



Issue 8

October 2012

How safe are our churches?

At the request of the Council of Assembly, the Trustees have developed a policy for assessing the vulnerability of churches to earthquakes, and managing the risk. This is a difficult issue that has emotional, financial and physical implications for many parishes.

The Trustees understand that it can be hard to accept that a place of worship which appears sound and which has adequately served a congregation for many years may, without much warning, no longer be considered secure, even on a temporary basis.

However, the Trustees, as the legal owners of church properties, have both a legal and a moral responsibility to ensure that buildings are safe for the congregation, the church workers, any tenants and the public.

Sessions/ parish councils, who also act in a trustee capacity for the parish, have a similar responsibility. If a parish knowingly fails to comply, this could leave both the Trustees and the parish open to significant financial risk as liability insurance cover would no longer apply.



Nobody foresaw the destruction of Canterbury churches, yet the fate of even quite modern buildings such as St Georges, Christchurch (pictured above), is a grim reminder that the only safe course of action is to treat buildings which have been assessed as Grade D or E as unsafe until proven otherwise.

PIF interest rate holding up

In May, the Trustees suggested that parishes budget on receiving an interest rate of 4.50% on their PIF investments for the current financial year. Since then, interests rates have held up better than anticipated, and the Trustees are now of the view that the average for the year will be at least 4.75%, and may even be a little higher.

The audited financial statements for both the PIF and the Beneficiary Fund will shortly be published in the Trustees' section of the Church website www.presbyterian.org.nz.

Pass on that info

Once your parish has obtained an IEP (initial evaluation) of your buildings, or a more detailed assessment, your Board of Managers should send copies to:

- Presbytery
- Church Property Trustees
- Presbyterian Insurance Group

Trustees step down

Three long-serving trustees retired at this year's Annual Meeting: John Craig, Peter Isherwood, and Margaret Shailer. Appreciation of their service was recorded.

Russell Garrett, of Wellington, was confirmed by General Assembly as a trustee.

Changes

After 5 years as Secretary to the Trustees, Heather McKenzie will retire from this position at the end of October, to return to Dunedin.

Although Heather will no longer have responsibility for Trustees' matters, she will continue to work for the Presbyterian Church in her other roles of Book of Order Advisor and Complaints Officer.

Executive Officer Kos van Lier will be joined on 1st November by Mrs Pat Griffin, who is taking up the new position of administrative secretary. Like Kos, Pat has a background in working for professional trustee companies.

Contact Kos van Lier by phone (04) 381 8296 or email kos@presbyterian.org.nz

P.I.F. interest rate

The interest rate paid for the Presbyterian Investment Fund is now

5.00 %

The Trustees review this rate each month, and the current rate is advertised in the Church Property Trustees' section of www.presbyterian.org.nz

Interest is credited to accounts quarterly.

Funds are available on call, though advance notice is required for withdrawals over \$250,000.

The PIF is open to parishes and other Presbyterian organisations, but not to individuals.