

PWANZ SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

37 women attended the Special General Meeting of Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand that was held on Saturday 25 February 2023 at St John's in the City, Wellington, and via Zoom.

Its purpose was to discuss and decide on the following motion:

That Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand (PWANZ) be wound up

This motion was passed, with 25 votes for the motion, 3 against and no abstentions. (Only financial members were able to vote.)

NEXT STEPS

The next step is to hold a further meeting on Saturday 22 April 2023 (also at St John's in the City and via Zoom).

Members will be asked to confirm the resolution that PWANZ be wound up, with a time frame of **30 June 2023**.

We will also discuss and fulfil regulatory requirements such as:

- contacting the Charities Commission and PCANZ
- advising various organisations
- fulfilling our Terms of Reference.

It is important that all our members have a chance to have their say, so please register for this meeting using the **Registration Form** included in this mailout.

FINANCIAL INFO/IMPLICATIONS

Under the PWANZ Terms of Reference – Clause 16. DISPOSITION OF SURPLUS ASSETS

- 16.1 Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand may be wound up if at an Annual General Meeting of its members, it passes a resolution to wind up, and the resolution is confirmed at a subsequent general meeting called together for that purpose within the next 60 days. All members will be notified of this meeting.
- 16.2 Any surplus assets after the payment of all outstanding liabilities will be transferred to the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. All funds to be held in trust for a future Presbyterian women's organisation.

At the 22 April meeting, members will be asked to approve the disbursement of funds currently held for the purpose of allocation to mission projects.

These may include projects to support women and children through Christian World Service in Vanuatu, and Hukarere Girls' College, Eskdale.

All funds held in Trusts (\$110,000 plus any funds held for United Nations delegate's travel etc) will be included in the surplus assets transferred to PCANZ.

Note: Some administration expenses (for example, audit fee, archiving) will need to be met from funds currently held.

If it is agreed to wind up PWANZ by 30 June 2023, tax receipts will be unavailable for any donations received after this date.

WORKING GROUP

A Working Group has been set up It consists of:

- Mary Gibbs
- Sandra Waldrom
- Carolyn Goudswaard
- Katherine Sutherland
- Judith Dunlop
- Lois Robertson

Mary Gibbs and Mavis Duncanson are our suggested representatives to report to General Assembly.

PUTTING IT INTO PERSPECTIVE

In 2011 there were **2,196** members.
In 2022 there were **111** members.

In 2011 affiliation fees of **\$9,104** were collected.
In 2022, affiliation fees of **\$1,860** were collected.

We currently have **no** Executive and **do not meet** our terms of Reference

With a dwindling membership and lack of volunteer Officers for the Executive, there is **no structure** to support the organisation either financially or in people.

Sandra Waldrom
(our first paid Administrator)

UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

In May 1998, Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand was granted special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC). This was due to the foresight of Jane Prichard who faithfully guided members through the application process.

The longstanding family-oriented projects of Presbyterian Women's organisations over many years were well known among members of the voting committee, either in their own or neighbouring countries. This led to unanimous support and the declaration by the NGO Committee chairperson: **'Status granted'**.

This status comes with an obligation to demonstrate ongoing commitment to gender equality and to contributing to the achievement of the global goals for sustainable development, along with participation in the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

The most recent CSW67 concluded in New York on 17 March 2023. Presbyterian Women contributed to the advocacy statement prepared by Ecumenical Women at the United Nations (EW).

Five of the 23 responses to the international EW survey were from Presbyterian Women in Aotearoa New Zealand. The agreed conclusions from CSW67 contained priority issues identified and advocated for by EW, including accessibility of digital technologies and safety and rights in the digital spaces.

In 2022, Presbyterian Women submitted a quadrennial report to

ECOSOC which was a timely reminder of our accomplishments over the past four years.

- Local and international projects, in partnership with Methodist Women's Fellowship and Christian World Service, have contributed to many UN global goals for sustainable development.
- Submissions to Parliament supported child poverty reduction and reproductive health rights.
- We have provided a faith-based perspective in the Ministry for Women International Caucus.

With the proposed winding up of Presbyterian Women in its current form, these opportunities to learn from and contribute a faith-based perspective to the global achievement of gender equality will no longer be available at an organisational level.

However, as individuals we can maintain relationships and influence through NGOs with an emphasis on empowerment of women.

Past decisions by the General Assembly remain in the records of the wider church, including support for the World Council of Churches 'Thursdays in Black' campaign for the elimination of rape and gender-based violence.

We need to seek God's guidance in strengthening an authentic women's voice to make Christ known in our local and international context.

Mavis Duncanson

*Previous UN Convenor for
Presbyterian Women*

HOW WE GOT TO PWANZ – A BRIEF HISTORY

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN MISSIONARY UNION

During the 18th century, Missionary societies were formed to spread the Christian message to overseas countries. In 1862 one was formed in Dunedin to support the Hebridean mission.

In 1896, Jane Bannerman and Margaret Hewitson (minister's wives), laid the foundations for a missionary women's group in the Presbyterian Church. Several small groups were established. Southland and Otago Presbytery approved the formation of a **Presbyterian Women Missionary Union** (PWMU) by *one* vote.

At a missionary conference in 1905, four groups agreed to unite and become one PWMU. This offered the women new ways to share the work of administration and public speaking as well as sewing and fundraising.

In 1906, *Harvest Field* was launched, containing missionary news and prayer studies for regional and local use.

In 1909, Busy Bees began and most parishes had a group that raised money for Missions.

The Girls Auxiliary started in 1915 and survived until the 1950s, sewing goods and raising money for missions.

The PWMU introduced many special schemes, as well as parishes having their own missionary in India and Canton, selling arrowroot and other goods that missionaries sent back for sale.

In 1926 (our 21st birthday) there were 7,155 members in 310 Unions who raised £9,141 that year and continued with missionary news and prayer studies.

Not all women were attracted to the PWMU. After WW1, a new generation of women wanted a Christian voice in social issues. In 1941, National Council of Churches promoted new projects and offered a wider scope with themes of justice, freedom and issues facing NZ.

In 1943, the **Presbyterian Women's Fellowship** was founded to interest other women in the community projects and issues facing families and communities. These were often called Friendship Groups.



ASSOCIATION OF PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN



In 1963, the two groups merged to form **Association of Presbyterian Women** (APW). Alexa Fraser (PWMU) and Joan Anderson (PWU) led this. Alexa was married to Very Rev Ian Fraser minister at St Marks in Lower Hutt and they were a high-profile couple in the church. Joan Anderson was the first women Moderator of the Presbyterian Church.

The first Executive of the new APW was based in Christchurch with Mrs Almond Royds as first President. The *Harvest Field* continued giving mission news and Bible Studies but also challenged members with issues like working mothers, abortion, divorce, and unmarried mothers.

APW also dealt with new challenges such as women elders and women ministers. It encouraged women into leadership positions in the church and to attend General Assembly.

APW became a member of the National Council of Women. NCW had 24 branches around the country and Presbyterian women were well represented at all of them, several holding an office of some sort.

The Decade of Women (1975–1985) added further impetus to study women issues in a Christian context.

The concept of foreign mission changed to an ecumenical partnership with foreign churches. APW continued to support the indigenous work in hospitals and schools.

There were many other projects such as supporting ministers in training, the Māori Mission Birthday League and collecting stamps for sale.

Yearly conferences soon became too big for one parish or area to host or organise and so two were held each year – one each in the North and the South Islands. Lecturers from the Knox Theological College were often speakers but soon we had women ministers who were also in demand.

From 1980, APW has combined with the Methodist Women Fellowship in a yearly Mission Project. First there was just one overseas project but this changed to also include a local NZ project. A large amount of money has been raised every year and is usually used by the Christian World Service.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

In the 1990s, we updated our name to become **Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand** with the same aims and outcomes.

Technology was more in use. In 2004 the *Harvest Field*, with low numbers and income, ceased to be our magazine. This electronic newsletter *Bushfire* has taken its place.

REFLECTION

There will be women like me who have had a long involvement in APW and PWANZ and have strong memories of small meetings: in our parishes, larger meetings at Presbyterials and the anticipation and enjoyment of the enjoying the yearly APW conferences.

Way back, in 1959, I was a member of PWMU. I remember the fierce discussions over whether we should combine the three women's groups in the church and into one – Association of Presbyterian Women (APW). A lot of this was over my head at the time but it did happen.

When I came to Wellington in 1967, I joined a Fireside Group in my parish. This was a meeting place for many young women settling into a new suburb.

By 1971, I was secretary of Presbyterial and gained a wider contact with other parish groups.

When Nancy Jansen became National President (1983–85) I was her National Secretary. With a full committee based in Wellington, we guided APW for three years, launched a new logo and badge and organised three APW Conferences with themes such as '*Stretch out your Hand*' and '*Being there for Others*'.

We invited well-known women in the church to lead us or run workshops, such as Margaret Schrader and Pam Tankersley.

I have never lost touch with APW or PWANZ but also went on to represent APW at the National Council of Women and was their National Secretary for 10 years (1988–98).

Through this association I have learnt so much about my faith, gained many skills over all these years and met many wonderful women.

Lois Robertson

OUR PUBLICATIONS

We have much to be proud of.

- Our five volumes of ***A Braided River of Faith***, edited by Nan Burgess and Judy Bedford
- Three books of ***Devotions***
- The ***Harvest Field Centennial History (1906- 2006)***
- ***Women of Faith*** printed in Suffrage year highlighting Presbyterian Women who were involved in Suffrage or who were our very early members.
- And, of course, the 10 issues of the ***Harvest Field*** every year.

