

Ko te timatanga o te whakaaro nui he wehi ki a Ihowa.

No reira, taku mihi tua tahi ki te Atua, ko i aia te kaihanga o tatou katoa

The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111: 10) therefore my first greeting is to Almighty God for he is the father of us all.

***E te Motoreta, Rangatira hoki o te Haahi Perehipitiriana
Aotearoa, tena koe, me te Motoreta o Te Aka Puaho, tena koe,
ara, tena koutou ko o kaiawhina, te Heke retari me nga Kai-
whakahaere i nga take. Tena koutou katoa.***

Moderator, (Peter) greetings to you, Moderator Millie, greetings to you; to Martin our AES, all those assisting you greetings.

***Tena koutou e nga tarikete o nga Perehepetere, Hinota, hoki
kua huihui mai nei i tenei hui nui a te Haahi, tena koutou katoa.***

To all commissioners and members of Assembly, greetings Kia orana, Talofa lava, anyanghaseio, Da Jia Hau.

Murray. Thank you for your words. You are a great friend and colleague and I do appreciate and thank you for speaking. No idea what you said, but I hope it was good, even if not true.

Assembly, I am sure that the one hundred people who have stood in this spot before me as Moderator designate have said that this is a great honour. And it is. I pray that when my time finishes I, like Graham will say, Church you have given me a great privilege. I really do appreciate the support you have given me, but even more the trust you have shown to me. It is a lot to live up to and I hope I can make a good contribution to the life of the Presbyterian Church as your next moderator. I have been in the arms of this church since infancy and I will die in her arms when my time comes to go home.

Now that those nice things have been said, let me be honest with you. Folks, I'm scared. I must say that the thought of being moderator freaks me out. You see, I am not Church politician. I have been taking notes as I watch Peter and Millie for next Assembly. Watch you guys up front dealing with us out there and think, goodness me, you mean I have to do that. But, guys together we will be team. And as they say here in Canterbury, 'a champion team will always beat a team of champions.' I am not a champion, but I am part of a champion team.

It's a huge honour. I am so aware of that when I think of all those who have been moderators before me – it's a list of people I admire. I can't mention them all, but I do want to pay tribute to Tom Corkill who died earlier this year. When I began ministry I was Tom's assistant for three years. Then when he became Moderator he asked me to be his chaplain. I want to honour his memory today and the part he played in my life. I also think of Michael Thawley who was AES when I was on Council. I honour his memory and also salute Dorothy who has played a huge part in the ministry of stomach's at this assembly.

Skipping to the more recent years, each Moderator has made a significant contribution – Garry with a strong focus on being a missional church, Pamela with that powerful theme of being Christ Centred-Community Facing, Graham, reformed and reforming, identity and direction. Peter discipleship making. Thank you.

These people have laid a good, solid work on which to build. I only hope that I can continue the work that you have done. Like waves out at sea, they don't break, they don't stop. The work you have done does not stop when your term as Moderator finishes. The waves keep rolling and having influence and impact on the church.

In his book 'Outliers' Malcolm Gladwell reminds us that everyone of us stands on the shoulders of others. Success is never self-attained. That is so true for me.

I think of the people of Winton, Central Southland, my hometown. The influence of the Rev Herbert MacLean, in my mind one of the greatest ministers this church had. As Murray Robertson was to Mick Duncan so was Herbert MacLean to me. He is my spiritual father, the man to whom I owe so much in my Christian life and faith. He was one of the most inspirational preachers I ever heard, and a man filled with the grace, humility and gentleness of Jesus.

There must have been something about the water or air of central southland in those days as a number of people offered to serve the lord around that time. Ministers of our church that come to my mind: brother David, Alastair Taylor, John Gullick, Duncan MacLeod, Donald Hegan; Russell Cross was a missionary in Chad for years; our assistant clerk, Heather MacKenzie breathed the same air in those years.

I think of my Dunedin days – staff at Knox. Prof Maurice Andrew, Profs Pollard and Breward, and Dr Peter Gardiner, especially had a huge influence. These are people that I greatly admire.

Then to my first parish at Trinity Timaru. True saints. Taught me how to be a minister. Introduced me to the Holy Spirit. I think that church has produced at least 4 moderators.

And now Mount Maunganui where I have been for 25 years. These are my friends, my fellow pilgrims, my church family. No words will ever express the honour and appreciation I have for the good people of the Mount.

Family. Judy - my solid rock, wise counsellor, genuine critic, fellow traveller, best friend ... thank you! You are a precious gem of God! Three of my four children with me – Andrew, Rachel and Ruth. Thank you for being here. I am so proud of you all. Stephen and his wife Karen live in the UK, but I know they will be with me in prayer. Brothers Alan and Di, David and Joy. Bless you all.

Earlier this year when names were going forward for Moderator, I was sitting in a café in Waihi with one of my friends. He said, "Ray if you are willing to allow your name to go forward – then you must know what is your specific gift is that you bring? That is not an easy question.

Never been a great assembly orator – sat through many assemblies and never said a word. But, give me a pulpit and one ear that will listen and you can't shut me up. I love talking about Jesus. I love discussing the faith. I love encouraging others.

So what will be my gift to the church? Clearly, I do not know yet what specific gift I will bring as Moderator. It would be wrong to say that I do. I will go and spend time with God and seek his face and call on his name to seek his guidance on what he would have me do as Moderator. I am sure that in these next two preparatory years a key verse for me will be. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Rev. 3:22 What is the Spirit saying to the church at this time? Especially, what will the Spirit be saying in 2012-2014. That's the question uppermost in my mind right now. You film buffs will be aware of course of the film 2012, and that some people who follow Nostradamus, the Mayan calendar etc think that will be a very significant year when the calendar runs out on 21 December 2012. Oh great. I become Moderator in September and the world ends December. Yeah right.

Moderator let me share something of my heart's desire:

- Passionate about Press Go and trying to help where I can to see the church grow as we work together making disciples. I believe that the Christian church is God's answer for our communities. I love the passage in Hebrews 12: But you – we Christians - have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You

have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

What a lovely image thousands upon thousands of people in joyful assembly.

- I have been a parish minister for nearly 34 years – I am very aware of the incredible privilege and blessing that call is, but I am also aware of how hard it can be. I know some ministers began their call with great enthusiasm, but now feel crushed. The writings and work of John Daniel show this. I would love to use some of my time ministering to the ministers, pastoring the pastors, leading the leaders, caring for the carers. Parish ministry is a great call, and I pray that a word of encouragement may cross my lips for those who serve faithfully day after day.
- As a parish minister I have been so strongly supported by good elders. I believe that elders are the hidden strength, underestimated and sometimes unappreciated wisdom of this church. In a parish they are like the keel of the ship. They are the story holders, the ethos carriers. I would love to encourage the elders and spend time with them.
- I also have a real concern for the tangata whenua of this land. Our God is a covenant God and he never turns his eye away from a broken covenant, no matter how many years or decades pass. The Christian church of this nation was a major player in the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The more I have studied this history, the more I become broken in heart for what my forebears did to the Tangata Whenua. I am not talking about politics and government's role in land settlements. There are three parts to this equation. Government, Tangata Whenua and Church. We of the church cannot be silent about our part. We cannot undo the past and neither do we beat ourselves endlessly for the sins of our forebears, but where we can seek justice we should. I would like to be an advocate for my friends of Te Aka Puaho and the tangata whenua of Aotearoa.
- But if there is one thing more than anything else that lies deep in my heart it is to see the church living as a resurrection church; a church that has an intimacy, closeness with the risen Lord. A church that knows life and has life and gives life to all people. A resurrection church knows that it does not exist for itself, it exists for the world in which it lives. A church that is not concerned for its self-survival, but is always ready to sacrifice and suffer for the community around it. A church that is alive in the market-place as much as it is inside the church. It should never escape our attention that all of the miracles of

the resurrection church in Acts occur in the Market-place, not the church setting. Only one occurs on the steps of the Temple. A church that has confidence in its Lord and a boldness in its mission. A church that moves in the power of the Holy Spirit. A church that lives the benediction – the good word. The empowering grace of Jesus, the overwhelming love of God, the joyful and happy fellowship of the Spirit. It's a church of people who know that when they are in Jesus, God is not ticked off with them. They are the apple of his eye.

Assembly I thank you most sincerely for calling me to this mission. Now that you have heard me speak, you may want to change your mind! I am overwhelmed by the thought. But I am grateful to the past moderators who tell me at the end of their time that being moderator is a ball and a lot of fun. I hope we have a lot of fun. And I am grateful that my God has never once let me down. When he calls his grace empowers. May the glory and honour go to him.

Kua mutu nga korero ki a tatou. No reira Tena koutou e hoa ma. Tena koutou, kia ora hui hui mai tatou.