



12 October 2016

Greetings

There are now only **three days left to enrol** for General Assembly in Dunedin. If you have not yet decided to attend I encourage you to reflect with me on what our General Assembly means to us.

Pilgrimage - the heart of a General Assembly

Why do we have General Assemblies as we know them in the Presbyterian Church? Many of us perhaps consider these gatherings as a negative in our life together but our Reform forebears saw them as an incredible gift to the church and they did so because in this singular meeting (yearly as they were then) the whole Church was given a chance to seek and to hear the living word of God together.

In this special act of retreat our forebears saw an act of pilgrimage during which the whole Church could and did focus their energies on hearing God for the sake both of the Church and the world. For



the sake of our future this is how we must see our upcoming General Assembly.

General Assembly is a time when a 'praying people' come together in prayer to seek God in a very special time of dedication and meditation. Yes, we examine some predetermined proposals in order to provide some structure to our meeting but the key to our pilgrimage lies

in the worship and prayer which invoke the presence of God amongst us.

Our task at every Assembly is to consider ourselves on pilgrimage – seeking both to quiet ourselves before God and then to hear God for and on behalf of the whole Church. This is a sacred trust given to every Commissioner and for this reason we come to Assembly as open as possible to the moving of the Holy Spirit within us. This means as Commissioners we do not come to Assembly with our minds made up to vote one way or the other on certain matters. Rather, we come with still hearts and quiet minds in order to truly hear what God might say to us in regard to each matter before the Assembly.

The heart of pilgrimage for the Celtic people was to travel to special places where the division between heaven and earth seemed to disappear and where they could be present to God in a special way in a balance of instruction, worship and prayer. So we come to Assembly to be present there for God to speak to us about our life and direction.

It is vital we come, then, without presumption, without prejudice and without pride so that we may do the whole Church the service of hearing God's word.

Will you join with me in prayer to prepare for such a time together? Will you use the "5 Stones" prayer cards <http://www.pcanzassembly.org.nz/prayer> recently distributed to parishes and also whatever else assists you to still your spirit and to open your heart for this special time together? I look forward to God moving powerfully amongst us we prepare to gather together in Dunedin 15 – 19 November.

JUST 3 DAYS LEFT TO ENROL



If you have not yet enrolled online to attend Assembly business, or the Hope Conference, I encourage you to please do so today as **registrations close Friday 14 October 2016**. Late registrations may be accepted up to one week before Assembly Week but there will be a late enrolment fee. Please do not miss out, make your plans now to join us. The **Assembly Week website** www.pcanzassembly.org.nz

has details on how you can attend business sessions and the Hope Conference, which will focus on resourcing you as part of a church family for your ongoing faith journey.

How you can participate

- 1 **For ministers only:** For the second time Assembly will include a Resourcing Ministers' Day on 15 November 2016. This is a day for ministers only, facilitated by Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership (KCML) <http://www.pcanzassembly.org.nz/#!/ministers-day/cd0a>.
- 2 **For Commissioners:** As a Commissioner you have an important role - to discern, deliberate and decide on the business of our Church. It won't all be business though <http://www.pcanzassembly.org.nz/#!/programme/c144>.
- 3 **For non-Commissioners (delegates):** We invite you to participate in the Hope Conference and participate in streams, workshops and much more.

See the full GA programme at <http://www.pcanzassembly.org.nz/#!/programme/c144> and find out more about the streams <http://www.pcanzassembly.org.nz/#!/streams/c15ji> and workshops <http://www.pcanzassembly.org.nz/#!/workshops/c9cp>.

In Christ



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