

CANDOUR

News and Views for Ministers

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Cross-cultural mission

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Noticeboard

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If you know someone would still like a copy of the *Candour*, please encourage them to get in touch.

Subscribers: please contact me if you change your postal or email address (whichever is relevant).

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Contributions

We also 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.

Articles on upcoming themes are also appreciated:

November: Endings and Beginnings

Deadline: 1 November

Advertising

One-quarter page: \$80 plus gst (8 x 12.5cm)

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Half page: \$130 plus gst (12 x 16.5cm)

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Update from the Stipend Review Task Group

While you may not have heard from us for a while, our task group has been busy. The purpose of the stipend review group is to take a strategic look at the overall remuneration package (not just stipend) and make recommendations to Council of Assembly based on our findings.

Task group members have been busy considering the results of a survey, which was sent to all parish ministers. Of the 320 surveys sent out, 202 replies were received (63 percent), which was very pleasing. We've completed a detailed analysis of the replies and comments, but have more work to do, such as making comparisons with other organisations, before we release further information.

Before we began, we were aware that there was dissatisfaction in some quarters with the whole remuneration package paid to ministers. However, we were surprised at the extent of the dissatisfaction expressed in so many areas of remuneration and reimbursements by such a large number of ministers. It's clear that many are not happy with their situation and feel that they are trapped in an organisation that cannot afford to pay them more. In some cases, they need more to survive, or more to be able make reasonable savings for retirement and/or housing.

We note that a number of ministers are awaiting our report with great interest. Some feel that the Church has had task groups before and nothing has really changed. We feel we owe a duty to the Church to tell the ministers' stories as we see it and make recommendations accordingly, even though these may have far reaching financial implications.

We hope to make recommendations to either the November 2005 or first 2006 meeting of Council of Assembly. Information from the review will be published widely when it is available, so keep an eye out on this and other Church publications for further updates.

Neil Sinclair – Convener Stipend Review Task Group

Striving for dialogue

Amanda Wells

I wasn't really intending to write this editorial. Why I am doing so is symptomatic of some of the attitudes we exhibit when confronted with our contemporary multicultural context.

Cross-cultural mission; a stimulating topic, you might think. Particularly in light of the recent politicisation (though some might say it has long been politicised) of race relations issues (though some might say race relations is in itself a discredited, patriarchal term).

It's these bracketed hedges that have the potential to grow into insurmountable hurdles. So much thinking seems required before speaking that the silence can be deafening.

Who can speak into cross-cultural issues? Do we value louder voices more? Or should we be giving special credence to those who are quieter or marginalised? These are difficult questions, and can encourage hesitation rather than debate.

I'm grateful to those who have taken up the challenge and contributed to this issue. They have produced thoughtful articles that shy away from generalisations or monocultural perspectives.

Andrew Bell considers definitions of cross- and multiculturalism, and the impact they have on mission in practice, in an article grounded by Biblical references.

Martin Stewart muses on differences discovered in his parish, while Stuart Vogel analyses the rise of Asian congregations.

A personal perspective on ministry across cultures is offered by Karima Fai'ai, and Roy Pearson reflects on his experiences of culture shock in Vanuatu.

Ken Irwin submits a passionate argument for our pursuit of biculturalism, and Stephanie Wells contends that cultural divides should not be seen as purely ethnic.

Also in this issue of *Candour* is part two of Lisa Wells' illuminating series on fundraising, covering who you might approach for funds and what you might ask them to support.

And we feature part two of national mission enabler John Daniel's "mission possible" series, which addresses how your church can break out of the inexorable cycle of growth, institutionalism and decline.

The next issue of *Candour* is the final one for 2005. Any meditations on the past year are welcome, as are essays on the November issue's theme, which is Endings and Beginnings. We'll be interpreting this in terms of planting parishes, starting in a new parish, closing a church, being a new minister and transition ministry. Contact me if you'd like to contribute.

Also before the end of the year, the editorial committee will be planning *Candour* for 2006. If there are any themes that you think would be good to canvass or any suggestions you have about the magazine as a whole, please drop me a line at candour@presbyterian.org.nz.

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Playing backgammon with the All Blacks

Andrew Bell, *Global Mission secretary, Auckland*

The twin concepts of cross-cultural mission and multicultural ministry are faulty in my view. They are as illogical as attempting to grow your church by going down to the local sports bar when an All Black test is on the big screen and trying to convince patrons to move to the church hall to play backgammon. Nothing wrong with playing backgammon, it just simply does not match up in that context.

The whole history of mission is characterised by crossing oceans and mountain ranges, carrying the cross of Christ. Not surprisingly, when culture was identified as a frontier to be crossed, similar terminology was used. However, this reduces culture to a physical divide to be vanquished rather than a human sociological construct used to order personal and corporate chaos.

Sadly, mission has remained strongly associated with the subjugation of other people groups despite warnings of the emerging discipline of social anthropology. Wave after wave of soldiers, settlers and missionaries carried the “civilising power” of the Christian West and North to the “pagan savages” of the East and South (including Aotearoa) in the name of aristocracy, greed and the Church. I am not convinced that much has changed in the life and practices of our church today.

I obviously did not have the opportunity to embark on any primary research for an article such as this. It is my impression that the twin terms of cross-cultural and multicultural are used interchangeably and without much consistency in our midst today. Generally speaking, however, cross-cultural ministry usually refers to a person/s who conducts ministry within the bounds of a people group other than their own. There is no obligation to jettison any of their own cultural norms and values and they will often be guilty of attempting to civilise the (so called) ignorant practices they find. Multicultural ministry, on the other hand, is seemingly used to describe what happens when people of other culture/s begin to worship in a previously monocultural congregation. Again there is no obligation on the dominant/resident culture to adapt or change and they are generally happy for the others to join in, so long as they don't try to change anything

and are willing to tithe or pay rent. Both understandings lack integrity in my opinion. Add to this mix the concept of biculturalism, and one can feel quite confused quite quickly.

Just as lingual communication requires a reasonable working knowledge of one language by two or more people, so too cross-cultural ministry requires some form of immersion in the recipient culture. It is impossible to communicate effectively in a particular cultural setting without both a reasonable working knowledge of the cultural norms and an adoption of at least some of them. To

achieve this with any integrity, anthropologists have long argued that one must assimilate

Mission-speak is the proverbial flavour of the decade

into the culture. However, it stands to reason that if this is achieved, then it can no longer be termed “cross-cultural ministry” but rather “culturally specific ministry”.

This has not stopped thousands from attempting cross-cultural ministry with some hilarious results. I could quote many examples – but the sight of a Zulu minister perspiring profusely while preaching in a full Geneva gown with stole and clerical collar outdoors on a blazing hot African afternoon made me realise that our missionary forebears did not do much work on contextualising the Gospel or the practices of the Church. There are many practices in our Church today that make me commit myself again and again to assimilating and communicating from within rather than without. But by no means am I arguing for a beatification of culture which restricts or exempts all cultural practices from vigorous critique and challenge. For example, Bevans and Schroeder¹ offer six models of missiological engagement with culture. The counter-cultural view would suggest that culture must be respected but regarded with suspicion, while the synthetic view encourages culture to continuously reform and improve by including elements from other cultures.

As a concept, multicultural ministry has been around a long time. The term is clearly plural in terms of culture but seemingly singular in terms of ministry. Ministry in foreign cultures can be identified throughout both Testaments with arguably the most famous being Jonah's

refusal to preach repentance to the Gentile Ninevites. Arriving in a big fish can stimulate some interesting discussion on the process of enculturation but I digress.

Somehow we don't seem to be able to hold the Apostle Paul's twin assertions in a creative tension. Writing to the fledgling church in Corinth (1 Cor 9:20ff) Paul describes how he became like the Jew and like the weak. In fact, he states that he became all things to all people so that by all possible means some might be saved.

However, to the Christians in Galatia (Gal 3:26ff) and to the Colossians (3:11) Paul writes that we are all one under the banner of Christ. Somehow we seem to have lost these truths in the clamour for power, status and prestige in the ranks of the Church. Somehow the process of enculturation has to be held in a creative tension with the counter-cultural and synthetic imperatives of the Gospel. The evangel is about liberation from what existed before and we are, as the Apostle Paul describes us, a new creation where the old things have passed away. Furthermore, we should no longer view life from a worldly point of view (2 Cor: 5:16ff). However, let us never forget that we are not called to be cultural crusaders.

If one extrapolates this line of thought out to the macro world view for a moment, one finds some interesting and possibly disturbing trends. Christians in the North and West who held the cultural capital for so long have been usurped. The centre of Christian gravity has shifted East and South, where massive Church growth is in stark contrast to the terminal decline in the West and North. I heard recently that extensive calculations had been done to calculate where the middle of the Christian world is now located. Not surprisingly it is no longer Geneva, Edinburgh or London, but Timbuktu. This is no joke and for those of you who thought it was a fictitious place, get your atlas out and look in Mali in West Africa. Interestingly Timbuktu was part of the ancient Ghana Empire before the Moroccan (1591) and French (1880) invasions carved up the region into a number of smaller independent states. Strangely enough, it is a predominantly Islamic city.

This immediately begs the question: in which direction should mission flow in this century? And secondly: will Europe be re-evangelised by African or Asian expressions of Christianity? The obvious answer is "not likely!"

It is an ugly reality if Christianity in the North and West cannot be (re)shaped by African and Asian expressions of Christianity. It signals the continuation of the lack of humility and willingness to learn that has characterised so much of mission in the past, and the folly of continuing to think that it can still flow East and South.

Philip Wickeri's essay "Toward a Kenosis of Mission: emptying and empowerment for the church and the world"²² offers some very helpful insights in this regard. For Wickeri Kenosis or the emptying of one's self is the vital missing ingredient in much of what is called mission today. Wickeri points out that mission fell from grace because of its association with imperialism, colonialism, racism, patriarchy and domination. In fact, objections reached such a pitch in recent decades that seminaries around the world stopped offering studies in missiology for fear of negative publicity.

When I arrived in New Zealand nine years ago, I can remember a local academic laughing out loud when I described myself as a missiologist. Nobody is laughing now in the face of dramatic denominational decline, and mission-speak is the proverbial flavour of the decade. Unfortunately it largely takes place in a missiological vacuum, resulting in everything being mission (and therefore nothing is mission, too) or in models and practices emerging that belong in yesteryear.

In fact, I don't think it will be long until Donald MacGavran's "homogenous unit principle"²³ is reborn. MacGavran argued that the difficulties experienced in church life when trying to accommodate multiple cultural groups justified setting up separate homogenous cultural churches, in a style reminiscent of Apartheid in South Africa. He contended that this was the only way to accelerate evangelism and church growth - and this practice can be easily identified in every New Zealand city today.

In contrast, Wickeri argues that kenosis missiology seeks to rediscover a missiology of liberation. This finds its genesis in the missiological bedrock of the *missio Dei* (mission of God) of Philippians 2:7, where God is described as being emptied to take on the form of a slave. If one is determined to give self entirely to the missionary enterprise, then it is very difficult to operate from a position of power - and culturally based constructs are power. One must recognise that even the scriptures do not have a single or

**In which direction should mission flow in this century?
Will Europe be re-evangelised by African or Asian
expressions of Christianity?**

universal centre resulting in a single authoritarian interpretation and understanding. Rather the wonderful diversity of the scriptures is read within the richness of the cultural context in which mission is taking place. It is in this cultural setting that the kairos moment is experienced as the Holy Spirit illuminates the scriptures in that time and place. The Word is suddenly living and active in the midst of the people and the evangel is heard. Wickeri suggests that in this way the scriptures are no longer “an anchor for tradition but a springboard for faith and action”.

I think it is possible to easily understand and concur with this assertion if one considers the popular evangelical passage of Revelation 3:20 where the writer quotes Jesus as saying “Here I am. I stand at the door and knock”. In some cultures, only thieves knock on the door. If Jesus is to have any credibility in that context, a new image will have to be used. The complexity of culture will never be navigated when one thinks in terms of working across a cultural divide. Nor will a one-size-fits-all approach survive in a multicultural setting long-term. It is all far more complex than that.

A past professor of mine, J.N.J Kritzinger⁴, describes mission in this way: “I understand Christian mission to be an inclusive complex of activities aimed at the anticipation and provisional realisation of God’s reign in history. It includes evangelism but is much wider. Mission is the ‘cutting edge’ of the Christian movement, embodying a way of life that refuses to accept the status quo and keeps on trying to change it, being pushed and pulled by the

Spirit of God towards the final dawning of God’s reign”. If one understands mission to be like this, talk of cross-cultural (and multicultural) mission is far too simplistic in the context of the melting pot that is our global village – or places like South Auckland for that matter.

Maybe the All Blacks do offer us an example of how it should work. Despite being drawn from many cultural backgrounds, when they pull on the black jersey, they are a new creation. As the haka rings out across the ground, there isn’t a single person who would argue they are not all New Zealanders. However, the team is made up of a multiplicity of players and staff, each with a unique role to play.

References

- ¹ Bevans, S & Schroeder, R. 2004 *Constants in Context – a theology of mission for today* Maryknoll: Orbis
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- ³ MacGavran, D. 1990 *Understanding Church Growth 3* Ed Grand Rapids: Eerdmans
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Can you wear a tartan lavalava?

Martin Baker, First Church of Otago, Dunedin

In 1967, the Congregational Church of Moray Place, whose members included a significant number of Samoans and a smaller group of Cook Islanders, merged with the First Church congregation. This merger heralded the beginning of a multicultural journey that continues to the present time.

The identity that arose from this merger is most obviously expressed in our worship services. A traditional English language service at 10am, a Cook Island language service at 11.30am, a Samoan Service at 2pm and, twice a month, a youth service mostly in English and orientated toward young Pacific people. Four times a year we all get

together for Communion, for which a multilingual liturgy has been developed.

Does it all hold together? The answer must be an emphatic “sometimes”. I admire the visionaries who set out on this journey all those years ago. But all journeys provide a source for stories. Some of these stories contain elements of paternalism and racism and some are stories of joy and transformation.

We need to remember that Dunedin remains one of the most mono-cultural cities in New Zealand – 93 percent of the population are of British ancestry and 3 percent or less

are from Pacific islands. Dunedin's settled (non-student) population is also relatively static and ageing. While the celebration of Pacific culture is evident in the activities of one or two Dunedin high schools, Pacific people are still regarded by most as an unknown and somewhat distant entity. It is in this climate that First Church has been identified as a centre of not only worship for Pacific Island communities but also as something of a cradle for nurturing language, custom and community.

There is real diversity between the different cultures that make up broad heading of "Pacific peoples". However, the following are (contestable) generalisations that have emerged from my experience:

The role of the minister. The minister has a defined place and role within the structure and organisation of Pacific communities. Any event of significance requires the presence of at least one minister and on these occasions their denomination seems less important. There is a strongly covenantal relationship between the community and minister – with the minister's well-being reflecting directly on the mana of the community. You can never be a part-time minister. In contrast, the role of minister within dominant New Zealand culture is an anomaly and highly ambiguous. The minister has become more of a salaried worker where "the ministry" is what someone does. Secular culture, by definition, has no place for the concept of minister as it is understood within Pacific communities.

The church for our Pacific community acts as the equivalent of a marae. It is not only the centre of spiritual and community life but is also the place where identity is found and affirmed. While there appears to be no division between the secular and the sacred in terms of the Pacific Island church community, in reality the church, its grounds and facilities are almost a separate land with a unique system of language, economy, values and behaviour. The starkest expression of this difference comes in allocating the use of buildings. An example would be when there is a death in the Pacific community. At that point, the entire community gathers around the grieving family, and the hall and kitchens are used for the days of family services and finally the funeral itself, which is usually followed by a large meal and some hours of time together. But, the Pakeha asks, "what about the group

of 100 who have booked the facilities for a conference, what about the 80 senior citizens who meet weekly in the hall and pay good rent?" These are seemingly superficial issues but underlying them is a breadth of attitudes and beliefs, which can come into painful conflict.

Of particular interest, and the source of significant misinformation, is what we could call the "Pacific economy". These are cultures of reciprocity. They are self-insuring – particularly at times of loss but also in celebration. Money given at a hair-cutting ceremony may be kept in trust for the young person's education or even to help with a first home purchase, and at funerals the entire family cost including all transport and all debt owed by the family at that time may be covered by the wider community's support. Of course there are distortions and abuses in every economic system, but when it works, and it works often, I get a very strong sense of the ways that the earliest Christian communities in the book of Acts shared their resources.

Celebrations. The Pacific communities know how to party. They hold lavish, generous messianic banquets that have an open invitation. They are inclusive and redemptive in their nature. I have never seen the insane, poorly dressed person with a dodgy past, or any outsider, turned away or made to feel any less than welcome. (The after-church morning tea with a vanilla biscuit – what is that about? Get the silver out and at least make some decent coffee.)

There are for me more questions about our multicultural future than there are answers:

Growth. A culture and its language are inseparable – but what happens when knowledge of the language is a prerequisite for full participation? (In a simple way, we can ask this question about a spoken language but in a more complex way, we can ask this about how we order our knowledge and construct our worldview.)

Responsibilities. Is it the church's role to preserve the integrity of any particular culture? We readily affirm the importance of environmental conservation as part of our celebration and stewardship of God's creation, but is there a Biblical mandate to preserve vulnerable cultures? – For instance, the Cook Island language is, according to

The church is not only the centre of spiritual and community life but is also the place where identity is found and affirmed

some recent studies, on the precipice of extinction. Does the church itself, faithful to its mission, have a responsibility here? Is there a theology of cultural preservation?

The prophetic voice. In terms of almost every social measure, Pacific Island people are amongst the poorest identifiable group within New Zealand society. Yet I need to look hard for any instance where we as a church have named the economic, health and educational deprivation that exists among a very significant community within our church. There is an overwhelming Gospel mandate to address the issues of poverty that are in our midst.

The average age of Pacific people in New Zealand is well below their Pakeha counterparts, with 40 percent of the Pacific population under 15. We should celebrate the presence of young and able people in our commu-

nity who have firsthand involvement in the life of a worshipping congregation. There is a challenge here for us. Culturally and linguistically, this group is in a state of significant transition. The church and its leader's ability to resolve the tension between the old and the new among this group will determine the future of the presence of young Pacific people in the life of our church.

These issues, and no doubt many others, will shape our multicultural life together. Occasionally I wear a kilt and sometimes a lava lava. We join the tangata whenua as skirted people. I do not think Jesus wore trousers either. There is something new coming into being here at First Church and in Aotearoa New Zealand. The most wondrous and overwhelming event in life is to witness a birth.

Finding a home: Asians in black

Stuart Vogel, Council of Asian Congregations, Auckland

Immigration in New Zealand works on the principle of seismic jolts. The first, major, recent jolt was in 1987, when the Government changed New Zealand's traditionally restrictive immigration policy to: "if you have cash and/or the skills that we need, you can come" (to put it simply).

The numbers of Taiwanese and Korean immigrants skyrocketed. For one brief period in 1995, Taiwan displaced the United Kingdom as our primary source country for migrants: the only time before or since that this has happened. The numbers of Asian churches in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand also soared, from two congregations to 11 or so.

Then around 1996, a second seismic jolt occurred and the number of Asian migrants to New Zealand plummeted. We had, it seemed, "too many Asians". An age-old exclusion tactic swung in to place: migrants had to pass an English test.

One hundred years ago, migrants walking off ships in New Zealand ports had to read 100 words in English to the immigration officers. If the Chinese couldn't - and everyone knew they couldn't - the ship's captain would have to take them away again.

Over the past five years, there has been another much more subtle "seismic" shift in Asian ministry.

When Doug Howlett, the All Black winger, scored the first of his three tries against Australia recently, the TV cameras panned over the cheering crowd. There they were; a young Asian couple, wild with excitement, wearing black and waving a "go Tana" sign. Ten years ago, ministry to new Asian migrants meant trying to explain the rules of rugby and why it was more popular than soccer.

No more "Asian congregations?"

I don't talk about "migrant Asian congregations" now. Almost all the members of my congregation, the Auckland Central Taiwanese Presbyterian Church, are New Zealand citizens. They have New Zealand passports.

One of our teenagers, who was born in Taiwan, went back there after 10 years in New Zealand. She was glad to see her relatives, but was shocked by the pollution and the different way of life. Somehow, Taiwan was no longer where it was at for her. On coming back to New Zealand, she felt great relief to be home.

She is the "1.5 generation"; young, articulate, bilingual, at home in New Zealand and (almost) voting. Yes, many young Asians do go overseas for work experience, but

then so do many other young New Zealanders. This country is home and where they want to bring up their kids.

Reading the Signs of the Times

Britain will continue to supply more immigrants than anywhere else (currently 30.8 percent of all immigrants) Today, less than 1 percent of all immigrants come from Taiwan and just 3.7 percent come from Korea. This is unlikely to change because the English language requirement for new immigrants will remain.

However, the 120 percent projected increase in NZ's Asian population between now and 2021 is probably correct. The number of people of ethnic Asian origin will reach 600,000 in that year due to natural increase and continuing immigration. There is no Asian invasion but the Asian population is significant.

China (despite the English language requirement) supplies 10.4 percent of all migrants. These figures throw up a particular mission challenge. Although migrants from China come from an aggressively atheistic state, they are not themselves necessarily anti-Christian.

India provides 6.9 percent of the total number of migrants. A further 5.9 percent come from Fiji, most of whom are Indian. The Indian Church in Auckland is a response to this challenge.

Challenges over the next 10 years

No English speaking congregation anywhere in New Zealand will be able to avoid "Asian ministry". Many urban congregations already have Asian families coming to services.

We need to learn how to extend hospitality and ministry to those whose English is not perfect and whose life experiences are different from our own. And equally importantly, are we ready to receive hospitality and ministry from them...?

Ministry training will need to include courses on the cultural needs and pastoral needs of Asian people. Continuing education courses at Presbytery level for all ministers should include this too.

Asian congregations and language specific ministries will continue to respond to needs for outreach and ministry in

culturally appropriate ways. The balance between Asian involvement in presbytery (for example) and in specifically Asian regional and national programmes will need to be understood and affirmed.

"Seismic jolts" in immigration policy are unhelpful. We need Government policies that are fair, just and consistent. Changes should be adjustments to meet emerging needs.

Take a look at your Church windows...

Often New Zealand Christians naturally and rightly want to join together in fellowship, ministry and mission with Asian people. However "multiculturalism" and "cross-culturalism" must not become ends in themselves. The All Blacks and their supporters are a good model. The fact that the team is multicultural is not in itself an aim or a cause for celebration. The team's aim is to win tests by letting each player bring their unique skills and flair to

the team and game. When that happens, we celebrate.

Like many others, I am a product and living example of what an early missionary

in Taiwan called the "Western window". A stained glass window in a Church filters and interprets the light coming through it. I understand the "light of Christ" through the patterns and insights of faith that my significant people have cast upon me.

However, now some of those significant people are not "Western". Many are Asian. I now choose – consciously and daily — to try to bathe in the light, to understand and interpret it, share it and enjoy it as it comes through their different windows as well. I do not always find this easy. I like to think my listening skills have increased as I try to grasp faith as they see it.

One of my first crucial lessons about cross-cultural ministry was in Taiwan but the lesson had nothing to do with the Taiwanese. The American and English missionaries working there at times found it culturally difficult to understand each other. A senior Canadian missionary – precisely because he had quite a few clues about both countries and their people – could offer them all an unobtrusive, sensitive and effective ministry with great skill and grace. Privately, I think he probably felt that the Taiwanese were a piece of cake after that: but he never said so.

Why I'm proud to belong here

Karima Fai'ai, St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Gore

I have been asked to write something about my experience in cross-cultural ministry, specifically as a Pacific Island minister in a Palagi parish. I would imagine that some of my ramblings that follow may ring familiar bells with others already in ministry, whatever the form of ministry.

I have been in New Zealand 17 years now, and I suppose, for what it's worth, that should qualify me as one of the locals. During that time, I have noticed some distinct changes evolving in both the cultural and social make-up of our local communities, as more and more new cultures continue to be either introduced or have sprung from the fabric of New Zealand society. Apparently a good few of the so-called locals have spoken out against these changes being thrust upon them, as they've found themselves constantly having to adapt and adjust in order to cope. It's much safer and easier living in a monocultural environment, some have said. I guess the question would be asked, "how can one sustain complete loyalty to one's culture of origin in a foreign land?" If the Israelites' experience in Egypt and Babylon is anything to go by, then the answer is clearly "it's not possible".

In fact, there is a sad trend happening amid the growing multiculturalism in our country today. More and more people feel they are forced to build their own little cultural empires, as opposed to working with and across the spectrum of cultures that make up the whole. We don't need to look further than within the walls of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand to see an example of that happening.

By the way, when I say culture, I don't just mean ethnicity and race. It also includes things like theology, liturgy, music, pedagogy, leadership, mana, gender, social background and charismatic gifts. It involves all these things and more, not only in their separateness but equally in their chemistry together.

I wonder if Dr Brash's fortunes could have been different if he had placed more emphasis on the importance of cross-cultural relationships during his pre-election campaign. Who knows? One thing we know is that despite claiming victory, the Labour Party cannot run this coun-

try alone. It needs to secure support from across at least some of the minor benches in order to keep its grasp on power for the next three years.

All this "cross-bench" reflection has set me thinking just what it is that makes me feel proud to belong here, in this corner of Aotearoa New Zealand, for longer than a passing moment. Until I came to Gore, I had spent all my years in New Zealand in cross-cultural ministries, trying to build and belong to a cross-cultural community. First as an active parishioner at St Paul's Trinity Pacific and later as minister of the Waihao Co-operating and the Oamaru Union parishes. That's where I found my primary identity as a matured Christian. Now I find myself caught up in maintaining one conspicuous face of a straight denominational culture and constantly measuring the mission-worthiness of that face. That is an ongoing challenge, and for me

We are still in the middle of the race

the answers are not yet found by winning any "general elections" and securing the best seat in the house. We are still in the middle of the race, campaigning furiously. My self-respect on this journey is very much bound up in the discoveries I keep having to make about myself and this rapidly evolving community of faith I belong to.

Everything I learnt about what it is to be Samoan, male, minister, parent and partner has undergone huge change, and keeps on changing. What it is to be Christian has undergone equal turns, not separately, but more as an outcome of all those other identities. The idea of a Christ who is within and around and beneath and above and most of all ahead of me has never meant more than it does in the midst of this turbulent change.

Communities that can cope with these changes are the ones I want to stay with. The ones that keep dragging me back to be someone I no longer am don't help much. They make me feel like a Great Pretender. None of the churches that I've served at — including St Andrews Gore — has once tried to make me feel like that. Because whatever else you can't say about Presbyterianism today, it still, by and large, honours its vocation of respecting the variety of ways we can belong to the Body of Christ. For me, that is more than a good reason to be proud about being a Samoan Presbyterian minister in Aotearoa New Zealand.

On eating potatoes in Vanuatu

Roy Pearson, Port Vila, Vanuatu

September 11th seems a funny day to be starting an article on cross-cultural mission; but perhaps upon reflection it is not so strange after all. September 11th has taught me many things about cross-cultural mission, and while I will not pretend to be an expert in this area, I offer some reflections. (Those at BCNZ who knew of my determined avoidance of any and all mission-related papers: I think they are all laughing now.)

Firstly, September the 11th 1993, the day I married my lovely wife. An event which continues to teach me about living with others, not assuming others have the same expectations as oneself, being prepared to give up one's own position to accommodate/understand the view point of others; all of which can be applied to cross-cultural mission. However, I wish to reflect on two other September elevenths.

September 11th, 2005, found Anna and I at Bushman's Bay, Malekula, Vanuatu. A lovely spot at which I was invited to preach on this Sunday morning. During the lunch after the service, we were served potatoes. This is the first time in two years that we have eaten potatoes, real kiwi potatoes. It is true that we have eaten taro, manioc, kumara and various forms of sweet potato, but real potatoes, what a treat. Potatoes don't grow in Vanuatu and therefore have to be imported, and with the huge import duties, which can be as high as 70 percent, potatoes are priced beyond the reach of almost all ni-Vanuatu, and certainly are far too expensive to be included in our food budget. Yet here in Bushman's Bay we find potatoes on the menu; on the table.

Here I learnt from my ni-Vanuatu friends. How often do we invite people from other cultures for a meal and serve them our favourite food? Food that may not be the favourite of those whom we have invited.

I have often struggled through a meal of laplap (the local favourite), but here in front of me was a meal that could be enjoyed, not endured. What a blessing. Please remember this when hosting persons of other cultures.

Another September the 11th, this one in 2001, taught me that cross-cultural mission can only be done on an individual to individual basis. It cannot and does not work at a national or even regional level. Cross-cultural mission is about how people relate to other people, not how coun-

ties relate to other countries, or even how the PI Synod relates to Te Aka Puaho; it is about how you and I relate here and now. Well-chosen words spoken on our behalf, by our leaders, do not make cross-cultural mission. It is about how we talk, act, and respect each other.

I wish to relate one other experience, however this one did not happen on the 11th of September. I was in New Zealand attending an event and had the opportunity to worship in English, which I thought nothing of until I found myself moved to tears. Something in my spirit was touched in a way that worshipping in bislama could not do. What an experience.

After living in Vanuatu I still struggle to pray in bislama. I'm fluent in the language and speak publicly in bislama, yet somehow prayers don't seem real until they are in English. I cannot explain this, except that I have spoken at length to ni-Vanuatu for whom bislama is also a second or third or twelfth language (Most ni-Van are multilingual, speaking many different village languages and bislama, English and French. Vanuatu has more languages per head of population than any other country in the world). They all say that worshipping in their mother tongue is somehow more meaningful – more spiritual – more moving – more encouraging – more enlightening – more real.

The implications of this are huge. Those of you who have mixed congregations, sing a song or two each Sunday in the mother tongue of those present, pray prayers in other languages – or invite them to lead prayers. Allow for times and services in the mother tongue of these groups. I used to think of this as the "token Cook Island song" but now realise the error of my ways when asking why people would want to come and live in NZ and not worship in English. Now I can understand the reason why so many expatriates in Port Vila worship at any English-speaking church. There is something very powerful about worshipping in your native language, in which your spirit can soar and your soul can fly.

Once again, I'm no expert but this is some of what I have learnt in two years living in Vanuatu. I could fill a book with all the experiences of how things work (or don't work) in Vanuatu in contrast to NZ, (the V factor, as the expats call it) but that is not the purpose of this article.

What's happened to biculturalism?

Ken Irwin, minister within the bounds, Wellington

I sense the Presbyterian Church is like the general adult population of New Zealand country when it comes to things Maori. If the election result is anything to go by, fractionally over half of us think there needs to be some recognition of Maori but we are uncomfortable talking about it and don't really know what we wish. And fractionally under half of us don't want any special place for Maori but we too are not comfortable talking about it. Nevertheless, each of us is becoming more and more comfortable talking about these things with people who have the same views as us, and less and less ready to listen (whakarongomai) to those who have the other view. We seem to be taking up sides in an argument without being at all clear what the argument is actually about.

I write like this because it seems to me that some sort of argument (undeclared) about Maori is happening in the Presbyterian Church. Over recent times:

The Council of Assembly announced that it was cutting budgets across the church departments, including Te Aka Puaho. And I thought to myself: is that the way we deal with a Partner? Do we not talk to a Partner and get their views before we do something like that? (The General Assembly some time ago declared that Te Aka Puaho was a "Covenant" Partner.)

- I heard the comment loudly expressed in a church forum: "...it's time we stopped giving money to the Maori."
- I read that one of the few consistent themes of the Focus on the Future consultations was a politer version of the previous point.
- Te Aka Puaho response to the recent call for donated funds was to donate a considerable sum from its capital reserves.

This has a commonality in the matter of money. It also has an eerie ring that echoes other issues alive and well in our land concerning a so-called "special deal for Maori". A growing number of New Zealanders, including many Presbyterians, are resisting the term "bicultural partnership" with regard to Maori and non-Maori New Zealanders. The term "bicultural" refers to a special relationship of two parties only, not more, and in Aotearoa New Zealand that means a special relationship between Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders.

I favour the Presbyterian Church continuing its bicultural partnership and journey with Maori! But I would like more emphasis on active listening to Maori in the next steps on that journey. Let me explain.

I do understand some of the resistance to such a notion, especially from those who wish to recognise the growing identity of other ethnic groups within the country and the church. We are positively blooming with the rich diversity of separate Pacific identities and separate Asian identities, not to mention the growing presence of refugee people, including South Africans. Each of these thriving faith subcommunities within our church is having impact-for-the-good on the church. So why not focus on a multicultural journey instead of the more exclusive bicultural partnership?

Well, I don't think we have our relationship right with our indigenous sisters and brothers yet and, until we do, I don't think we will have a constructive model to get our relationships right with our other partners. This has next to nothing to do with money, for instance. For me, the priorities over the next few years are for us (Pakeha New Zealanders) to:

- Understand better the Maori view of the world
- Understand more about how they relate the Christian Gospel to their living
- Affirm our own identity as Pakeha New Zealanders
- Accept some of their taonga (treasures) into our own faith frameworks
- Adapt our understandings into our relationships with other ethnic groups.

But the very first step just has to be whakarongomai (listening). Not discussing, certainly not arguing, but listening to a perspective and later making judgements about it. Then returning for an engagement in which our own perspectives are listened to. Joan Metge, renowned sociologist and a woman proud to call herself a Pakeha New Zealander has written a monograph on a process for such engagement. Called *Korero Tahi*, it was published a few years ago and is available in libraries.

For all these reasons I applaud the initiatives taken by the Council and the Moderator to engage with Te Aka Puaho on the future of our Church and the place of Maori within it.

I think the country at large would benefit from such initiatives. We need plenty and varied models of constructive engagement with Maori.

Wouldn't it be a great thing if in 2006 groups from all regions met at Te Maungarongo (the Te Aka Puaho marae at Ohope, Bay of Plenty) to engage with and listen to Maori on matters of faith, Treaty (we might be surprised with their views) and multicultural relationships. We would need to gain agreement from Te Aka Puaho and be ready to share in the costs of such an event, including helping in the setting up and closing down of the facility.

What follows are some short jottings on simple facts on matters Maori within the Presbyterian Church and some frameworks that might arise in a korero tahi.

What does the title Te Aka Puaho actually mean? "The Glistening Vine" It is the vine that binds together the differing species of trees in the forest.

How did Laughton House get its name? The Very Rev J G Laughton was superintendent of Maori Missions and Moderator of the General Assembly. Hoani (John) Laughton spent some years in London supervising the translation and printing of the Bible into Maori

Who were given the title "kotuku" (The White Heron)? The Presbyterian Deaconesses, who brought education and health services to Maori.

What does a kaituki do? Stands in the middle of the waka, and sets the rhythm (pace and synchronisation). Decides when to lift or lower the pace, and ensures a uniform stroke from the differing paddlers. It's a key leadership role, quite different from the vision/direction setter (where to go) and the navigator (how to get there). A good model for faith community leadership structures.

What does MMBL stand for? Maori Missions Birthday League. Organised through the Presbyterian Women and the Methodist Women's Fellowship (now) it allowed each church member to make a donation to Maori Missions on their birthday. Imagine the revenue annually from 30,000 Presbyterians at \$10.00 a birthday!

One of the understated benefits of the Treaty of Waitangi is the opportunity for the Pakeha partners to share in new wisdom and insights of thinking about the world from

the perspective of our Maori partners. Maori signed up to a commitment to share their treasures, including their frameworks for understanding life and life events.

Matariki

The Maori New Year began in June. The first three months come at the start of winter, but their dimensions of meaning reach way beyond climate, and can be slotted into the routines and rhythms of families and congregations.

Pipiri (June) derives from Piri – literally "coming close together". It is the time when the wider whanau, which has been scattered afar, now gathers back together in preparation for managing the challenges of the winter. We begin bonding again as we get ready to generate our own warmth for the colder periods ahead. Pipiri reminds us of the tasks of re-bonding in family and friendships.

Hongongoi (July) is a fun word, literally and figuratively. It means to "stoop down and waddle together" a bit like penguins! It is the time when the people having come back together move into smaller and lower dwelling spaces for warmth. It is a time when the whanau focuses on internal rather than external matters. Honongoi encourages us to focus on internal togetherness.

Here-Turi-Koka (August) is another expressive term. It refers to family huddling together around the fire. A collective sharing of warmth. It's a time of being warmed together.

The later months naturally lend their meanings to collective tasks around the warmer climate: a time for planting.

Wouldn't it be a great thing if we could incorporate these seasonal and spiritual insights into a lectionary framework with accompanying biblical readings.

Those of you who know me recognise that I make these remarks from a position of privilege. I'm not dead yet [truly!] but when I do die I will have had literally a cradle-to-grave intimate association with Te Aka Puaho and its predecessors, Te Hinota Maori and Presbyterian Maori Missions. The "privilege" has been the experience of being nurtured, cajoled, affirmed and challenged within a Maori setting. I have a fervour for others to share in the benefits. But I write this as an individual. I have not consulted with Te Aka Puaho or anyone else.

Recognising the rural voice

Stephanie Wells, ordinand, Dunedin

Usually we consider cross-cultural issues in relation to ethnicity but I would like to challenge that perspective. I think we also need to consider the difference between some other cultures such as that between rural and urban churches/people.

Since I starting ordination training this year, I have often been asked where I come from. I have found I hesitate to claim Auckland because this sets up a certain expectation I am not comfortable with: ie JAFA. Therefore, I tend to mention my five years in Auckland and then quickly go on to highlight my eighteen years in the Far North. Why do I have such a cultural cringe? Because I experienced such a contrast of culture between living in an isolated rural area and in Auckland.

Rural people ARE different. We tend to feed you more to start with. I was mortified to turn up to “bring a plate” events in Auckland to find most had only brought a few biscuits while I had enough for an army. And the emphasis on “good” coffee! What was wrong with instant, or even a cup of tea? For months I was too scared to order a coffee in a café because I couldn’t figure out whether the coffee I wanted was a latte, or a long black, or a cappuccino, or... And how did you say those fancy names anyway?

Rural churches emphasise relationships because we are so interrelated anyway. My neighbouring pew sitter may well be my boss, my cousin, my pupil or my casual worker. Anonymity is not easy. This means if we march for Jesus down the main street we are exposing ourselves to our friends and neighbours in a much more direct way than is likely in the city. Street-corner-type evangelism has huge dangers for us because we live and work with these people. They see the “real” us and so our witness must have integrity.

Even though we live in the same country and speak the same language (sort of), rural and city cultures are quite different. Thus I think we need to use cross-cultural methodology in any meeting between these two cultures. Do we, as urban or rural dwellers, actively listen to the others’ point of view? Do we really appreciate the distance some rural people have to travel to church or meetings? Do we realise the pace at which urban dwellers live and the pressure this puts them under to make quick decisions?

A recent leadership journal asks why our sole measure of cultural diversity is ethnicity. They suggest, as I have, that there are other measures. In a rural parish we have to have diversity. With only one church for miles, we often don’t have the choice of going to the other one down the road that has “better” music/preaching/children’s programme. Therefore, we have family services every Sunday, where we cope with the bouncy two-year during the prayer time because she’s one of the church’s 80-year-old’s great-grandchild. Besides, when you only have two or three children attending, you treasure them all.

We learn to tolerate, sometimes even enjoy, music that ranges from a children’s action song to a hymn by Luther; even when it’s played on a wheezy old harmonium accompanied by irregular tambourine crashes. Why? Because that harmonium player is carrying on her mother’s role as a faithful church organist. How do you tell this 60-year-old that such faithfulness is no longer needed. And the tambourine is in the hands of a 40-year-old Downs Syndrome “child” who has been brought by his mother ever since a former minister provided the support she needed at that time. How can we as a congregation squash the joy this man-child and his mother have in being able to come to a place that accepts them as part of the family?

In small rural parishes, we may have to abandon ideas of excellence because the talent isn’t there, but we are great places for encouraging you to take part, to try new things because – hey, we need you. In such a small environment, we notice if you don’t take part and we care enough to try to find out why and to nut out the expertise that you didn’t even know you had.

For rural churches, so much of the “how-to-do” church doesn’t seem to apply and we often feel sidelined by all the hype about growth. When the local freezing works has just closed and the local farmers are cutting back spending, our entire population tends to decline. And then we have the perennial problem of our youth leaving for work opportunities and further education. To then suggest we should be growing numerically is ridiculous, and yet we feel guilty that it’s not happening. If our town or district is hemorrhaging people, rural areas should be congratulated if we are just able to retain previous numbers. Are we?

As our schools, hospitals and other infrastructure start disappearing around us, we start to cling to what is still there. Yes, it is very logical to close down the little old church with only 10 members, but to us that may be our last link to a past that in times of tremendous change becomes even more precious - a link to a time when we were secure. Now nothing is secure and we hang on, even if we know it is irrational, to what remains.

I'd like to end with a plea for all those contemplating the cross-cultural dilemma – widen your scope. We are not dealing just with people with different countries of origin or colours, we have wide gaps between those who are born-and-bred Kiwis too.

How much do we know about teenage culture these days? How much do we know about those who gave up church for rock and roll – in the 50's? What about the gang culture or Country and Western fanatics? What about the cultural angst between Chinese who have been here for generations and those who have just arrived?

Those of us on either side of the rural/urban divide may have difficulty understanding each other at times, but by recognising this and using cross-cultural techniques to bridge the gaps we will all be greatly enriched.

Is God calling you to vibrant rural ministry?

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We seek two ministers to team up and work across the three parishes.

For further information and expressions of interest contact the Nominator:

Rev. Owen Rogers,
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TRANSITIONAL MINISTER WANTED

The Auckland Methodist Central Parish is made up of five diverse congregations – Aotea Chapel Queens Street; Pitt Street 'K' Road; Epsom; Kingsland and Mt Eden.

All ages are reflected in the life of the Parish. In some of the congregations there are lively youth groups and active children's work.

Currently there are five part-time Presbyters working in the Parish. There is an efficient administrative team of four part-time staff; Secretary, Parish Treasurer, Parish Property Manager, & Administrative Assistant.

The Parish is looking for a qualified **full-time Transitional Minister**, Lay or Ordained, who will work with four part-time Presbyters and Lay leaders to help the Parish explore innovative and creative ways of being church in the 21st Century.

A profile of the Parish, Job description and Terms of Appointment are available from;

Rev. John Murray, Mission Resourcing
655 Otewa Road, Otewa. Otorohanga.

Fundraising II: Funding sources

Lisa Wells, CFRE, FFINZ

Before fundraising begins in earnest, it is necessary to address key questions of “what do we do?”, “why” and “who for?”; then we can determine “who should be asked?”. My previous article (*Candour*, August 2005) dealt broadly with the first three questions, so it is the purpose of this article to start to answer the latter question, by way of the table below.

The reason for preparing so well becomes apparent when we start to unwrap the implications of our question. Not only are we concerned with the “who”, but the “when”, “how” and “what for” become crucial in strategy that aims to achieve the best results for, and the greatest ownership of, the mission.

Sources of funding for the mission of your congregation

Who gives? Ways of Giving	Regular worshippers	Participants in Church Activities	People served in Mission	Supporters of the Church	Local Community Individuals	Local Community Groups	Other Churches and groups	Trusts	Government
Spontaneous									
Short-term goal									
Community worship									
Long-term goals									
Planned giving									
Bequests									
Fundraising									
Endowment									
Self Help Grants									
Commercial activity									
Fee for service									

This is a useful chart, which can be used by the group charged with fundraising to open up possibilities. Often in the church, the possibilities for fundraising appear very limited. As discussed in the previous article, we tend to restrict giving opportunities to “passing the plate” and “envelope systems” and then maybe run some community fundraising event, such as an annual fair.

I would like to open your eyes to more possibilities! The column headings in the chart give examples of some of the ways we can differentiate potential givers. Not only are all people unique, but the ways in which they prefer to give are unique. It may seem self-evident but for many congregations it is not obvious. The values that motivate people who grew up in the shadow of the war and/or depression years to give tend to be loyalty, endurance, reciprocity and commitment. I would hasten to add that these values are not unique to these generations, but that they create a contrast when looked at in the light of the prevailing values in a postmodern society. The motivators that affect giving behaviour in the post-war generation tend to be more ego-centric and include: emotional appeal, affiliation with a cause rather than an institution, influence of peers and/or role models, and a desire for immediacy in impact.

Therefore, the permutations are much more extensive than this chart would suggest, but it is a start in changing our thinking. Let’s look at each column heading and consider an example of just one strategy for each group of people. Remember that we are talking about giving here, not purchase of services – paying for a course, renting the hall or any other example of “earned income”.

Regular worshippers – Apart from the discipleship commitment to give generously of time, talents and tithes (which I believe is non-negotiable), regular worshippers should most certainly be asked to consider making a bequest to the parish. If the church is something they have faithfully supported during their lifetime, it is not unrealistic to suggest that, after the needs of family members have been attended to, a regular worshipper might consider a gift to the church. This can be done in a low key way and as part of telling your stories. There are not many parishes that started without the startling generosity of some ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Start to talk about what giving has meant in the past and what it can mean for the future of the parish. This is where a

clearly articulated mission is essential. It’s not about paying the power bill and the stipend. It’s about the mission that you have with God in your place.

Participants in church activities – These are people who associate with the church in some part of its life. They could be the people who define “regular attendance” as Christmas, Easter and funerals. They might be the “Mainly Music” parents. They may well see themselves as part of the congregation, but place it amongst a number of other competing interests. For these people a realistic

strategy is to seek gifts towards a specific purpose. It will be a short-term goal and it may be relevant to their area of connection with the church. For example, “Mainly

Music” mums might like to give to help purchase new musical instruments, which are used by numerous groups in the parish.

People served in mission - The most potent example I have seen of people who have been served in mission giving to the church was when the (non-churched) parents of the young people in a community outdoor education programme got together. Those who had money gave it, those who had time gave it and the result was that these parents and their children cooked and served a meal for the volunteer leaders of their children’s programme (and cleaned up afterwards). This sort of reciprocal generosity had benefits many times greater than the sharing of a simple meal.

Supporters of the church – These people reside in the local community and, although they may regard themselves as part of the church, observe and are impressed by your mission being lived out in the community. They may share with some of the regular worshippers a desire for continuity and could be asked to give to a long-term project, such as repairing a historic building.

Local community individuals – In common with the preceding group, these people will be supportive where your mission impacts the community. They may take an interest in community initiatives such as a “Carols in the Park” and give either to put on the event, or at the event itself.

Local community groups – Other groups may well join with you to achieve something which is perceived to have

Not only are all people unique, but the ways in which they prefer to give are unique

impact in the community. The local service club may help you fundraise for a van for the youth group. What about asking the local floral art club to help decorate the church for a special service? Involvement and investment are often linked! People give to what they are interested in. Show community groups that you share some of their aims to develop community.

Other churches and groups – an example here is local congregations and two para-church groups getting together to raise funds for the curriculum material for Bible in Schools for a school that has agreed to run with the programme for the first time.

Trusts – This is a very broad group because the trust might be as small as one of the trust funds that dwell in your parish accounts or they may be as large as a national philanthropic trust, or a local Community Trust. Let's say it's one of the latter. Most will give only for secular (non-religious) purposes. They will most likely give for a specific purpose that is more community focussed than church focussed. At this point, it is obvious why all the preparation work on mission was necessary. The need should be shared with the Trust in such a way

to distinguish it above all the many competing demands that come to their attention. If you have clearly articulated "what you are doing" and "for whom", then writing the application is a lot easier!

Finally, **Government** – This is a category that is historically included in this chart. Funding from this source can not be philanthropic; it must be related to achieving an outcome that the government contracts for. An after-school programme, day-care centre, and parish-based health outreach are all examples of what might be funded from this source.

A clearly articulated mission is essential

This list is not exhaustive, and the means by which each group might give are merely examples. You could well find that almost all of these groups could give in each of the ways that I have mentioned in the row headings.

Once you are clear about your mission, start to ask "who could/would/should give to this purpose, service or programme?" The answers will continue to surprise you, and the process of telling others about what you do and informing and involving them may well become a mission in itself.

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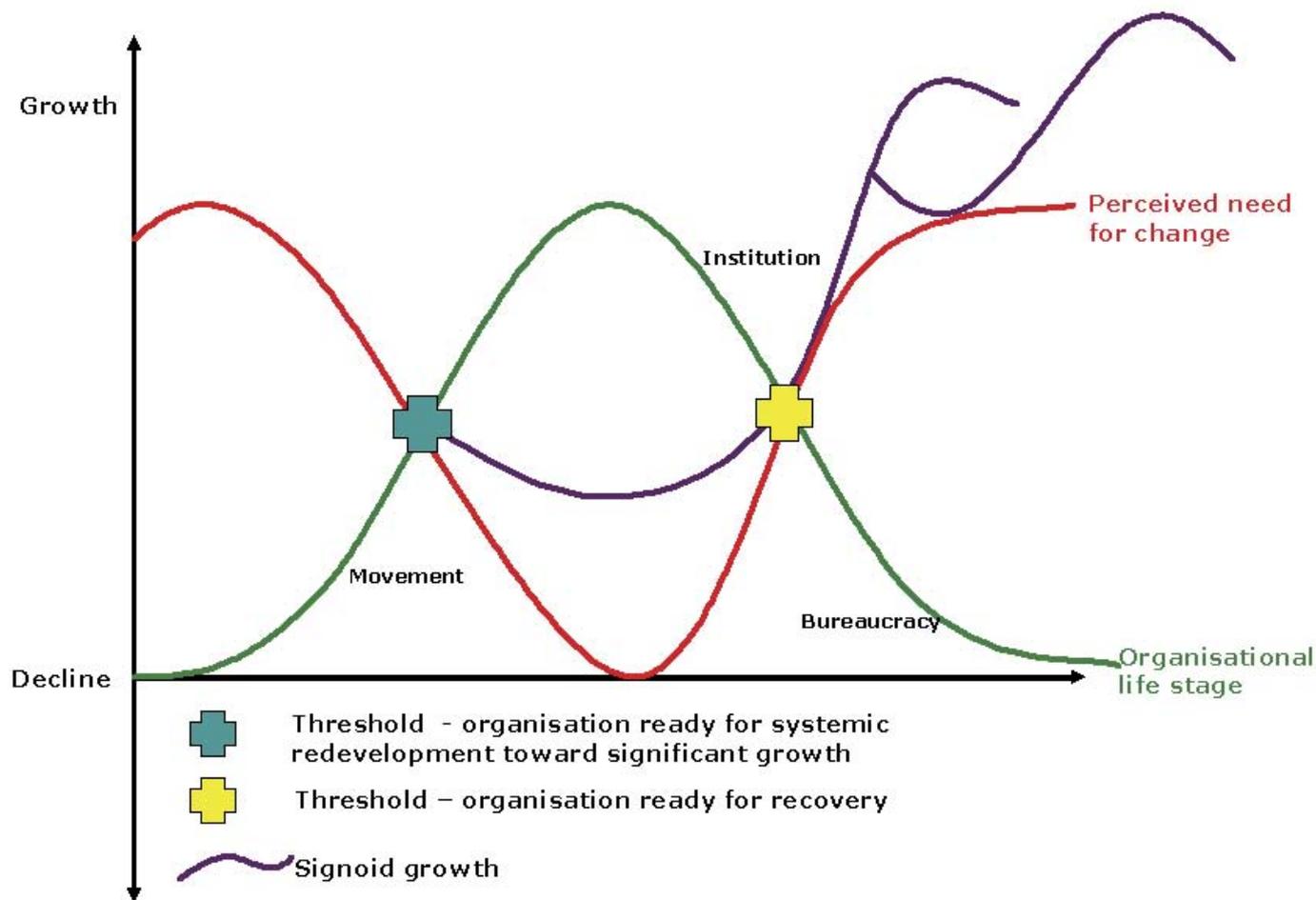
for registration details and info on special Golf Game go to:

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MISSION POSSIBLE

Created in consultation with national mission enabler John Daniel

Part two: Renewing your organisational vision



This graph follows on from Part One, which described how organisations can be placed on a graph that correlates their life stage with members’ perceived need for change.

This month, we add a purple sigmoid curve, which represents an alternative path for organisational growth that evades terminal decline.

John Daniel explains: “When everything is going well, then people say ‘that’s it, let’s systematise it’. They create rules and regulations that become really important, and the organisation moves towards becoming an institution. Then the decline happens.

“At that threshold point, missional congregations identify that there is a need for them to re-vision.”

After this period of re-examination, the organisation’s curve will climb again, until another period of systematisation and staleness makes fresh refocusing necessary.

“We need to be intentional and continually evaluate what we are doing well and what we could be doing better.

It’s important to know that we are organisations that rise and fall, Mr Daniel says.

“The key is constant review and realignment with vision, context and past – especially when things seem to be going really well.”

Is our organisational vision still relevant? And part of this world? Why do we exist and will anyone miss us if we’re not here?

Different ways of facing death in NZ

Last Words: Approaches to Death in New Zealand's Cultures and Faiths, compiled by Margot Schwass, (Bridget Williams Books with The Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand, 2005, \$29.95)

By Joan Ross

No matter where we come from, no matter our culture, politics or religion, this is certain: we are born; we breathe, live and act; we die. The commonality of these profoundly sacred experiences allows *Last Words* to be voiced, compiled and placed into our hands.

Open its pages, browse the contents showing no less than 32 cultural and religious approaches to death and dying, and you are immediately made aware of the increasing diversity of New Zealand's resident population. It was like that at the book launch too. The new publication was celebrated a stone's throw away from the Beehive in a colourful intermingling of politics and religion, race relations and the literary world. Soberly dressed funeral directors gave a nod to their colleagues across an interfaith gathering of contributors "to die for!"

Last Words is a handbook for practitioners. An introduction by Race Relations Commissioner Joris de Bres (who related a family history of Reformed ministers) is followed by informative essays giving background: Facing Death (Margot Schwass), Tikanga Maori (Paratene Ngata), Migrant Communities in New Zealand (Margot Schwass) and Understanding Grief (Tricia Irving of Sky-light).

From 65 interviews across the country, Margot Schwass compiled a central section "from the horse's mouth" of what death means in multicultural New Zealand, including, for example, Buddhist, Chinese, Ratana, Niuean, Orthodox, and Presbyterian voices.

Not that Presbyterian approaches are plain or simple either; I was careful to invite two evangelical and liberal colleagues to review the Presbyterian draft before publication. We live in a complex cultural milieu. *Last Words* is a useful contemporary guide in "getting it right" in our pastoral and professional ministries.

[Editor's note: Joan Ross was one of the contributors to *Last Words*]

Clergy and disability

I've read the September issue of *Candour* (Life of Clergy) and have been quite impressed by it. Unfortunately, it doesn't include people who while ministering are disabled by severe depression or a stroke.

I was, and still am, a man that has had both. I had depression at 49 and the stroke at 50. The ten years following have been a struggle. From this struggle, I proceeded to write a book of my experiences.

The first thing I did was learn again how my computer's keyboard worked. Then, I wrote down all things from my boyhood; and following that, all my life experiences in a book. This took me three years hard work! My wife, who was my editor, was trying to guess how I arrived at this point and I tried to get the words out in order to explain!

My effort of rehabilitation is not over. I don't read much for my brain is affected. I don't go walking, for my foot is damaged. I don't preach so often, for my voice still has its problems.

But I still pray, I still listen and I still give my time and energy. Above all, I still praise the Lord for His patience and long-suffering. God has shown me precious and eternal things because I'm still a Minister of His Word!

PS The book is *Inside/Outside: A Story of Depression, Stroke and Freedom*. (Available from 8 Richards Avenue, Papanui, Christchurch, \$5).

Robert Simpson

Reviews and letters to the editor
Rare very welcome. Please email
candour@presbyterian.org.nz or post
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making it clear that your text is
intended for publication.