was teaching in Yogyakarta, Java.

The daily work of teaching and writing began against the background of *Pancasila*, the basis of the Indonesian state. Five moral principles support a policy of religious toleration: belief in the one supreme God, a just and civilised humanity, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by the wisdom arising from deliberations among representatives, and social justice for the whole of the people. At the time, Indonesia was relatively stable. Although the Muslim population was greater than any other country in the world, Christians held office in government and the armed forces, and were responsible for many educational initiatives.

The book contains many details of journeys, of people and places, clearly the fruit of meticulous diary-keeping. Sadly, there is no map. One such journey was to Gepsultra, the Protestant Church of South East Sulawesi, adopted by Christian Youth Movement Presbyterian. (Money was raised for a launch to assist a transmigration project.) Gepsultra had suffered persecution in the Daryl Islam rebellion of the 1950s and 1960s, many congregations being forced to become Muslim. The Church survived and in writing for the *Outlook* in 1976 Robert quoted the Indonesian proverb, "The broken grows, the lost is replaced" as epitomising its history.

I tend to be wary of self-published books – and certainly this one would have benefited from some skilful editing and the addition of an index. What does stand out is Robert Paterson's dedication to the task of producing Biblical commentaries for Indonesia and the warm relationships he has had with his students, especially those who lived in his house. The text is accompanied by Robert's own photographs and his observations serve as a humbling reminder of the way the Church works in a predominantly Muslim country.

# Looking for a challenge? God could be calling you To St David's, Otorohanga

Otorohanga is a friendly, peaceful farming community, situated 25 minutes from Te Awamutu and 50 minutes south of Hamilton.

St David's consists of a large area under pastoral care, a small "core" group who attend worship regularly, a "fringe" group who attend for Communion or when they have a specific task, and a group who support the Parish but rarely, if ever attend worship. Initiatives are currently in place relating to primary age children, and some steps have been made towards getting a youth group started.

We need, as a Parish, to see the core group encouraged, the fringe and support groups involved and incorporated, and the work among the younger age groups extended. The minister St David's seeks will be one who leads us in this work.

For further information please contact

Rev David Gordon - convener of the Ministry Settlement Board.

phone (07) 8276523

email [gordond@xnet.co.nz](mailto:gordond@xnet.co.nz)

## MINISTERS' STUDY GRANTS

**Are you a Presbyterian minister planning on further study?**

**Do you know that you can apply for a study grant from the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership?**



Applications are invited in March and September each year for post-ordination study grants for ministers in good standing of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. These grants are made possible through the generosity of the Mary Ann Morrison and M S Robertson estates and are administered by the Senatus of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

### **What are the rules?**

1. The proposed course of study will aid the applicant's professional development.
2. There is a potential benefit to the Church and the probability of significant service to the Church.
3. Parish and presbytery approval has been obtained for the study, where appropriate.

In normal circumstances grants do not exceed one-third of the study costs involved and may be held in conjunction with other scholarships and grants other than the Postgraduate Scholarship. Grants are not made retrospectively and relate only to costs to be incurred by the scholarship holder themselves.

### **How do I apply?**

Applicants are asked to address the criteria and set out their expected costs including conference fees, tuition fees, basic accommodation and travel, and to supply any other information that may be relevant.

Enquiries to: The Registrar, Knox Centre for Ministry & Leadership, Knox College, Arden Street Opoho, Dunedin.  
[registrar@knoxcentre.ac.nz](mailto:registrar@knoxcentre.ac.nz) **Closing date for the next round of applications: 30th September 2009**

Dear Colleagues

There is a man looking for his car keys under a lamppost. Asked if that is where he dropped them, he answers, “no, I don’t think so, but this is where the lighting is best.” What do we take to be knowledge and reason? And when does it become dogma: there are no keys unless they are under the lamppost? Or the keys found beyond the lighting of the lamppost are not true keys? We can put a lot of time and resource into a reasonable and even worthy sounding activity, we might even argue passionately over the value and rightness of the action. But there still can be a fundamental flaw in what we are doing and thinking.

One of the moments of illumination in my ministry came when sharing morning tea at a preschool in one of my previous congregations. We had a kind of prayer and singing time with the three-year-olds. We gave thanks for hedgehogs, rabbits, little sisters, sick grandmothers and all the rest. And then said grace before sharing the food. It is an obvious thing to say, but for some reason it came to me as a bit of a jolt: I realised that this time together was as real, as legitimate, a worship time as anything else that happened at Church.

If we believe that God delights in what happens at 10am on Tuesday in the preschool (take a look at question 1 in the shorter catechism) as much as God delights in what happens at 10am on a Sunday (albeit on the Sabbath, viz question 59 and 60) with mostly much older people, what’s the issue? Why do we privilege one over another with the way we set priorities, allocate resources, train our leaders and determine our orthodoxy?

We might frown at the way our children or our youth engage with worship, but we always do so from a position of our own construction. Surrounded as we are by notions of order, appropriateness, and views and feelings about the profane and sacred, we can’t enter the mind of a six-year-old jumping around in that annoying way of his to the tune *Lobe den heren* to determine whether or not his mind is, at the time, on God or on horseback riding. We can guess at what might be happening for him, but we can only know our own minds – and even that can be a bit of a stretch at times.

Perhaps we all struggle with the relationship between the challenges of faithfully and courageously proclaiming the Christian Gospel, and the structures, administration and organisational issues surrounding the support we provide for this work. There is seldom an easy argument around how money could be better used, or the relationship be-

tween the size of the organisation and the effectiveness in playing a role in God’s mission. A smaller national office and larger presbyteries may make no difference at all, unless these changes are accompanied with a genuine commitment to work together in a more collaborative, mutually accountable and sharing way that places a real priority on an outwardly focused mission commitment.

I have found the writing of French protestant philosopher and theologian Paul Ricoeur helpful in not only my own engagement with the Bible but also in the wider challenge of interpreting the context in which God calls us to serve.

Ricoeur distinguishes between two forms of hermeneutics: a hermeneutics of faith that aims to restore meaning to a text and a hermeneutic of suspicion that attempts to decode meanings that are disguised. He said that we need to do two things when reading a text – 1. apply suspicion to myself – am I imposing a meaning on this text? And, 2, apply suspicion to the text – is it really saying this? These two processes help us engage freshly with the text and with what God might be saying to us. In a wonderful little phrase, he said “Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience.” He talked about “doing away with idols,” namely, becoming critically aware of when we project our own wishes and constructs into texts, so that they no longer address us from beyond ourselves as “other”.

All change in our Church involves us with two texts: the testimony of Scripture, and our personal text - the words, memories and feelings that surround our lives and are interwoven with our own relationship with God, God’s church and all the tangible and intangible expressions of our faith. We have to change, and so we are going to need to ask a lot of our settled, traditional congregations and worshippers over the coming years. The organisational and structural issues can never be separated from the pastoral ones. An opening question in this discussion can simply be to ask, “what are you afraid of?” Discerning the ways forward may require us to look for answers in more challenging places, away from the lamppost’s light.

Thanks again for all your support

