

PRESBYTERIAN PEOPLE

Employment news & information bulletin

Vol 6 Apr 2007

Employment update

Welcome to the April bulletin of Presbyterian People.



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

In this bulletin, Bruce Fraser, Synod Mission Advisor for the Synod of Otago & Southland, discusses his role and the introduction of parish mediation teams in the Synod region. Also this month, I provide an update on what has been happening in regards to the complaints procedures.

Please drop me a line if there are any topics you would like to see covered in Presbyterian People at juliette@presbyterian.org.nz

Introducing.... The Synod Mission Advisor

Introduction

Bruce Fraser was appointed as Synod Mission Advisor for the Synod of Otago & Southland in July 2005. The role was initially for a period of 18 months and was created by the Synod out of concern that its parishes had lost a valuable resource when the Mission Resource Team was disestablished by the General Assembly.



Bruce's background is in the Presbyterian Church and it was at age 14, as a Bible class member, that he first felt the call of God. However, it wasn't until after 17 years in radio that he made the leap to full-time lay ministry, becoming an itinerant preacher throughout New Zealand as well as a short stint in Vanuatu. Bruce then became involved with Trinity Parish, Timaru; an association that would last for a further 14 years.

Prior to his appointment by the Synod, Bruce was the lay leader of Kaitangata/Stirling/Lovells Flat Parish in South Otago. Originally intended as a three-month lay supply role, he led the parish for five years, during which time he encouraged the congregation to identify the ministry gifts already within its ranks.

The Role of the Synod Mission Advisor

As the Synod Mission Advisor, Bruce works with parishes to look at who they are and the mission they are called to in their community. To do this, he facilitates a mission appraisal process to assess, in depth, the parish's understanding of both its mission and local community, the challenges it faces, as well as identify its core values and the resources available to help the parish respond effectively to its call.

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In addition to working with parishes, Bruce provides pastoral support to leaders—especially those in rural parishes. He has also developed a training seminar for elders to assist them to “rediscover the wonderful gift that they are to the church”.

As his title suggests, Bruce works with ALL of the parishes below the Waitaki River. However, he does not let the long hours traveling between parishes daunt him. Instead, he focuses on “the single biggest challenge [of] working with wonderful faithful people to make the huge change in thinking that is required to move ourselves out of institutional dependency or addiction, to trust that the God who has been so faithful in the past will continue to be faithful in our unknown future, that the pillar of fire and cloud has lifted and now we have to pack up our tents and move on if we are wanting to be where God’s mission is taking place”.

The Successes

Mission appraisals are, by their very nature, an area where it is difficult to quantify ‘success’. Nonetheless, in his short time as Synod Mission Advisor, Bruce has worked with a range of parishes to help them realise their potential for mission.

For one parish, that meant deciding to merge with a neighbouring one. While for another, it was recognising the progress the congregation had made moving on from a traumatic past — including developing the ability to love those who had hurt them . As Bruce notes “we live in a transition time that is exciting and scary”.

Parish Mediation Teams

Of course, mission appraisals do not take place in a vacuum. There are times that Bruce will find a parish is in a state of conflict. Where this happens, Bruce takes a step back and refers the parish to mediation.

This is where the parish mediation teams come in. Another Synod development, the teams were created out of a need to free up the Synod Mission Advisor for mission appraisals while at the same time providing support to parishes to enable them to reach a stage where they are ready to look forward to the future.

The parish mediation teams are made up of volunteers selected for their experience in ministry and the institutional life of the Church. Bruce describes them as “disinterested outsiders who can walk alongside a hurting people to bring them to a safer place”.

The teams work independently of the Synod Mission Advisor and are available to presbyteries and parishes alike within the Synod area.

If you would like further information about the Synod Mission Advisor and/or the parish mediation teams in the Synod of Otago & Southland please contact me in the first instance on (04) 801-6000 or at juliette@presbyterian.org.nz.

Complaints Procedures

Over the last two months' there has been a flurry of activity in the Assembly Office around the complaints procedures.

As many of you will already know, General Assembly 2006 introduced changes to the way complaints are handled by the Presbyterian Church. Some of the key changes are:

- All complaints are now handled centrally by a Complaints Officer, Heather McKenzie
- The role of Contact Person has been reinforced as the regional point of contact for anyone considering making a complaint
- The types of complaints handled centrally now includes complaints of a non-sexual nature
- The roles subject to the complaints procedures now include ministers, elders, office-bearers, church workers and members and associate members of a congregation
- Presbyteries/UDCs aware of inappropriate behaviour must now appoint a representative to make a complaint on its behalf to a Contact Person rather than conduct its own court of discipline.

What hasn't changed is the requirement of all parishes to display notices setting out the complaints procedures and who the Contact People are for the area. This year, the Assembly Office produced the complaints notices for all parishes—including bearing the costs of printing and translating the notices (where the parish is predominantly non-English speaking). These notices have now been sent out to all parishes.

At the same time, the guide for Contact People has been updated, and this too has now been posted to all Contact People as well as presbytery clerks and UDC secretaries. Later this year, the Employment Advisor and the Complaints Officer will run training sessions nationwide on the new Book of Order and complaints procedures. Information on upcoming courses will be sent out next month.

For more information on the complaints procedures, please refer to the website www.presbyterian.org.nz—click on 'parish tools' and then 'human resources'.

NOTICEBOARD

Important dates to remember!

1 July 2007 Kiwisaver begins. For a copy of last month's Presbyterian People on Kiwisaver please email me on juliette@presbyterian.org.nz.