

Press Go: Sharing in our Church's Future

The Purpose

The purpose of the Press Go Board is to support the growth of the Church through facilitating a process that will provide the resources to support new and innovative mission and outreach. This will be achieved primarily by fostering a culture change that enables the sharing of resources.

Members of the Board

Members: Ray Coster (Kaimai), *Chairman*, Andrew Norton (Auckland), John Kernohan (Auckland), Lisa Wells (Dunedin), Neville Guy (South Auckland).

Associate Members: Martin Baker (Assembly Executive Secretary), Brendan Sweeney (Finance Manager), Amanda Wells (Communications Manager), John Daniel (National Mission Enabler), Cunny Atchison (Resource Committee)

Report

1 Introduction

The Press Go Board was established by the 2008 General Assembly with the specific purpose of assisting new growth initiatives within the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. Our initial focus has been to find and support mission endeavours around New Zealand. In our first two years we have received 14 applications, of which we have agreed to support seven either by way of a financial grant or an interest free loan. Some of the seven that we have agreed to support are still working through planning processes before the grant or loan can be given.

Assisting growth initiatives is only possible when congregations release some of their assets to the Press Go Board. Working together as a Church focused on mission, our Assembly has challenged each congregation to be generous for the greater cause. One example of how we may work together is that each congregation with investments gives 1 percent of their investment income to Press Go to enable us to do the work the Church has commissioned us to do. In practical terms this means that \$1000, invested at 7 percent, returns \$70. \$1000 invested at 6 percent returns \$60. Therefore donating one of the percentage points gives a donation of \$10 towards the mission cause of the denomination while retaining \$60 for local mission in the congregation. But, of course, congregations may choose to be more generous than this 1 percent example.

At the present time the congregations of New Zealand have about \$120 million in investment accounts. If congregations agreed to this challenge, our Board would have \$1.2 million dollars annually to assist growth projects. As at the end of June 2010 the Press Go Board has received \$101,000 from individuals and congregations. About \$20,000 of this is from congregations.

The giving of 1 percent seems to have been a difficult concept for congregations to accept and really commit to. Perhaps people can intellectually commit to the concept without it being an emotional or fundamental commitment leading to action. Though we are enormously grateful to congregations who have provided funding, responses so far have

been very meagre. Despite now having some great stories around the mission work we have been able to support, it has been inordinately difficult to communicate that our congregational wealth does not belong to us, but has been dedicated to God and is to be shared for the mission to which we have all been called.

One very encouraging story was from Knox Church, Lower Hutt. This church has no investment money, rather it has a debt. Having no investment income to share they decided to give 1 percent of their tithes and offerings to Press Go! Working together we can do the mission of growing the Church.

The task of growing our Church can be done! Imagine what we could do, working together for the good of the whole Church if we all released just a small portion – 1 percent of our investment income. We have all the resources needed – people and finances. If we work collectively with one heart and mind we can change the growth trends of our Church from decades of decline to increasing growth. Each of us does not need to do much. A little from each congregation with God's hand of blessing on it will work wonders.

In Exodus chapter four we read of God asking Moses a very simple question: "Moses, what do you have in your hand?" All he had was a stick of wood, a walking stick to help an 80 year-old man walk the hills of Midian. When Moses took the most simple of things in his hand and offered it to God it worked miracles to set a nation free. Even more, through Moses and the stick in his hand God gave some simple yet profound rules that have now become the foundation of law in virtually every country on earth. And it all started with one question – what do you have in your hand.

The question we challenge the congregations of New Zealand with is simply this, "what do you have in your hand?" What do you have in your hand that you can offer to the Church to assist and support the growth mission of the Presbyterian Church at this time? As we share our taonga, our treasures, miracles can occur in our Church even as they did among the Hebrew people of old. We understand that these taonga may have been gained over many years of hard work, by faithful people whom we honour, and thus they become hard to part with. But as Christians we know that lying right at the heart of our faith is the principle that life comes through sacrifice.

2 The big picture

We have a real concern that many of us in the Church of today have learnt to live with decline over a number of decades and find this an acceptable place to be. As church leaders we need to be shouting from the rooftops that it is not acceptable. Working for the growth of the Church is a high Kingdom value that should motivate each one of us in our mission.

The statistics on the Presbyterian Church covering the period 1998 to 2008 are very concerning indeed. These show a 33 percent decline in Presbyterian membership and a 22 percent decline in Union membership. The decline in adults at worship is 21 percent.

These trends are likely to continue as 46 percent of the members of the church in 2008 were over 65 years old. But they do not have to. Reversing this trend is the challenge and opportunity that we as Press Go Board have

accepted. But we need your help. If together we share our resources, wisdom and experience we can help each other to grow the church.

3 Signs of hope

In our short time as a Board we have seen there are many excellent growth initiatives. Each project we have read about and visited is exciting. Sadly we have only been able to support a few. But right around our Church are real signs of hope. It's our delight to tell these stories and to encourage others to share too.

The task we face as a denomination is huge – but we are a people who must be like Abraham: *“When everything was hopeless, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw he couldn't do but on what God said he would do. And so he was made father of a multitude of peoples. God himself said to him, ‘You're going to have a big family, Abraham!’* Romans 4:18 (The Message)

4 Process

Virtually all of our applications so far have come from a parish context. As a Board we cannot consider projects which emerge without the express support provided by a congregation, presbytery or Synod. Where the application comes from a parish, the Board has sought the concurrence of the presbytery to ensure that the project being applied for fits within the wider presbytery mission.

Our Aim

As a matter of policy the Press Go Board has agreed that we will send one or two members of the Board to meet with the people that we are considering supporting.

Part of the philosophy behind this is that the Press Go Board does not see itself simply as a committee to which applications are made and money is given. We want to enter into relationship with each project we support and then have an on-going relationship with them. We see ourselves doing more than just giving money. We see ourselves journeying together with various growth projects so that we can both learn and help. What we learn from one project we can then share with others. The outcome we want to see from each project is growth, and creating a culture of growth and mission in the whole Church. We need to emphasise that for us a key task is to facilitate this sharing of the resources we have been blessed with - money, people, stories, experiences, skills and gifts.

Our Stories

1 Knox Waitara

Knox Church in Waitara, Taranaki, has a strong sense of community, with many members involved in leadership roles for its children's and families' programmes. These draw in a significant proportion of Waitara's population and are making a visible difference in a town that has its share of difficulties. As well as a children's programme on Sunday mornings, Dynamite Bay Xtreme clubs for boys and girls aged seven to 11 are run on Tuesday nights, and a teenage youth group meets on Wednesday nights. About 35 boys are

part of the DBX boys group, which is led by men from the church; 30 girls, along with their teenage leaders, are part of the girls group. The church, which was built in 1924, can seat 100 people. Attendance in 2009 has averaged 100 adults each week, up from just over 80 in 2008. Press Go has granted the church \$500,000 for its building replacement programme, contingent on Knox Waitara raising the rest of the costs. The new building will provide a venue for worship as well as for expanded community involvement.

Knox Waitara is a good example of how the Press Go Board works with a local congregation in more ways than just helping with seed money. The Board has engaged a professional fundraiser to assist the congregation and will also be seeking ways to help the congregation raise the necessary finance.

2 Waipukerau

A new programmes coordinator for St Andrew's Waipukerau's booming youth ministry is being funded by Press Go. The Rev Ian Pimm describes the new role as focusing on the "faith based" side of St Andrew's youth and children's work, with about 200 children and young people involved in its Sunday school and youth groups. At least another 200 are involved in the church's community-facing work, which is managed, together with the ministry work, under the umbrella of Epic Ministries. Located in Central Hawke's Bay, Waipukerau has a population of about 4500. The Press Go board granted \$60,000 towards the new position and has made available an additional \$60,000 interest-free loan for six years. David and Kirsty Tilyard have been employed in the role, with David working 32 hours a week and Kirsty 16 hours.

3 Crossroads

The new building for Crossroads, in Mangatangi, an hour south of Auckland, was completed in June 2009. The church, midway between Auckland, Thames and Hamilton, sold off several of its smaller worship centres to help raise the money for the project, along with a loan of \$300,000 from Press Go, to be repaid over 6-10 years. The new facility is on a 12-acre site and will seat 200 people, with expansion space for another 50, and includes a café and dedicated areas for other ministries. The church is also planning conferences and youth events, such as its successful youth music festival Faith Fest, and to offer training such as parents' courses.

4 Welcome Bay

Welcome Bay Presbyterian Church has turned away from a traumatic past towards a future with huge potential. Press Go granted the church, now known as the "Light House", \$250,000 over three years to establish a self-supporting ministry. At the start of 2010, the Rev Mike Uttley was called as minister, with the church under the oversight of the neighbouring St Peter's Tauranga. Mike says attendance at the Light House is building, with 25 people the first Sunday he preached in February, and about 40 a couple of months later.

5 Bethlehem

After securing Press Go funding for a church planting mentorship, Bethlehem Community Church is searching for a suitable applicant. The Rev Jim Wallace says he's looking for a "courageous, creative people person, who is committed to Jesus". The person selected, who must be a Presbyterian minister, will spend a year at Bethlehem learning about church planting and developing their own projects. The position is fully funded, with the proviso that the church planter is bonded to the Presbyterian Church for five years.

Rev Ray Coster
Chair

Appendix: Press Go Finance Report to June 2010

Press Go Finance Report to June 2010

Funds held and available (\$000's)

PCANZ (Laughton Fund)		2,000	
Donations from A Hubbard	100		
Ex-MRB Funds Identified	298		Note 1
Donations Received	101		
Interest Earned	39	538	
Total funds received or approved		2,538	
Less Grants and Loans Made		(390)	Note 2
Funds held at June 2010		2,148	
Less funds committed		(896)	Note 3
Add funds receivable		353	Note 4
Funds available at June 2010		1,605	
Plus Hughes Estate PIF account (pending Council approval)		47	
		1,652	
1 MRB Funds			
Funds received from sale of Ranui property		190	
CPT Identified MRB Funds		108	
		298	
2 Grants and Loans Paid			
Operation Lighthouse (Welcome Bay)		82	
Knox Waitara Funding Study		5	
Crossroads Community Church		293	
St Andrews Central Hawkes Bay		10	
		390	
3 Commitments			
Knox Waitara	500		Contingent on Funding Plan
Operation Lighthouse (Welcome Bay)	173		To Jan 2013
St Andrews Central Hawkes Bay	113		To March 2013
Bethlehem Community Church	85		Waiting MoU
South Kaipara	25		Waiting MoU
	896		
4 Receivables			
Crossroads Community Church	293		2500 pm from March 2010
St Andrews Central Hawkes Bay	60		From March 2013
	353		
PSDS/St Columba Loan			
PSDS Loan Payable	143	(252-109)	
Receivable from St Columba (Centenary)	256	(400-144)	
Receivable from Bethlehem	200	Receivable from 2013	
	599		