

## SA22 News Friday 29 April 2022

### Assembly Devotions

Moderator Right Rev Hamish Galloway has invited Katerina Solomona and Rev Dr Selwyn Yeoman to deliver morning devotions to the Special Assembly. Selwyn delivered the 9am Friday morning devotion, we hope to share video of this. Read more about Selwyn below.



#### Rev Dr Selwyn Yeoman

Selwyn has been a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand since 1979. He has served in three parishes – two with strongly rural interests. In 2005, he worked in conservation and community development in Tibetan China. From 2012 -2014 he was Master of Knox College. He concluded his formal ministry working with the inner-city Dunedin Church of Christ

Community (where the only space for vegetation was in the spouting..., which caused flooding during rainstorms!). This was followed by a year with Otago University chaplaincy.

Selwyn has been thinking about how human beings relate to the rest of the natural world since childhood - when the wild gully below his house was invaded by bulldozers for a building project – some of which was the work of his architect father.

He has written on, and addressed conferences on, environmental themes. He heads up the Dunedin branch of the international Christian conservation movement, A Rocha. In 2012, he received a Doctorate for an exploration of the idea of human dominion over creation.

### Presbyterian Children and Families Ministry video



Assembly was treated to a break in business for a video presentation on the work of the Presbyterian Children and Families Ministry. The video is also available on the Church Vimeo channel so please share it with your parish - [watch or share it here](#).



As we go into the afternoon session on the last day of the Special Assembly the 'top table' continues to adapt well to working electronically. Here they face the screens of Commissioners, as a video plays of our churches' ministry in a time of Covid (see it below). Pictured from right to left: Rev Alistair McBride, Assembly Business Work Group; Assembly Moderator Right Rev Hamish Galloway; Heather McKenzie, Acting Clerk of the Assembly; Rev Shona Bettany, Deputy Clerk of the Assembly.

## Our churches' ministry in a time of Covid



After a short lunch break, Commissioners returned for a video created for Special Assembly showing how some of our churches throughout the country have adapted their ministry in this time of Covid restrictions and lockdowns. Moderator Rt Rev Hamish Galloway asked the churches featured two questions:

What have we learnt? How will that shape our future? Watch the video [here](#).

## Presbyterian Church Schools video



Watch a video presentation on the work of Presbyterian Church Schools. The video is also available on the Church Vimeo channel so please share it with your parish - watch or share it [here](#).

## Much debate as TELT given weighty consideration

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Commissioners regrouped for an all-morning session on the Theological Education and Leadership Training (TELT) report. It began with the combined feedback from yesterday's dialogue groups. This was followed by debate and voting on a range of recommendations and amendments/new motions

The feedback was presented by Rev Anne Stewart. Themes that emerged were an appreciation for the KCML and Research Centre staff, concerns which included the costs of implementation, that different classes of ministers would be created, that the proposals may negate the contribution of parishes, and that Te Aka Puaho and the Pacific Presbytery are already overstretched.

There was strong agreement by groups with half the recommendations. The following were voted on and carried without debate:

1. That the partnerships with Te Aka Puaho and the Synod of Otago and Southland, in providing training for ministry and leadership, be affirmed.
2. That the principle of all leaders and ministers in the Church being life-long learners, be affirmed.
3. That presbyteries be invited to encourage ministers, before they take up a new position, to develop a professional development plan.
4. That the Church express its appreciation for the initiatives undertaken by the Presbyterian Research Centre in developing their online presence and collaborating and connecting to further align their resourcing with the needs of ministers and the wider Church.

A proposal brought by Rev Dr Jordan Redding for a statement on the theology of ordination was also carried with little dissent. It asks the Doctrine Core Group to prepare a statement for the next General Assembly that updates the theology of ordination of the PCANZ, including a theology of baptism as it relates to ordination, and that any proposals to develop a new order in the Church be considered after the Assembly accepts an updated statement.

Jordan also introduced an amendment to motion 37 seeking a new task group to implement a plan addressing training needs. He felt strongly that the current wording was too vague.

"This uncertainty must stop," Jordan said. "There needs to be job security for our KCML staff who've been working under a cloud of review since 2017. We need to implement a plan that addresses the TELT report issues. We don't need a restructure; we need to resource what we already have. Let's form a task group to get the mahi done."

Young Commissioners such as Jonathan McLeay and Tom Mephram who spoke against the amendment were agreed that it was further stalling the process "kicking the can down the road" and could bring even more uncertainty.

The amendment was lost. The existing recommendation that proposed a structure rather than a plan for training, one that would create a new Head of Training broader than KCML, was also lost. However, a new motion 72 was carried, that the work of the Knox Centre of Ministry and Leadership (KCML) be affirmed.

The next recommendation was also amended to be a more general statement about "adequate resourcing" for KCML rather than specific FTEs.

Ahead of the vote, Convenor of the Resource Sub-committee Craig Donaldson gave an overview of the financial implications of increasing FTEs. KCML's current annual costs are \$900,000, he said. An increase could add at least another 10 percent just as a baseline, not to mention incidentals adding another 20 percent. Overall, legal and financial reporting costs are also on the increase. Increased costs would be faced disproportionately by parishes due to accounting standards. The Church cannot change cost consolidation, as that would risk loss of charitable status.

A further amendment was made this morning to internships, with the result that Commissioners have adopted the principle of fully funding internships without the need for parish contribution. Consideration will also be given to developing new ministry pathway options as set out in the body of the TELT report. The Council will find a way to progress this intention.

Moderator Right Rev Hamish Galloway concluded the morning session recognising that three years had gone into a report on what were complicated matters, but ones that needed to be addressed. "We've got strong opinions about this stuff that stirs up conversation and inevitably the right decisions get made," he affirmed.

For more background on the TELT task group and its role, see yesterday's news coverage of the TELT debate [here](#).

## **Finding A Way Forward on Inclusivity Issues**

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Yesterday the Assembly carried recommendations on issues of inclusivity in the Church.

The Church has had divisive debates on inclusivity issues since 1985. The winner/loser nature of the debates have caused hurt and anger. Many lament the fact that it detracts from other issues. Nevertheless, the issues remain and are still divisive.

Churches around the world have dealt with the issue by either accepting those in same sex relationships into positions of leadership or recognising that the different positions cannot be reconciled and choosing to separate.

The Presbyterian Church Aotearoa New Zealand can learn from what is happening elsewhere and seek to avoid acrimonious schisms involving property disputes and court cases.

The Pacific churches were especially concerned at what this dialogue would look like in practice since same sex relationships were a sensitive issue in their community.

Lorna Clarke of Presbytery Central said people come to the Church to hear the word of Christ and that they cannot be making up their own rules.

But others spoke in favour of the motion and one noted that queer people were not represented in this dialogue.

Christine Spall responded to Pacific concerns by assuring them that dialogue groups would seek all points of view and thus the Pacific community would have ample opportunity to have their say.

"We cannot keep treating LGBTQI worshippers as second-class citizens. Injustice cannot be swept under the carpet," she said

The recommendations that were carried are:

The Church commits to a dialogue on a way forward in a Church divided over issues of sexuality, biblical morality and leadership.

That this dialogue be led by the Moderator and Moderator Designate who will gather a group together representing a variety of views on this issue.

That the outcomes of the discussions be reported to the 2023 General Assembly for consideration.

The proposal came from the original brought for last year's Assembly and had input from Presbytery Central Nukuhau Tapu and from Affirm – they came to an agreed position that a dialogue process would be the appropriate way forward.

## **God's mission at the heart of Church property**

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Rev Dr Ron Mills presented to Commissioners a report of the Theology of Property and Money task group on behalf of Convenor Jenny Flett and member Teresa Parsons.

The report was introduced on Thursday, ahead of dialogue groups. Feedback and voting took place this afternoon.

The group was set up by GA18 and entrusted with two tasks, 1) to develop a theology of money and property, 2) to make recommendations for sharing resources.

The report sets out a theological statement embedded in the principles of kaitiakitanga or stewardship. Commissioners were asked to approve a recommendation that the statement be noted as the foundation for any framework for sharing money and property in the Church. Following task group concerns about a lack of definition for 'theological statement' and failed attempts to amend the recommendation, the motion was lost.

Results of the second task drew much initial discussion. "These are what most excited and disturbed Commissioners," said Ron, as he introduced the proposed changes.

"The Book of Order is silent when it comes to congregations sharing their property with others. There is presently no way to compel congregations or presbyteries to share their property more widely in the absence of the will to do so. The gates to a wider sharing are firmly closed."

Commissioners expressed in focus groups the view that there is strong attachment to property and financial resources, and a reluctance to prop up failing congregations

Despite that, Ron responded, the Church's ultimate calling is a generous one. The report's recommendations embed that generosity. Presbyteries are requested to include a summary of their sharing of resources in their report to General Assembly, and are encouraged to more fully utilise the current framework for sharing resources, as set out in the task group's report.

A motion to set up a new task group to develop a gracious covenant for sharing was lost, with debate focused on the view that such generosity was already happening, and that relationship building was the key to sharing resources, not a directive from the Council. Rev Colin Gordon also emphasised that the Church has yet to address Treaty issues, which should happen first.

A question raised on Thursday about decolonising the wealth of the PCANZ drew the comment from Teresa that property was bought through a settler model and these inherited structures may not be relevant to today's context, giving an opportunity to look at and revise the underlying story of property.

The question of decolonisation was grappled with by one dialogue group, and during today's debate Te Aka Puaho Moderator Marina Rakuraku was asked for her view. Marina said the first step was to find out how the land came to be owned and how resources may be shared. She also said that if the land was gifted by tangata whenua then it should be gifted back.

The Church's considerable collective wealth is largely held in trusteeships that were formed in the context of colonialism and the Presbyterian Church Property Act 1885. Focus groups reflected confusion about the Act. A new task group will investigate amending or replacing the Act to further encourage sharing, and will review the Book of Order, in particular chapter 16, and report with recommendations to the next General Assembly.

## **Church Property and the Principles of Te Tiriti**

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Having committed to supporting the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, the Church is now considering how to responsibly and ethically deal with the sale of Church land.

Rev Ryhan Prasad spoke to the proposal that those bodies responsible for the sale of Church-owned land and/or buildings offer these assets to relevant Maori entities before the asset goes on to the open market.

The New Zealand Government has settled many Treaty claims with iwi that include land and/or a right of first refusal to purchase various land blocks as part of the settlement.

The Church owns a significant amount of land. Each year a small number of these titles come up for sale. By offering Maori the right of first refusal to purchase land surplus to Church needs, this is one way the Church can honour its Treaty commitments. Maori entities such as iwi or hapu often have easily defined roles and thus it is seen as a quick and easy procedure to contact the correct entities.

After being asked if Te Aka Puaho's wished to respond, Moderator Marina Rakuraku told the Assembly to differentiate between land that had been gifted and land that had been sold. Gifted land ought to be returned as a gift. Land that was sold can go through a sales process.

Questions were asked about how a price is decided. Should the land be offered at market rates with the first right of purchase offered to Maori? Ryhan responded to this by saying he did not want to make the proposal too prescriptive. People may wish to offer land at a market rate or even below market rate.

He acknowledged this would take more work from presbyteries but said if there's a chance we can sell land to local iwi or hapu then that is worth the extra work. He noted this was a tangible way in which we can honour the Treaty.

The vote was carried 121 to 12

## **Support for Eco Church**

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Today the Assembly supported by a clear majority the proposal that the Presbyterian Church become a denominational partner of Eco Church NZ and that individual presbyteries and parishes be encouraged to join Eco Church.

Eco Church NZ was launched in 2020 by A Rocha Aotearoa New Zealand as a network and resource centre for churches engaged with caring for creation. It began in the United Kingdom and is thriving in many parts of the world. Locally, several Anglican dioceses have already taken this step.

Rev Dr Jordan Redding who brought the proposal said the Church has an essential role to play in responding to the climate crisis and that it should be part of our kaupapa.

Eco Church is free to register. All that is required is a statement of intent. Redding said among the benefits of joining was a self-review process for mission planning, a subsidised programme for zero waste, networking events and resources for engaging with children and youth on ecology and biodiversity projects.

Rev Sharon Ross Ensor supported the motion. Her church has already applied to become part of Eco Church. She liked the fact that it was not prescriptive, other than a commitment to care for God's earth and provide a story a year about what they had done in the past 12 months. She believed Eco Church would extend and challenge her presbytery.

Jonathan Sunderland questioned the motivation for joining. Was it genuine concern or a desire to appear concerned? Would the enthusiasm last after the initial excitement? He also raised the cost of environmental pursuits which he said were often resource heavy and questioned whether this work was a distraction from worshipping the creator.

Ola Leasi, who seconded the motion enthusiastically, said she was acutely aware of the impact of climate change on Pacific people

Ever since the last Assembly when a proposal called "A Commitment to Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation" was warmly affirmed, Churches have been having casual conversations, often via Zoom, about what more they can do to address this issue.

They recognise that environmental issues are impacting the Church locally and globally.

Rural and urban communities are preparing for climate-related disasters and seeking to become more resilient and sustainable. In practice this may mean growing food locally or finding creative ways of recycling. Instead of seeing this as outside their purview, the assembly was asked to consider this work as part of congregation mission planning.

## **EcoChurch Survey and Action commended to Church ministries**

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The ICBC report was presented to Assembly this afternoon by its Co-chair Joy McIntosh.

She presented an overview of the groups work, noted that they require help to recruit new Church members, and said that the urgency of the pandemic meant key work on climate change was set aside but hoped they can return to this priority in the near future.

A Rocha, the Christian environmental organisation, has developed an "EcoChurch" survey ([www.ecochurch.org.nz/self-assessment-worksheet](http://www.ecochurch.org.nz/self-assessment-worksheet)) and Assembly was asked to pass a motion that all ministry units within the Presbyterian Church undertake the survey and choose one action point from each suggested area to complete over the coming year. The suggested areas are: worship and teaching, church buildings, church land, community engagement and sustainable living.

Joy suggested selecting an issue that suited your church. That could mean aiming for zero waste or looking at what it means for the children's church.

The report was commended by all speakers and the vote carried 124 to 8.

## **BOO amendment for ministry team resignations**

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As its last act of business today Assembly supported a proposal that when a minister applies to resign their charge, the presbytery be required to notify any other ministers in the ministry team and to seek their views. The Book of Order Advisory Committee will be asked to draft an amendment to Book of Order 10:23 (5) to include reference to any other ministers when there is a ministry team.

This proposal was brought to the Special Assembly by the Alpine Presbytery having experienced the limitations of the regulations following the resignation of one of their ministers.

Mavis Duncanson from Presbytery Women spoke her concern about developing policy from a single example and wondered if it could be resolved another way rather than becoming a regulatory matter.

Rev Ryhan Prasad asked why this should apply only to ordained ministers. Why not youth workers and others in the team?

Rev Rory Grant said the change acknowledged the reality that more and more parishes are operating in team ministries. This alteration was a simple courtesy accorded to ordained colleagues.