

Candour



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NEWS AND VIEWS FOR MINISTERS

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Prioritising resources



Contents

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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:

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Amanda Wells

Somehow we always cope with what we have. I can remember having a food budget of \$20 a week as a student; to buy lunch at a café was an unimaginable extravagance. But inevitably we move beyond basics and, for many people, items such as flat-screen TVs or iPhone become defined as needs rather than wants. It can be difficult to maintain non-consumerist priorities in a world that constantly attempts to dictate the direction of your wallet.

Last week I attended the Australasian Religious Press Association's annual conference. Apart from the practical sessions and speakers on offer, it's always interesting to talk to other people in similar roles, and to hear about the struggles they have with resources and expectations. A significant number of Australian attendees have been severely affected by the financial crisis because their denominations rely almost solely on interest income to fund central operations. Some lost huge amounts of capital, necessitating swingeing cuts. Small as our communications operation is compared to those of many of the Australian Churches (in staff if not in scope!), we are fortunate not to have faced the same situation.

One trans-tasmanian colleague related to me his dilemma of whether to get rid of his unit's print or web arm. Research was undertaken showing that both were valued, needed and effective. So both became cut-down versions of their former selves. A magazine was produced with three instead of six staff and website functionality was reduced.

We always find a way to adapt when faced with straitened circumstances such as these. But other circumstances can change priorities more indirectly. For example, many New Zealanders will be restocking their emergency kits this weekend. It's definitely a hot topic of conversation in Wellington. The devastation in Christchurch feels very close to home, and heightens our perception of risk. What was a low priority becomes vital.

People in Christchurch may well have undergone a reassessment of their personal priorities since last Saturday, as the disruption of everyday life throws into focus what's most important. Stories are emerging of enhanced neighbourliness and caring, despite the stress that individuals are under. People are staying close to family and friends, with those living alone recognised as being in particular need of support and companionship. Perhaps our better traits come to the surface in these times of special pressure.

As someone who is careful with money, I find traumatic experiences make me much more likely to spend; today seems more important than tomorrow, for once. Especially when faced with illness, whether your own or a loved one's, priorities go out the window. Sadly the gradual decline of a church doesn't often induce this same sense of urgency. Many churches with significant resources are experiencing a slow drop-off in numbers, yet continue in stewardship mode. We humans respond much better to immediate danger than to threats that slowly eat away.

Prioritising resources is about deciding what's most important. That might sound self-evident but often our actions don't fit with our professed priorities. A church might have a sign outside saying everyone is welcome, but newcomers have to push past unsmiling people perched on the ends of rows to find a seat.

How you decide on priorities reflects your core values, whether you make these decisions as an individual or as a church. What does it mean if your vision statement emphasises outreach and mission but yet 90 percent of your budget goes towards existing worship services? Mark Chapman makes some interesting comments on this in his essay. Our contemporaries always seem eager to have more money, but if someone gave you \$20,000, what would you do with it?¹ David Galt reveals the difficulties of largesse in his fascinating piece. I like to remind myself that lottery winners are said to return within a year to the same level of happiness they enjoyed before their win.

The October issue of *Candour* will have the theme "the public face of Christianity" and a deadline of 8 October. It is likely to be published slightly late, because of GA10. Contributions are very welcome and can be emailed to candour@presbyterian.org.nz

¹ According to research in the September 2010 issue of *Vanity Fair*, when asked the question "which of the following things would you prefer to receive if no effort on your part was involved?", 39 percent chose US\$10,000: ahead of a college degree, becoming fluent in another language, being one year younger and losing 10 pounds.

Mission and attitude for budget priorities

Mark Chapman, Clevedon Presbyterian, South Auckland

If you are in ministry, let's assume that you are not there by choice but because you can do no other in response to the call of God on your life to be a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Given that, there are some assumptions that worked and work for me.

1. The Church didn't pay me to be a minister. It paid me not to be a radio and television engineer which had been my "job".
2. My congregation was "holy ground". It involved the sacred journeys of the people who made it up. They deserved to be treated with respect.
3. The community in which we gathered as a church were to be the recipients of our loving service.
4. I could not expect the congregation to lead sacrificial lives, unless our family was prepared to so live.

This led me to conclude that the prior claim on my time and resources was the living out of the Gospel and the building up of a community of faith, who would in turn live out the Gospel into the community. What that meant in effect was a personal investment in the tools of ministry that I felt were needed. To create an attitude of mission amongst the leadership, I had first to display that attitude in my personal life.

The paradigm shift between parish and mission has since been always dear to my heart. When we move from a parish model to a mission model, our priorities change. As our priorities change, so our budgeting changes. Instead of asking "what's in it for me?", we ask, "what's in it for the community?" This shift doesn't just happen; it takes time and I sense that it rarely happens in short-term ministry.

The paradigm shift

The church parish culture that we inherited from Christian Europe, where the parish church was the centre of the community, is no longer an appropriate model. Yet this is still how many congregations live out their lives, if not practically then on a subliminal level. No wonder many are disillusioned when the old model doesn't seem to work.

Scratching where the community itches

Years ago we surveyed the community and asked where we could help them. The answers formed our mission strategy. We started to scratch their itches! It was interesting that the church community at the time wanted little of what the community was asking for. This applies to worship as well. At Clevedon Presbyterian, we cater for the old parish model with a traditional service and we cater for seekers through a contemporary music service; but our overall ethos is ministering to the needs of the non-church persons in our community and outside of it.

Turf wars

One of the most difficult aspects of a congregation's life when it comes to setting the budget is what are known as turf wars. This is nowhere as evident as where the turf includes serving the existing congregation and the yet-to-be congregation. The person running the kid's club might be peeved if there is more money going out to community services than to the Sunday school. The outreach ministry will become irate if the leader sees more funds being directed to church activities. Yet both are important. If those involved can get their heads around the reality that we are in this together, budgeting becomes easy.

Setting priorities

Because the existing congregation is the dying edge of the church, and we are called to let our lights shine before the world so that God will be glorified, meeting the needs of yet to be congregation

should be of paramount importance. But that doesn't mean in-church work will suffer. It does mean that we have to ask: "will what we are putting money into help in our communication of the Gospel to 21st century people?" I recently had a gentlemen suggest to me that the reason the church in New Zealand was dying was because ministers no longer wore robes etc! He even offered graciously to purchase a full set for me. I declined for reasons that may be apparent. Traditional garb might satisfy a small group attempting to reclaim the halcyon days of the 50s but I doubt it communicates much that is positive or helpful to those born in the later part of the 20th century.

Always short of money

A declining parish-model congregation will always have more money than a mission congregation. Mission congregations by their very nature are creating new avenues of service to the community.

If you want to have money in reserve, don't do anything! Mission churches have money to do things with because money flows to ideas that capture people's hearts. And at the same time we always need more! When our mission to community mothers and children (five days a week) was about to close because of lack of funds, one couple who saw the value of that ministry pledged an extra \$30,000 a year to ensure it continued, *once they found out there was a need!*

Presenting the budget

Present the budget to the congregation in block mission budget form. Small details confuse. The budget has to be sold. It is best sold when people see that genuine needs are being met rather than that we are shifting the deck chairs on the Titanic in the vain hope it will make a difference. As I write this, our budget, heading for the AGM, has just hit my desk. Our budget for the year (preschool not included), is \$459,222. We present it to the congregation in this form.

- Existing congregation and seeker worship: 42 percent (\$193,224)
- Young People and families at present in the church: 27 percent (\$124,950)
- Young people and families yet to be in the church: 31 percent (\$141,048)

Inspiring and exciting

Congregational life is dynamic when people sense the Spirit of God is in control and inspiring the congregation to mission. It is exciting when the congregation see and hear of genuine needs being met and the community asking the question, "why do you do this?", and we introduce them to this wonderful God we know in Jesus Christ.



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There is a \$50 booking fee, refundable on arrival at Glen Innis.

Prioritising abundant resources

David Galt*

St John's in the City, Wellington, is blessed with large financial resources, which came about through the sale of development rights on the Church site in 1987. Some \$7 million was raised at that time through fast action by far-sighted managers in the congregation, who sold transferable development rights to property developers in the unique conditions of the 80s property boom. Three months later, the opportunity for further such sales had gone for ever as the share market crashed.

It was a time of high inflation – 16.9 percent in the year leading up to the sale in the September quarter of 1987. St John's is obliged by agreement with the Wellington City Council, which allowed the sale, to allocate the proceeds first to maintaining historic buildings – a task which would otherwise be close to unaffordable. The Church decided to allocate some of the earnings from the funds to maintaining the real value of the funds, by setting aside some of the interest to add to the capital fund to match inflation each year. From September 1987 to June 2010, there has been inflation of 81 percent, so without the inflation adjustment, the purchasing power of St John's capital funds over that time would be well on the way to halving. The balance of the funds is used for outreach and mission. There is usually little surplus in the capital funds above the inflation adjustment.

You might think that having large resources makes managing finances easy. Little sympathy can be expected from the rest of the New Zealand church, but the fact is it has been an ongoing, difficult task managing these resources. A few lessons can be drawn.

Having money doesn't make church management easy

Setting up the capital fund was controversial from the start. People walked away from the Church over the issues. (See Graham Reading's account below). It took until December 1990 to complete and approve the rules governing the capital funds.

Having more resources doesn't make managing a church easy. That is because with more resources, we expect to do more and should be expected to achieve more. The Parable of the Talents is highly relevant – from those with resources, more should be expected in doing the Master's work. The parable also tells us that much is expected from everyone entrusted with resources – whether small or large. All congregations have scarce resources – and the expectations that go with them.

In St John's' case, there was an easy period at the start of the 1990s when interest rates were high, inflation low and the resulting resources available for annual spending were high. Appeals to members, fundraising events, stewardship campaigns, commercially sponsored church maintenance and garage sales all eased off. In fact even now in more difficult times, church members tend to think the Church has plenty of resources and that there is less need to give personally. The exceptionally high interest rates in the early 90s were the temporary product of squeezing inflation out of the economy and certainly did not last long.

Members of the congregation and church leaders began to develop new thoughts on how the money could be spent – paid secretarial services on site, Wellington community projects, a youth café, a theological lectureship at Victoria University, a free counselling service, church music, overseas mission and national mission, support to neighbouring churches, a second minister, a church office, building projects, organ refurbishment, a pre-school, youth outreach, expanded paid children's mission, pastoral support and last but not least, an enlarged Assembly assessment.

For most of this decade, the congregation has been embroiled in a polite but extended debate on how resources should be best used, stoked by regular operating deficits and worries about how to live within the constraints of the capital fund rules. The debate is healthy because it reflects an essential concern with how Christ's kingdom can best be extended. Current outreach policy (see reference below) is on the St John's web site, setting out some priorities.

Fluctuating inflation rates and falling interest rates have forced St John's to look at how congregational giving can be encouraged and to prioritise spending. Some felt sadness as large grants to community projects had to be reduced and even more as the free counselling service was discontinued. Debate continues as some question whether capital funds inflation adjustment should continue when there is so much outreach to be done. It is an absolute certainty, though, that

no inflation adjustment would see St John's capital funds reduced and a rapid decline in longer term outreach. The original \$7m capital funds would now be worth less than \$4m. Other parishes will also have experienced generous tied legacies left in the early 20th century being eroded by inflation and becoming largely a book-keeping problem, requiring special accounting treatment for very small amounts.

Interest rates have continued to come down recently. The long-term return that can realistically be expected after inflation on funds invested in relatively safe interest bearing securities is roughly determined by the rate of economic growth and a "risk premium" representing how risky New Zealand investment is relative to other countries. While there is always uncertainty, St John's and the many other congregations with invested funds can expect 3 percent to 5 percent long term interest after inflation. Interest rates are likely to be at the lower end of the range for an extended period as a result of the 2008-2010 global financial crisis. The debate over how to prioritise resources will continue unabated.

How can prioritisation best be done?

There are no easy lessons from the St John's experience in prioritising. It is hard work. Often the church leaders in council and session would rather be thinking about something other than resources and finances because the topics come up so often.

An essential starting point is to ask where God is leading and approach the subject with prayer. This is easy to overlook as we default readily into familiar, secular modes of management.

Getting a representative group of church leaders in session, council or committee to consider the issues provides for the "wisdom of crowds" to operate. A good test is to put more complex or strategic propositions and budgets to the congregation and see if they will gain support. Providing the full set of information – not just the bits that support the case or appeal to the emotions - is good practice.

The congregation has been embroiled in a polite but extended debate on how resources should be best used

It is also good practice to consider all new spending proposals together, as in the annual church budget, so each proposal can be considered on its merits and compared to existing spending. Some of the harder debates come up when new spending proposals arise outside the annual budget cycle. It is then harder to see what else will not be able to proceed because the new proposal is the sole focus of attention.

St John's has put in place some mechanisms to keep discipline over its spending. The Finance Committee, which reports to the Council, is required to scrutinise all new spending proposals over \$5000. For very large, complex spending proposals, it examines the implications of the proposal over each of three to seven years, to be able to see clearly all the operational spending implications as well as the capital cost. Groups wanting large new spending projects to go ahead are asked to set out what the implications will be for mission and how success will be measured. This also helps later reviews of whether projects have been successful. They will not always be successful and it is then easier to face reality and decide if the project should continue.

While St John's has adopted these procedures, it is still easy for many to overlook them and need reminding about them. Frustration can arise over slow decision making but taking time helps get better decisions.

Which resources should be managed?

St John's and other congregations have to manage three main resources. They are people's time, space and facilities, and money. At least one of these will be relatively scarce in all congregations.

All need to be managed well. Where can the dedicated youth space be found? How much volunteer time is available rather than paid staff time?

The three resources are interchangeable to some extent. Church facilities can be rented out to generate income. In a city church, providing dedicated space for a particular congregational group could cost \$50,000 a year in foregone rental. Youth leaders' time can be saved if they have a dedicated youth facility available to work in. Actively marketing spare space and regularly reviewing rents to secular users may not be anyone's favourite activities but they need to be done. Thinking should also extend to which community groups should have free or concessional use of space.

Time is valuable. A possibly controversial thought from economics (see Linder below) is that the value of a person's time spent in leisure will be roughly equal to the value of the person's earning capacity in work. This means that the difficulty of getting paid professionals to carry out voluntary work in their leisure time is likely to go up as their salaries rise. There is good news too though – many people are not in this position and may have more time to volunteer, even if they have less financial resource to contribute. Resources are available in every church.

The main conclusion here is that all of these three resources need to be actively managed and thought about together.

Using talents

Something else that can help with prioritising is looking to fully use the talents available to us in thinking about resourcing decisions, including doing our homework.

Not all churches will have financial professionals to produce systems and information on a plate but there is useful information out there. We can reasonably anticipate inflation will occur over time and take it into account in our planning. We can take the trouble to find out what is expected to happen to wages and take it into account. For instance, many employers like to keep their staff's pay at least up to the level of consumer price inflation (CPI) over time if they can. This year, the GST increase is expected to add 2 percent to the CPI. Should churches increase staff wages for the GST increase when income tax reductions already broadly compensate everyone for the price increases? Good stewardship requires this to be thought about.

Considering resource allocation is a job that is done professionally in treasuries and treasury or finance units in companies. But you don't have to be in them to do the same jobs in churches. Simple things like asking someone who wants to spend money to tell you clearly what the real benefits will be, what the costs will be each year for five years, how the benefits will be reviewed if the project goes ahead and how they compare to the benefits from other potential projects can take you a long way. Church resources need to be managed with the head as well as the heart.

Asking how you can use all the resources and talents available and not just the scarce financial resources can also go a long way to advancing Christ's kingdom.

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The place of the offering

Rhys Pearson, Minister Emeritus, Kaimai

In Israel's Timna National Park, not far from Solomon's Pillars, archaeologists uncovered an ancient "temple". Best estimates are that worship has been conducted on that site for over 6000 years. Don't ask how they can tell but scientists claim that, back in the time when the present wasteland of sand and rock was a fertile valley, offerings of flowers and fruit were made to unknown gods.

Making an offering is perhaps the most ancient and pervasive form of worship. The Old Testament is replete with references to "Bring an offering" (e.g. 1 Chronicles 16:29, Psalm 96:8). Malachi 1:8 reminds us that the offerings were to be of the best, highest quality. Nothing less was worthy of offering to almighty God.

Too often our modern practise has been to relegate the offering to as minimal a role as we can achieve. We have:

- Taken up the offering during a hymn or song.
- Collected the offering at the door.
- Dedicated the offering as part of other prayers (or worse, not dedicated it at all).

It is as if we are ashamed to focus on money. Not infrequently ministers report they seldom if ever speak about giving. One reason given is that they feel people will think they are preaching for their stipend. Others feel the church is always asking for money.

I believe this is a mistake that removes the central theme of offering our best (first-fruit) to God. Jesus talked about money. It was the subject of most of his parables. Money, wealth, riches are more frequently spoken of in the Gospels than the Kingdom of God. Should we not follow the example of Jesus?

Our offerings should form a central part of the act of worship. We ministers need to explain frequently that the reason the congregation stand as the offering is brought forward is that in symbolic action we are offering ourselves. It is not just money (and the odd tin of beans for the foodbank) that we are giving. The people of God are placing themselves on the altar for God to use. The prayer of dedication should reflect this understanding.

There are a number of understandings that can be communicated to the congregation:

- God does not need our money. The cattle on 1000 hills are his. (Psalm 50) What the Lord requires is a declaration that we trust him with our finances. We trust him with our eternal destiny. Should we not trust him to provide for our material needs? Giving our tithe demonstrates we do.
- Our spiritual health requires that we give, and give generously.
- We can never out-give God. He has innumerable ways to bless us (health, safety, children who love the Lord, a sound marriage – all are gifts from God).

Martin Luther claimed people need two conversions – one of the heart; the other of the wallet.

William Barclay stated that riches shackle a man to the earth.

Over the years I have run "Life in the Spirit" seminars, Alpha, Discover Life, Contagious Christian, and a host of similar programmes. The biggest single lift in spiritual health of a congregation was experienced when we ran the "Time to Build" programme. For two months we focussed exclusively on giving, with a month-long daily devotional around a theme of "God, what do you want me to do with the resources you have placed in my hands?" To spend a month praying about financial priorities and the call of God on one's life was an eye-opening experience for most in the congregation. The response in financial terms was amazing. More importantly, the lift in attendance at worship, commitment to prayer, and enthusiastic involvement was beyond anything previously experienced.

When we diminish the status of "offering" and allow our congregations to give loose change to God, we short-change their spiritual life. Offering to God is an ancient and central act of worship. Let our offering have the place it deserves.

Prioritising resources for young people

Carlton Johnstone

I want to start with an inspiring story of a group of Christian brothers in a small French town called Taizé. I'm sure many of you have heard of this place, or at least the Taizé-style services they have inspired that take place around the world. Some of you might have even been to Taizé. My neighbour, who is now in her 60s, went when she was a young person back in the 1960s and had some time with Brother Roger, who founded the community. She said he read her heart and what was causing her anxiety and spoke words of life and wisdom to her.

Taizé continues to attract thousands of young people every year. With this surprising increase in visitors, they felt they needed to do everything necessary to offer hospitality to those who came knocking at their door. Brother John points out that, "This sometimes required significant and demanding changes in their life"¹ (2006, 150). They asked, "what does God require of us in relation to the young people?" This is a great question for any faith community to be asking itself. How you answer it will have implications for areas such as budget, resources, and priorities, and vision.

For the brothers of Taizé, welcoming young people took priority over material considerations such as buildings. This is clearly illustrated by their actions during Easter 1971. Brother John tells the story²,

In 1962, a new, larger church had been built for community worship, since the 12th century Romanesque church in the village was sometimes filled to over-flowing. Less than ten years later, with 3000 young people expected for Easter, the new church has become too small in its turn. So the brothers knocked down the back wall of their new church and attached a circus tent so that all the worshippers could fit inside. This step was an eloquent sign of Taizé's readiness to place the welcome of the youth over material considerations, a sign that clearly had a great impact on those who came.

When it comes to setting priorities, do we demonstrate a readiness to place the welcome of the youth over material considerations? Would we be willing to knock out the back wall of our newly built church to cater for young people? I suspect not. Although I'm sure all of us would like so many young people that we needed to knock down a wall or two to cater for them.

Having a great vision is not enough if the climate that youth ministry (or any ministry) takes place in is toxic

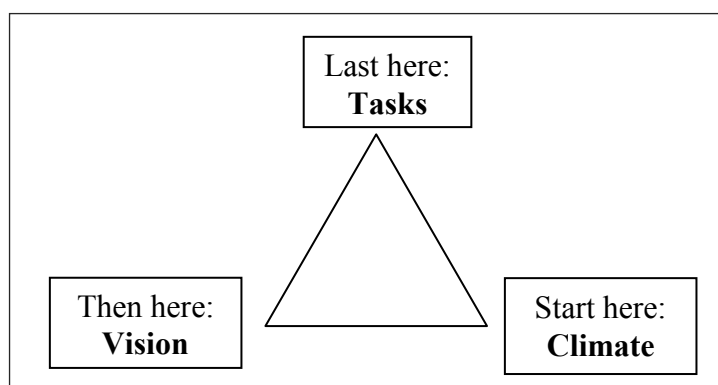
The Taizé community made welcoming young people such a priority because, first and foremost, hospitality is an important Christian (and human) value. The brothers also felt that listening to the intuitions and perspective of young people could help the Church find a way forward towards greater authenticity. I do wonder if one reason why some of our churches do not have any young people is because the environment is unwelcoming and there is no evidence of hospitality.

Do we have a culture within our church that tries to do and resource youth ministry with the bare minimum - and even less if we could get away with it? Or are you asking, "what does God require of us in relation to the young people?" And depending on your answer, how are we going to resource this and make it happen - financially, in terms of time, people (volunteers and paid staff), giving young people responsibility and valuing youth participation.

When we set priorities for our church's vision, or, as is sometimes the case, undertake a re-visioning of our church, do we include young people and 20-somethings in the conversation and decision-making process? If you are fortunate enough to have a paid youth worker, or children's worker, are they part of the key leadership team, or excluded from this?

Having a great vision is not enough if the climate that youth ministry (or any ministry) takes place in is toxic. You can even have all the right structures in place for supporting the vision but, as Mark DeVries³ argues, unless a toxic climate is addressed it is like being in a structurally sound building filled with noxious gases. A toxic climate not only undermines any sustainable change taking place, it also inhibits growth.

The climate or culture of our church is what sustains its health and vitality, or alternatively can be a source of tension, frustration and ill-health. System issues feed and shape culture much like springs that feed rivers and wells. System issues are those processes that take place beneath, around and within... particular topics of concern, such as concern over the curriculum.⁴ Addressing system issues leads to more efficient use of resources. Trust between leaders and a congregation is a system issue. So is clarity of expectations for staff and volunteers.⁵ It is easy to have unrealistic expectations of our youth workers, especially if they are paid. Youth participation (or lack of it) is a system issue. "A systems approach to youth ministry places the first focus on the climate, not tasks. In the context of a healthy climate, a vision is developed. Only then can a church hope for its youth ministry to manage its tasks and content issues well."⁶ (see diagram below)⁷



Some of us are in places where we have no young people and as a consequence might think that we do not need to allocate any resources towards youth ministry. But if we want to engage young people and have them become part of our faith community, then we will need to explore some creative ways of doing this that will involve sacrifice, risk and, heaven forbid, spending some of that rainy day fund.

In order to develop a healthy and sustainable youth ministry, we need to stop underpaying and under-resourcing our youth workers. If our youth ministry is run by volunteers, then we also need to be investing in them and resourcing them. This might include a budget for resource materials like studies, sending them to Connect (our annual PYM youth leaders' conference), and books on youth ministry. It would not hurt to also consider a hospitality allowance for your key volunteer youth workers. The best youth ministries are relationally driven, so meeting up with a young person at a café or having a group around for dinner is a ministry cost that the youth worker should not always be expected to pick up the tab for. Within the space of a week I had two conversations with different part-time paid youth workers who were paying for their own mobile phone that they use for work. This is not an acceptable situation. We would not expect a minister to be paying for their own phone, or not subsidising hospitality costs. So why do we have very different standards when it comes to youth workers?

We do communicate something intentionally or unintentionally about how much we value a youth worker by how much we are willing to pay them. And I would add, resource them. "The pay is too low" is one reason cited for leaving youth ministry. This is an issue of retention. "If you want someone to stay find some way to pay."⁸ One of my friends, who is one of our finest youth workers, was recently made redundant by his church (due to a financial crisis, it was said). They didn't value what he was doing enough to find some way to pay. They certainly didn't seek any outside advice from either regional or national people or to explore possible sources of funding. He has recently started as a youth worker for a Baptist church who are paying him \$20,000 more than his previous job. This includes housing, but still, this is a big difference.

"How much should a youth worker be paid?", I hear you asking. Depends. "On what?", you say. On a number of things. "Such as?" Experience and qualifications for starters. Below is a useful pay scale guide recommend by PYM and also used by the Anglicans.⁹

Youth Ministry Office recommended pay scale for those in paid youth ministry

A youth worker who is an intern (part-time ministry) \$16.00 an hour (\$33,000 pa)

An experienced youth worker working towards a Youth Work qualification (or equivalent qualification) \$17.00 (\$35,500)

An experienced youth worker with a Certificate in Youth Work (or equivalent qualification) \$18.00 (\$37,500)

An experienced youth worker with a Diploma in Youth Work/Theology (or equivalent qualification) \$23.50 (\$49,000)

A highly experienced youth worker with a Degree in Youth Work/Theology (or equivalent qualification) \$27.00 (\$56,000)

A highly experienced youth worker with a Degree in Youth Work (or equivalent qualification) who is overseeing other youth workers and/or interns \$27-\$31.50+ (\$56,000-\$65,000 +)

We cannot employ an inexperienced, unqualified youth worker and expect them to do the job of someone who is trained in theology and youth ministry with five years' experience. We need to have realistic expectations of the person we employ and think about the sort of person we want to employ. If we do employ someone with very little experience, then we need to put things in place for their on-going training, develop their potential, and enable them to survive and thrive long term. When thinking about allocating resources, setting priorities and budgeting it is worth considering this reflection from Brother John¹⁰, with which I will close,

So, our discovery about the young is that when given responsibility, they very often rise to it. They do not simply want to be the passive recipients of programmes tailored to them; they appreciate being invited to take part in an ongoing search to which they have something vital to contribute.

References

1 'A Spiritual Crossroads of Europe: The Taizé Community's Adventure with the Young,' Brother John of Taizé, *In Passing on the Faith* (Ed. Heft, 2006).

2 Ibid, p. 150-151

3 Mark DeVries, 2008, *Sustainable Youth Ministry* (Downer Groves: IVP), p. 79

4 Ibid, p. 53

5 Ibid, p. 53

6 Ibid, p. 80

7 Ibid, p. 81

8 Ibid, p. 103

9 Baptist Youth Ministry has a similar scale when allowance – housing, hospitality etc - are factored in.

10 Brother John, 'A Spiritual Crossroads...' p. 157

St David's in the Fields, Hillsborough, Auckland

FULLTIME MINISTERIAL VACANCY

We are seeking a suitably qualified person to lead and help grow our family-focused, multicultural Church.

To register your interest, contact Jane Prichard at email janeprichard@extra.co.nz or view our Parish Profile at www.sdfc.org.nz



Historic Presbyterian Church in Singapore seeks Senior Minister



The English Congregation of Orchard Road Presbyterian Church (ORPC) seeks a Senior Minister for an initial 4-year term commencing July 2011.

ORPC is a family-oriented church in an inner-city location which draws people from all over Singapore. We have a multi-generational and multi-racial congregation of 800+ which includes international workers and students. Our church has a history which spans over 150 years. For more details of ORPC please visit our website at www.orpc.sg.

We are prayerfully seeking God's minister to lead ORPC. Our minister ideally will be one whose life is based upon God's word and is able to provide a strong bible-based expository preaching from the pulpit. The minister should also have (1) the vision and leadership skills for both world mission and local outreach programmes (2) the heart and experience to initiate and manage an effective pastoral care ministry for the congregation and (3) a good understanding of cross cultural differences, sensitivities and communication.

The Senior Minister leads a pastoral staff of 5 full-time ministers and preachers and 6 administrative personnel.

Ordained Presbyterian Ministers with at least 10 years' pastoral experience and a degree from an accredited theological institution are preferred.

A clearly defined job description, salary and other benefits will be discussed and agreed upon before employment commences.

Resumes with recent photograph, two references and one recording of a sermon and/or inquiries should be sent by post (mark Private & Confidential) to the following address:

Orchard Road Presbyterian Church
3 Orchard Road, Singapore 238825
Attention: Session Clerk, Elder Robert Yu
(or to his email address at ry5485@yahoo.com.sg).
All applications will be treated in confidence.

World Communion of Reformed Churches: A report

Jason Goroncy, Knox Centre, Dunedin and Bruce Hamill, Coastal Unity Parish, Dunedin

Churches as diverse as the Yolo Church in Kinshasa, Congo; the Presbyterian Church in Lar in the Sudan; the Myung Sung Presbyterian Church in Seoul, Korea; the women's church among the Maya Quiche Indians in Guatemala; the First Presbyterian Church in Havana, Cuba; the Great Church in Debrecen, Hungary; and Te Anau Presbyterian Church in Fiordland, New Zealand, all seem, on the surface, to have little in common. But probe a little deeper and you discover a common love for Christ and neighbour, a commitment to justice, a desire to be a welcoming, apostolic and ecumenical community, and a sense of the Holy Spirit at work among God's people.

Sadly, this wonderful diversity also represents a history of visible division at odds with Grandpa Calvin's vision. Something of this vision was taken up when, in 1875, a diverse body of Reformed denominations joined together as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) to undertake common purposes and to speak with a common voice. Until a few weeks ago, the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand was a member of this Alliance. And in 1946, another group of Reformed denominations joined together for similar purposes to form the numerically smaller Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). While fostering somewhat different theological emphases and concerns, the two groups have been in conversation with one another and those conversations have moved rapidly over the past few years from the subject of "doing more together" to a more ambitious hope of forming one "communion" of churches in order to give more visible expression to our unity in Christ.

In what sense is it possible to be in communion with others while retaining intact one's autonomy?

In June this year, in the pleasant surroundings and humid climate of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, those hopes were realised when the many denominations that were part of both alliances joined together to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC; see www.reformedchurches.org) to "demonstrate and live the oneness in Christ we confess". This new World Communion, birthed around the theme of "Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace", brings together 80 million Reformed Christians from 230 member churches (Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed and United) in 108 countries whose roots are grounded in the 16th century Reformation associated with Calvin, Knox and others.

We were there as delegates from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, meeting with other Reformed leaders from around the globe over meals, in rigorous discussion, in worship, and in formal decision-making processes. We also spent more intentional time getting to better know delegates from the Pacific region and thinking about how the communion can be strengthened in our part of the world.

A welcome by the indigenous peoples of North America and a presentation by Richard Twiss – with stories from his own life and that of his people, their experience of colonial violence and their faith in spite of that, and their longing to participate in the mission of the Triune God to the nations – in many ways set the tone for the entire gathering. Each day began with Bible study and worship, and concluded with worship led each evening by people from a different region of the globe.

The formal work of the gathering was divided between:

- Plenary sessions, in which the whole gathering heard significant presentations and made decisions about the constitution of the new body and the direction of its work;

- Focus sections, in which key areas of the future work of the WCRC were explored in more detail. These included: (a) Reformed Identity, Theology and Communion; (b) Christian Unity and Ecumenical Engagement; (c) Justice in the Economy, on the Earth, and for all God's Creation; (d) Worship and Spirituality; (e) Layperson Development, Youth Development and Formal Theological Education; (f) Gender Justice; (g) Youth Empowerment; (h) Mission; and (i) Working for Peace and Reconciliation;
- Workshops and Committees, covering such diverse topics as addressing issues facing indigenous peoples, the church and disability, and the work of the Council for World Mission, among many other topics.

Three issues came to the surface for us at different points during the gathering: (i) the implications of being a communion; (ii) the nature of Reformed identity; and (iii) the responsibility and opportunities associated with speaking with a united voice about issues of global importance.

One area where questions might be raised here concerns the relationship between Reformed Churches and the State

We were keen to explore the extent to which the language of “communion” actually represented something more than an extended “alliance”. A sign of the need for ongoing reflection on this matter was seen in the retention of the notion that all member churches are “autonomous”. In what sense is it possible to be in communion with others while retaining intact one's autonomy? A further sign of the thinness of the existing communion emerged when one of us proposed to the “Reformed Identity, Theology and Communion” group that (among other things, and as a minimal sign of our communion) we commit ourselves to “not kill one another”. The proposal was overwhelmingly rejected.

The resistance to engaging with these questions led us to think further about the nature and content of Reformed identity. One area where questions might be raised here concerns the relationship between Reformed Churches and the State. It seems that a tradition like ours which is so heavily imbedded in (what is now a rapidly-disappearing) Christendom has well and truly entered (in most parts of the world) a time in which our relationship with the State and our thinking about our participation in the State's machinery of violence is overdue for a rethink.

Gathering as representatives of the global Church highlighted issues associated with globalisation. In the wake of the prophetic challenges that were taken up in The Accra Confession, adopted by WARC's 24th General Council in 2004, we continue to struggle to know how to engage with the phenomenon of global empire and move beyond mere rhetorical condemnation to exploring, for example, some alternative economic models following the collapse of the neo-liberal-dominated world economy.

In some ways, we sensed that we might be at a defining moment for our Reformed family. In the words of Clifton Kirkpatrick, the former president of WARC, “we have reached an important historical milestone, the 500th anniversary of our movement. This is the time for us to no longer be an ‘alliance’ or a ‘council’ but to truly be a communion, to claim the best of our heritage, and to be open to the radical new things that God may have in store for us in the years ahead. There is a future – a vital and exciting future – for the Reformed movement in the 21st century. However, we cannot overlook that there are serious problems in our common life that we must address with repentance and commitment to change... God surely intends for us to give up our divisive and fragmenting ways and join the movement for unity and reconciliation in the church and the world”.

After surviving a tornado and 10 days of sugar-filled food (both life-threatening realities), we returned home laden with books, grateful for the experience, proud to have represented our church, and with a deeper appreciation of our own ecclesiastical traditions and of the missiological challenges before us.

Vacancy - St Andrew's Symonds Street (Senior Minister)

St Andrew's is a lively and multicultural parish with two vibrant congregations meeting on a Sunday morning.

We are a diverse, welcoming, friendly and inclusive community. There already exists a very strong platform for future growth and development. The parish has been blessed with incremental growth in recent years.

The parish has a unique "inner city" mission and ministry opportunity, with a great location and strong ties with the University of Auckland and adjacent CBD.

We are looking for a Senior Minister with particular responsibility for the needs of our international congregation who brings the following strengths and emphases in ministry:

- a commitment to biblical scholarly preaching and teaching, with a reformed and evangelical commitment that has academic rigour.
- an effective leader of worship that is formal and dignified but allowing for flexibility to cater for the youth of the parish through other worship styles.
- highly developed interpersonal skills that will allow you to lead in outreach and hospitality.
- attributes of understanding, empathy and ability to work with our Indonesian congregation, and their minister.
- skill in delegation and consultation together with an approachable and hospital nature.
- standard terms of Call (housing allowance not manse).

Contact person: Rev David Williams (Convenor of Settlement Board williams.dn@gmail.com or mobile 021798002) – Parish Profile available via email.



Iona Presbyterian Church Blockhouse Bay, Auckland www.iona.org.nz

We are seeking expressions of interest for a full time minister

We are a friendly and diverse congregation that enjoys traditional worship. We wish to maintain our present values while encouraging new families into our congregation, and developing new youth initiatives. We recognise the need for change and the challenges ahead of us so that the congregation may develop and grow together.

Blockhouse Bay is a western suburb of Auckland, located on the Manukau Harbour and approximately 10 km from Auckland CBD. Blockhouse Bay is a well-served vibrant centre with many shops, cafes, schools and churches all within close proximity to one another.

Our new minister should be a person who:

- Can effectively preach the Word of God to all age groups
- Is able to relate to people with a wide range of theological perspectives
- Enjoys pastoral care
- Can enter fully into the life and work of the parish

The parish profile can be obtained from Elizabeth Visser at evisserhome@gmail.com

Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity—we look forward to receiving your application by 30 September 2010, addressed to the Nominator, Rev Linda Hope, 38 Donovan Street, Blockhouse Bay, Auckland 0600, Ph 021 155 919, email: lindat.hope@gmail.com

The word of the Lord and its combinations

Maurice Andrew, Minister Emeritus, Dunedin

The lectionary for October 10 offers Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 as the Old Testament reading. It is the truncated beginning to Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, on which I offer the following reflection.

It is striking that the letter itself is introduced with "thus says the Lord of hosts..." (v. 4) and similar formulae are given throughout, including "the word of the Lord" (WL) in v. 20. The WL is the leading justification for the letter and my reflection is mainly based on its import.

But it is striking further that as soon as the WL is given as introduction, it immediately continues with its addressees: "...to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon". Jeremiah is presented as being sure that he is speaking the WL, but that alone is not sufficient. The WL has validity only when it reaches the people for whom it is intended in their present circumstances.

This is different from the way many people today *think* of God. This is of God known only in one way and as coming in from outside the people and circumstances concerned. Jeremiah, however, keeps on "rubbing it in" that the WL is necessarily addressed to people in particular circumstances. To say that God has sent them into exile is the most challenging way of asserting that they really are in exile, and that they should commit themselves to stay there: "build houses and plant gardens" (v. 5). When it says, "multiply there and do not decrease" (v. 6), the implication is that they are to be fruitful even in exile.

Thus hearing the word of the Lord is in a combination of the people's own response with their present circumstances

This means that the WL will be heard only in ongoing commitment to the present situation that they would rather get out of quickly. But they do not hear God only in this one way. They are to "...seek the welfare of the city..., and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (v. 7). There is some self-interest in it, but it is striking that this is the only place in the OT where Israelites are told to pray for another people, and it implies that the WL is bound up with not only with their own response but also with their response to another oppressing people. All this is hard enough, but there is harder to come (in the sequence the lectionary leaves out).

Hearing the WL comes in a combination of different ways, and one of them may be through resistance to those who resist that word (vv 8-9). It is likely that the prophets mentioned are said to deceive because they were prophesying a speedy restoration. Restoration is not wrong in itself but it is not the WL *for the present circumstances*. Hearing the WL is in the combination of resistance with present circumstances.

But it is also combined with a presentation of restoration too even if it is disappointingly postponed. In the combination of resisting a quick solution with commitment to present circumstances, the WL can be heard in a promise for the future: "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for your harm, to give you a future with hope" (v. 11). God is also presented as saying that God will hear the people when they call upon God (vv 12-13). Thus hearing the WL is in a combination of the people's own response with their present circumstances.

The whole paragraph in verses 10-14 also presupposes that there may be a future orientation with hearing the WL. It is noteworthy too that verse 14 speaks of "...gather[ing] you from all the nations and places where I have driven you...". This has a wider scope than before, and Judeans were exiled

at different times to different places. It is an indication, found in other parts of Jeremiah as well, that the book also reflects the experiences of exiles after Jeremiah's time, but that they too knew themselves grounded in the pain and hope of Jeremiah and the people of his time. The WL may not be heard by some people at one time but can still be heard by other people in a different place at different times. Another way in which the WL is heard is through a combination of different *places* and different *times*.

Another indication that different interests are involved in hearing the WL is given when verse 15 begins with prophets in *Babylon*, but the matter concerning them is not taken up until verse 21. The verses in between are concerned with prophets in *Jerusalem* who were not heeded by the king and the people there. The point in the present complex is that if the exiles were hoping for a quick return to Jerusalem there is no hope even there. Again the WL is heard in realistic situations combining more than one place.

Since, however, the letter is directly addressed to the exiles in Babylon, it must get back to their place (v. 20). Now two otherwise unknown prophets are mentioned by name: Ahab and Zedekiah are stated roundly to be prophesying a lie in God's name, and a horrible fate is prophesied for them (vv. 21-23). From the emphasis of the letter on commitment to exile in Babylon, it can be inferred that their lie was a prophecy of a speedy return home, words that would have been seditious in the hearing of the king of Babylon. The circumstances described here indicate that hearing the WL is bound up not only with different proclamations of the WL but also with reactions to them.

We must also accept that we will not convince many that we have heard the word of the Lord

This brings us to the greatest challenge in hearing the WL: different people in different places and times proclaim the WL differently, and it is a real question to whom people are to respond. It may seem clear to us that Jeremiah was the one proclaiming the WL, but many of the exiles, placed in their present situation, may quite understandably have felt that it was not obvious at all. The greatest challenge in hearing the WL is that the place of the present situation is combined with being placed in an awkward dilemma.

We may hear the WL, however, in our very realisation that there is a dilemma and that the matter is not necessarily immediately obvious. Part of this too is to treat those with a different view circumspectly even if we think that their hearing of the WL is mistaken. I wrote above that one of the ways of hearing is in resisting those who resist the WL. A related way is in resisting part of the manner in which the WL is presented to us. The final part of the letter has a ring of triumph concerning Ahab's and Zedekiah's fate, turns them into a curse and says not only that they have prophesied a lie but also that they have committed adultery (v. 23). It is catastrophically easy to proceed from disagreement to triumph and personal abuse. Recognising ourselves doing this may be the crucial way in which we hear the WL addressing us in as much of the combination of people(s), responses, circumstances, places and times of which we are capable.

Certainly there is no way of blocking out our responsibility for our own response. We must also accept that we will not convince many that we have heard the WL, and be sure that we have taken that into account when we remain with our conviction. And, of course, our conviction can convince others. In the Gospel given for October 10 (Luke 17: 11-19), of the ten lepers Jesus heals, only one, and possibly the one even Jesus would have least expected, returns praising God for his healing. But Jesus is convinced by the Samaritan's response that he is praising *God* (see v. 18 as well as v. 15).

Jeremiah's, Jesus' and the Samaritan's conviction concerning God has convinced millions of people since in their combinations of circumstances. It still can in ours.

A prayer for those affected by the Christchurch earthquake

God our refuge and strength,
 who offers hope in the midst of adversity,
 assure the people most affected by this earthquake of your
 comforting presence;
 grant wisdom to those who must exercise leadership at this time;
 and strengthen those who will be working hard to repair the
 damage to streets, buildings and utility services.
 Encourage your church,
 that, through its worship and community service,
 it will be a channel of your hope and compassion.
 These things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

*The Right Rev Graham Redding
 Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*

Do you hear a call to serve God in Vanuatu?

Can you teach English to theological students?

A position is available at Talua Ministry Training Centre, beginning in 2011. It is supported by the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Council for World Mission (See the article in *Spanz*, June 2010, page 23).

We need someone who has a theological background, can teach English and also:

- Has respect for those of other cultures and has skill in working cross culturally
- Is flexible, resilient and adventurous
- Will enjoy participating in the community life of the theological campus

For more information, contact:

Kevin Heath, kevsue@eol.co.nz
 or c/- St Andrews Presbyterian Church, PO Box 4255, Mt Maunganui, 3149

Breaking down barriers

Martin Baker

As I write this reflection, I am deeply conscious of those working so very hard to provide care and ministry to the people of Christchurch.

We have been receiving numerous letters and emails of support from around the world. At times like this we become very aware of the strength provided by the knowledge that so many churches and people worldwide uphold those in Christchurch with their prayers and words of encouragement.

During a time when so many of those who are part of our churches in Christchurch have significant concerns about their own families, friends and property, it is extremely heartening to hear about the work being done by our ministers, elders and congregations to reach out, support and care for their communities. We join in giving thanks for your strength and witness at this time.

The Church as a steam train

Who said 50 years ago our church was “going like a steam train”? I am not sure why or how those words have been remembered and are, every so often, quoted back at me. But it must have felt like that in 1960. Strong, confident, and supported with an influx of baby boom children, newly urbanised young families, and lots of immigrants from the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

Here I am in Busan, South Korea, attending the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea. If any Church was ever a steam train, this must be that Church. With 3 million members, this is the largest denomination in Korea. There are another two dozen Presbyterian denominations, some of which are only slightly smaller, with subtle differences in names and doctrine, but the PCK is the biggest one. Some of their single congregations include more than 50,000 attendees, with churches that make Wellington’s Michael Fowler Centre look like a school hall. The Assembly was held in a brand new church, which would have sat around 4000 people, but you could fit four of these into some of the larger church auditoriums. One of the PCK’s seven seminaries, which the overseas delegates visited a couple of days ago, has a facade more like that of a multinational corporation than anything we might associate with the traditional notion of a seminary.

So why the trip here, and the need felt by our Council and our Asian Advisory Group to make the effort? To give you an idea of the figures involved, if tomorrow all those Korean Christians in New Zealand who describe themselves as Presbyterian were to join our Church, our membership would increase by about 50 percent (an extra 15,000 people) and our number of congregations would increase by 25 percent - more than 100 extra congregations. Eighty percent of these would be in the greater Auckland region.

For a whole lot of reasons nothing like this is going to happen overnight, but for some very obvious reasons we need to be talking with those who are working so hard to extend the ministry and mission of the Presbyterian church in New Zealand, but with whom the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand shares little or no knowledge or relationship. Most Korean Presbyterians in New Zealand identify with one or other of the Presbyterian churches in Korea. Our Church has had a formal relationship with the PCK and the somewhat smaller PROK (Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea). However, there are several other Korean Presbyterian churches who have a significant missionary presence in New Zealand. There is also the Overseas Presbyterian Church of Korea, which is a separate, almost “virtual” denomination, represented in a dozen countries, run out of the United States, claiming a huge international membership and identifying six congregations in its New Zealand presbytery.

We are working on developing a number of agreements about the mutuality of ministry and processes that might enable Korean congregations to join our Church. However, I am sure that the reality is that none of this is going to help strengthen our relationship with the Presbyterian Korean community unless presbyteries and congregations put in the hard work of welcoming, hosting and including the burgeoning Korean Christian communities in our midst. It has taken me about a week to get used to eating hot pickled cabbage and rice for breakfast, but it’s not so bad. And the lunch and dinner food is really quite wonderful. We are going to have to work at our relations with our Korean brothers and sisters, but it will be worth it. Both as a witness to the unity we find in Christ and also as a way to strengthen our own mission and ministry to an increasingly diverse community.