

- 3.2 Weaving is a social and relational cultural activity
Weaving is a core cultural activity of Pacific Island women from all over the Pacific, it is also a social activity, requiring the input of men and children. Weaving is a relational activity, the weaving of many strands is a collective enterprise. The mat we weave from the laufala/pandanus leaves is truly a shared creation from the work of many hands working together in partnership. In the making is a collaborative process of giving and receiving, laughing and crying, feasting and singing, learning and sharing, deciding and making.

The many strands are interwoven, one with the other, and at the same time certain strands are highlighted in particular ways, thus supplying the unique designs, illustrating diversity, coherency and interconnectedness, as each strand is woven in and out, lie side by side, in an orderly fashion, blending and complementing each other. Each strand is part of the creation and is an essential and enhancing strand in the woven whole. Whatever our culture, whatever our history, each group contributes a richness to the whole. Therefore there is no space for any individual strand to stand alone or separate itself.

4 The strands of the Pacific Island Synod

The Pacific Island Synod is a recognized national body of the Presbyterian Church, a strand, within the wider mat of the Presbyterian Church. We are a weaving together of five constituent groups that continue to grow and develop in its mission to serve God as Pacific people, wherever we have been placed. Each ethnic group is unique and has its own character. We rejoice in the richness of our cultural diversity. In attempting to make our vision practical, as well as keeping in mind the overall mission of Synod – that of ‘equipping and empowering Pacific peoples in Christian worship and Christ’s mission in New Zealand, the Pacific and globally’. The Pacific Island Synod values and encourages each ethnic group to organise themselves and take charge of their strategies to true unity amid diversity and unity without uniformity. This a gift Synod celebrates.

The five constituent Synod groups are:

- 4.1 The English Speaking Group
4.1.1 Historical Establishment

The English Speaking Group (ESG) originally was established for the purpose of providing a voice and an active role in the Pacific Island Church (PIC) for the members of the PIC generation (many of whom were the first generation New Zealand born children of immigrant foundation members of the Church). Many of this generation grew up in a proudly Pacific Church but increasingly communicating in the English language, socialising and worshipping in the context of people in Aotearoa New Zealand. It has through the years become increasingly bi-lingual as new generations of Pacific youth have begun learning their mother tongue.

In the early days of the establishment of the Pacific Island Synod some ethnic groups within the Synod churches were hesitant to encourage their next generation to join this group, out of a desire to maintain our uniquely Pacific culture and language and perhaps a fear of losing both. However, this fear is unwarranted given that ESG’s main purpose is to provide a space and a place

for Pacific generations to express themselves freely in the language that they are most familiar and comfortable with. PIC Churches continue to be active and responsible for teaching and ensuring the island languages remain alive within their churches; as well as encouraging and accepting new generations to find expression of their place in the Church family, whether in ESG, or elsewhere in the Synod or wider Church.

4.1.2 Contribution

ESG are the smallest group within the Pacific Island Synod, but their voice is strong and they play an active part contributing to and participating fully in the decision-making of the Pacific Island Synod. They have five active representatives within the Synod Executive, and are well represented in various task groups within the Synod.

They are honoured to have four women ministers in their membership. They have brought a vast ocean of knowledge, wisdom and expertise to the group. Not only cultural but they provide knowledge of the national Church. This is a great strength in bridging the cultural and generation gaps as well the Synod and the national Church. Their gifts, abilities, and potentials are fully recognised and utilized. The ESG has been greatly empowered and well resourced by their experiences.

The ESG is the forum that provides the dignity of encouraging open dialogue, to have discernment, gain knowledge, have freedom of expression and to enjoy the fundamental human rights that acknowledge the dignity of each human being – i.e. the laity of the church, women, youth and children. ESG values team leadership, and focuses on the creation of an environment where men, youth, and women can exercise their gifts, develop their ministries and reach their full potential.

4.1.3 Historical first

Rev Tala Fa'amausili was the first Pacific Island woman minister elected to be the Moderator of the Pacific Island Synod. She was elected by the English Speaking Group, and led the Pacific Island Synod from 2006 to 2008 as the Moderator. She had served her moderatorship faithfully and with excellence. ESG remain humbled and appreciate that their involvement in the Synod has been recognized by their contribution and commitment.

4.1.4 Mission

At the parish level ESG continues its mission in food, bread and hospital ministries. It also contributes to parish life with leadership in teaching, bible study and choir ministries, and active involvement in church council, management and property committees. ESG continues to be committed to the vision of unity across all ethnic groups, is also represented at presbytery level and continues its commitment to the Pacific Island Synod, in which it has been an integral and essential member since the Pacific Island Synod's inception.

4.1.5 Vision

It continues to be the vision and hope of the ESG that it will become more and more nationally represented throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. They believe that as more Pacific Island and other brothers and sisters within and outside of the Church recognise their unique and vital place and contribution to the Pacific Island Synod and the Presbyterian Church that this dream will become a reality. In the meantime, they work diligently alongside our Pacific Island

Synod brothers and sisters of all ethnic fonos to make Jesus Christ known. To God be the Glory.

4.2 Fono Samoa

4.2.1 History

The Fono Samoa comprises of 17 churches or congregations with 12 in Auckland, three in Wellington and two in the South Island. Since the Pacific Island Synod came into existence in 1998, Fono Samoa continues to grow in numbers and spirit. Its popularity is reflected in many areas of mission and ministry but especially in the Mafutaga a Tina (Women's Fellowship) and the Tupulaga (Youth). Despite the many hurdles along the way, Fono Samoa acknowledges the love of God in these developments.

4.2.2 Parish Development Units

With the wider Presbyterian Church aim of planting new churches and healthy congregations, Fono Samoa has over the years developed these parishes using the SDU model (Synod Development Units). These five new congregations namely; *Taeao fou o le Talalelei East Tamaki*, *Satauro o le Fa'aolataga Takanini*, *Alia o Manu Mangere*, *Panmure PIC* and *Sailimalo i le Atua PIC Aranui Christchurch* are beginning to flourish and in the future will be made recognized parishes within our wider Church.

At the same time, we would also like to celebrate these 'successes' with the rest of our Church.

4.2.3 Samoan translation of constitution

This provides guidelines for the work within the Fono Samoa and also in relationship with other constituent groups of Pacific Island Synod.

4.2.4 Fono Samoa lawyer in place

The lawyer advises Fono Samoa on legal issues in its operation.

4.2.5 Worship Liturgy for Sunday Services and Bible Studies (3rd Ed)

This resource book provides not only scriptural readings for worship services but also for daily reflections and Bible Studies for the whole year.

4.2.6 Sunday School Resource Book (3rd Ed)

The Sunday School Resource Book is for children ages 1-11 years and the youth from 12 years upwards. This is printed in both Samoan and English.

4.2.7 Permanent venue for future activities

One of the hopes of Fono Samoa is to have a permanent venue for its operation and all activities. This will be centralised in Auckland where most congregations are situated and consultations are progressing well.

4.2.8 Housing intern student from Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership

A new initiative by the Fono Samoa came from their West Auckland constituent group (Aukilani i Sisifo). The three congregations have pulled together its resources to help fund an intern student from the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

4.3 Niue Fono Motu

4.3.1 The Church for the Niue people

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Niue people migrated to New Zealand. While they settled in Auckland, their first worship place was at St James Church, Beresford Street, Auckland. The gathering of the Niue people retained their denomination the Niue Congregational Church under the leadership of Rev Challis. Later in the 1960's the Church moved to Newton, Auckland. The first Niue minister for the Niue people was Rev Elisi Sionetali at the Newton Church. Rev Lagaua Talagi was second to minister to the Niue people at Newton Church when Rev Elisi passed away in 1970.

In late 1960, the Niue Congregations at Otara and Mangere Pacific Island Church were also established for the Niue people in South Auckland. Rev Pehalo Talagi was the first Niue minister at the Otara Church. Rev Lagi Sipeli was the first Niue minister to the Newtown Church in Wellington. Rev Lagi passed away in 2008. Rev Eveni Lagaluga was the Niue minister at Mangere Church, he has now retired and living in Mangere. In 1981 Henderson was set up for the people in West Auckland, and Rev Leomana Tongatule was their Niue minister for the Henderson Church.

4.3.2 Establishment of Niue Fono Motu

In 1980 Niue Fono was formally established with the following Niue Churches as first parishes - Niue Congregational Churches from Christchurch, Hamilton, Manurewa, Otara, Mangere, Newton, Henderson and St James Niue Newtown Wellington. Since then other parishes were developed which includes Onehunga, Tamaki, Knox-Parnell, Takanini and St Timothy.

The aim of the Niue Fono Motu is to gather the interest of the Niue people in Auckland and to provide appropriate cultural ways of advancing God's mission. From that point forward the Niue people wanted to hear their voice within the Pacific Church in the Presbyterian Church. In 1999, the Constitution of the Niue Fono Motu was registered. One of the significant statements asserted in the Constitution is to express views and concerns on matters concerning the work of the Niuean section of the Presbyterian Church and especially to be their voice within this church that they are affiliated.

4.3.3 Council of Niue ministers

The forum of the Niue Fono Motu Council of Niue ministers was established to oversee the aims and objectives of the Niue Fono Motu and to ensure that the responsibilities, functions and direction vested in the Niue Fono Motu. The Niue Fono Motu is affiliated to the Pacific Island Synod where it has four representatives to the Executive of Synod.

In 2001 the Niue Fono Motu signed an agreement between Ekalesia Niue, the Congregational Union of New Zealand and the Presbyterian Church. It is recognition of each partner to work in partnership in the mission of Jesus Christ and especially to acknowledge each other's commitment to work with the Niue people.

4.3.4 Association of Presbyterian Women

The Niuean Association of Presbyterian Women is a strong movement under the umbrella of Niue Fono Motu. They continue to promote fellowship among Niuean women within their parishes. In worship they also encourage the

proclamation of the Gospel in their study, preaching and participation in worship.

4.3.5 The Niue national youth

One major factor within the youth movement of the Niue Fono Motu, it confirmed and supported the process of their setting-up of a five year Planning Project. The project states that their wish is to have a 'stand' in the Presbyterian Church where cultural expression of their cultural identity and values are maintained in the Church they belong too, the Presbyterian Church. And while they are passionate about their level of participation with the Niue Fono Motu, they continue to seek to understand and retain their cultural heritage.

4.3.6 Niue Fono Motu annual conference

The Annual Conference of the Niue Fono Motu was held during the Queen's Birthday weekend. The funding for its annual conference is entirely from levies from each Niue Pacific Island Presbyterian Church and gifts for the running of the annual conference.

The annual ministers' retreat in October is a time where ministers deal with business from the AGM of the Niue Fono Motu. The Council also prepare other important matters for the next annual conference. The Council extended invitations to all the session clerks and treasurers from each Niue Pacific Island Presbyterian Church to attend the retreat, this is seen as another way of fostering and understanding the ministry work among the Niue people in each Pacific Island Presbyterian Church. Our other outreach is supporting all projects in overseas mission within the Ekalesia Kerisiano Niue, Niue Island. We fulfilled this by means of monetary support as well as furnishing the Millieum Hall in Niue. Niue Fono Motu also offers financial support for newly built pastors' houses on Niue Island.

4.3.7 Future

The most important issue for the Niue Fono Motu is the concern for the future of our Niuean ministers in the Pacific Island Presbyterian Church and Niue Fono Motu, as in a few years time, most of our ministers today will be retired from their ministry work in the Presbyterian Church.

Every year for the last seven years, it has been identified that Niue Fono Motu has reached a crisis phase in ministry in terms of shortage of Ordained Ministers from 2010 onwards. Hence, the major goal for the Niue Fono Motu is to continue to seek ways to promote a recruitment policy in which each Niue Parish must encourage, support and nurture potential candidates towards applying for both national and local ordained ministry. We are pleased to report that one Niuean candidate, was confirmed by the National Assessment Workgroup this year, to train for national ordained ministry.

4.4 Fono Tokelau/Tuvalu

4.4.1 This Fono is made up of four parish groups: Porirua Tokelau Pacific Island Presbyterian Church, Grey Lynn Pacific Island Presbyterian Church, Taupo Tokelau Group in St Paul's Union; and the newly established Tuvaluan Parish, Niutao Pacific Island Presbyterian Church. There is also our Tokelauan Presbyterian in St John' Presbyterian Church, in Rotorua.

The combined membership of this Fono is about 500 communicant members and an overall estimate of 700 pastoral members.

The ministers have been preparing a lectionary in these languages for all members, and will soon be available for distribution.

4.4.1 Tokelauan translation

The Fono has been involved in the arduous work required over the past 10 years, in translating the New Testament to the Tokelauan language, which was celebrated and launched last year. This has been a monumental achievement, and a wonderful gift to the people, to declare God's Word in their own language. This was accomplished through a collaborative, ecumenical, and national effort with all Tokelauan groups, in various denominations. The second phase is underway i.e. working towards the translation of the Old Testament.

4.5 Uapou Fellowship

“Ei Reo Akaaravei no te Uapou Fellowship! Ei Reo Tuoro! Ei Reo Ariki-riki! Ei Reo Akangateitei Anga! Ei Reo Aroa!”

4.5.1 Its ongoing journey of faith

The Uapou Fellowship continues to maintain its strength and enthusiasm more so at its Annual Celebrations. This year it was held during Queen's Birthday Weekend of 4 June through to the Monday 7 June 2010, again at the “O-Lelei” Pukapuka Centre, Mangere and hosted by the parish of Mt Eden PIC Ekalesia - Auckland. These are parishes that gathered for fellowshiped at the gathering of the Uapou Fellowship Queen Birthday Weekend: Auckland Pacific Island Church, Mt Eden PIC, Tamaki Pacific Island Church, Onehunga Cooperate Parish, Otara Pacific Island Presbyterian Church (Youth), Hamilton Pacific Island Church, Tokoroa Pacific Island Church, Hawkes Bay Pacific Island Church, Porirua Pacific Island Church, Wellington Cook Islands Presbyterian First Church of Otago, Dunedin. The 2011 Uapou Fellowship will be hosted in Hamilton by the Uapou Fellowship Youth Council.

4.5.2 2010 highlights

This year the Uapou celebrated its 35 years in existence and again remembers its own history and its early beginning from 1975 in Hastings under the Presbyterian Church. We also remember those who initiated the idea of setting up a foundation for a National Body of the Cook Islands people under the Presbyterian Church that are no longer with us. Only a few today are still with us and continue to fully participate. It is always a good foundation to remember those from the past and the vision we work towards into the future that was prepared as early as 1975.

4.5.3 Konitara Orometua – Council of Presbyterian Church Cook Islands Ministers

This year's celebrations of the Uapou Fellowship 2010 was opened with a Konitara Orometua – Presbyterian Church Cook Islands Ministers Retreat on the 2 – 3 June 2010, hosted by the Otara Cook Islands Pacific Island Presbyterian Church.

The Rev Robert Robati-Mani was invited by the Executive Konitara of the Uapou to facilitate the retreat. It was an unforgettable event that brought all our Cook Islands ministers within the Presbyterian Church together for the first time. We were overwhelmed by the attendance of all those Cook Islands

ministers who have been working in Papaa (European) parishes who all came with the blessing of their parishes and their congregations. The majority of those that travelled to Auckland were sponsored by their respective parishes/congregations and we are humbled by their contributions in this way – Meitaki maata – thank you.

Preparation: It is so true at this time to say that there were ‘Retreats’ previously planned and organized and not everyone could attend due to work commitments. The highest attendance to any one retreat was six or seven in both Auckland and Wellington in previous years. We sincerely and openly congratulated at the completion of our retreat our Facilitator the Rev Robati-Mani for his enthusiasm and commitment together with the hosting of Ekalesia Cook Islands of Otara Pacific Island Presbyterian Church.

4.5.4 Memorandum of understanding between the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Cook Islands Christian Church

As an outcome from the Retreat, the ministers tirelessly worked to review the draft memorandum of understanding between Presbyterian Church and the Cook Islands Christian Church of the Cook Islands. Special focus was given to the emphasis and impact the content of the document will have for Cook Islanders that are residents of Aotearoa, affiliated member of a Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and members of the Uapou Fellowship.

The Uapou wished to make acknowledgements to those ministers within the Presbyterian Church for the visionary pathway provided for the document to eventuate. It is our hope and prayer that both current and future Presbyterian Church Cook Islands ministers and leaders will take that vision to another level on behalf of the Uapou Fellowship and the Cook Islands people that will indeed benefit the wellbeing of Cook Islands people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Therefore, the Uapou anticipates continuous work on the document and in consultation with the Presbyterian Church and your desk will be informed on its outcome in due time.

4.5.5 Cook Islands Student Training Funds for training of ministers of word and sacrament

There is a strong view from the Uapou Council of Ministers to set up a Cook Islands Student Training Funds for Theological Training. This is an initiative set up by all Cook Islands Minister’s who attended the Retreat to be established and challenges will be with all Cook Islands Congregations up and down the country to seek to support the initiative that will assist students into the future. Thus all Cook Islands are invited to contribute to a fund that has been solely set up for this purpose.

4.5.6 Moderator of the Pacific Island Synod

Since the beginnings of Pacific Island Synod, we have thus far been privileged in having two Cook Islands ministers as Moderator to the Pacific Island Synod. Our first was the Rev William Cuthers and the now current Moderator the Rev Ngatokotoru Ine. We praise and thank God for their leadership in this way.

4.5.7 Our testimony

The Uapou Fellowship continues working to enhance and develop support towards mission and ministry work as a national organisation. We acknowledge and commend the journey that is at times long and challenging. The Uapou Fellowship has in its entirety appreciated working alongside other

Fono's within the Synod, as we all journey together as people of God for the betterment of our Pacific peoples within the Presbyterian Church and in Aotearoa New Zealand.

5 Pacific Island Synod strategic plan

5.1 Theological Reflection Centre

We have been working diligently to develop a centre to support Pacific people in ministry and provide support for the wider Pacific community in need. The Theological Reflection Centre has been a vision and a dream of the Pacific Island Synod for over ten years.

We believe that when this Centre is up and running we hope to be able to work with the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership to provide resources of Pacific people and courses as well as internship opportunities within the Pacific Island Church and ministry context for the whole of the Presbyterian Church.

We also believe that this Theological Reflection Centre will become a leading centre for research as well as a resource for Pacific literature and theological reflection and study for the whole Church.

We are currently awaiting progress on an available venue and negotiations are underway.

The issue of sustainability is a priority at the moment and research is being carried out as to funding this Centre and maintaining sustainability for the future.

5.2 Theological objectives

To collect and store Pacific Island resources in ministry and mission

- 5.2.1 Enable and encourage Pacific churches to openly share and utilise resources amongst the different ethnic communities.
- 5.2.2 Develop a good network amongst Pacific Island communities and Centres of a similar nature within New Zealand, the Pacific Region and the world.
- 5.2.3 Explore and develop the ministry of Ministers, women and youth amongst Pacific Island people in New Zealand, the Pacific region, and the world.
- 5.2.4 To fundraise to develop and sustain the centre as a resource to Pacific peoples and all peoples for Mission and ministry, research and contribution to society as a whole.

5.3 Orientation programme for those interested in ministry

An orientation programme will soon be available for those interested in ordained ministry. It is for anyone who has an interest, without the obligation of a commitment. This is where questions can be asked and answered, frank discussions on expectations of ministry, academic qualifications, the reality of ministry, and so forth. This programme will provide the necessary preparation for those interested in pursuing the call to ordained ministry.

5.4 Youth involvement

At our Annual Conference this year, we called for a Pacific Island Synod Youth Meeting, prior to Synod's future Annual Conferences. This is to encourage youth involvement in the decision making process, to hear their voice, to

continue the development of them as leaders, and to build up youth participation, youth networks, and to provide intentional space for them to walk alongside their ministers and elders, and know that they are valued within the Synod.

6 Pacific Conference of Churches

6.1 Komiti Moana Nui

The Komiti Moana Nui (KMN) is made up of representatives of Te Aka Puaho and the Pacific Islands Synod which manages the relationship of Presbyterian Church and the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC). We are getting more involved in the life of the ecumenical movement in the Pacific through seminars and training workshops for leadership, ecumenism, HIV/AIDS human rights with focus on youth and women. Saumalu Tuitama (English Speaking), Georgina John (Cook Islands) Lee Makavani (Niue), Jubilee Suifili (Samoan, representing Te Aka Puaho), Vinise Moananu (Samoan, Council for World Mission Workshop) Rev Linda Hope (Tokelauan) all enjoyed their life changing experiences and will continue to be instrumental in the journey of the Pacific Island Synod. PCC is represented on the Global Ecumenical network on Migration (GEM), a programme of the World Council of Churches, by Rev Asora Amosa.

6.2 Pacific Church Leaders Meeting (PCLM 2010)

It was a historical moment when the Presbyterian Church hosted a first ever meeting of the Pacific Church Leaders here in Aotearoa from 7 to 13 August 2010. With the theme of migration, KMN organised and the Moderator Rev Dr Graham Redding opened the meeting and Te Aka Puaho welcome and hosted the PCC Church leaders on to Te Maungarongo Marae in Ohope on 7 August. The meeting continued in Auckland at the Hotel Grand Chancellor Conference facilities in Mangere till its conclusion. Pacific Islands Synod hosted them in Auckland during the week. We acknowledge in appreciation the monetary grant the Church made towards the costs of hosting this meeting. PCC sponsored and covered the rest.

7 We have shared briefly the weaving that is occurring in each constituent group and as a Synod as a whole, and together, we share our heart in our theology of the **Many Strands of One Mat**.

7.1 The place of scripture and theology in the Many Strands of One Mat
The richness and diversity of this multifaceted weaving process is amply illustrated to Paul's image of the Church, "there are many parts but one body".

¹ If we are to affirm and value this vision of unity in diversity, it must find its referent, standard, and source in the excellence of the Triune God, the Creator, the redeeming and healing love manifested in the life, death, and resurrection of the Son, and the sustaining and transforming work of the Holy Spirit. The crucial concept termed “perichoresis” is used in relation to the Trinity depicts the three persons of the Trinity as separate persons of equal standing that relate to each other in perfect harmony and unity, interpenetrating one another without diminishing the personhood of any. Perichoresis is described as: ‘the divine persons exist so intimately with one another, for one another and in one another, that they constitute themselves in their unique, incomparable and complete unity’.²

- 7.2 What does this imply for the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand? The logical implications for the church of this understanding of God as Trinity, said Moltmann, is that the ecclesiastical structures of power and hierarchy that flow from the notion of a divine monarchy, must give way to the horizontal structures of fellowship, equality and interdependence.³ Perichoresis is the operating principle (modus operandi), for the ways in which humankind (and church) was called to function in terms of interpersonal relationships.⁴
- 7.3 The Triune God presents a model for connection and relationship. Relationship and connection is the basic step in the spiritual formation of the whole Body of Christ and the whole network of relationships.
- 7.4 We proclaim and celebrate the gospel of Jesus Christ in worship and action. But through the Grace of Jesus Christ we also affirm our traditional spirituality and our place in God’s Creation. Our life with the Presbyterian Church is changing as we all seek to work together in partnership.
- 7.5 We are in this together, and we will continue to journey together, guided by the Holy Spirit, seeking the healing of our relationships and ways of being who we are, both fully Christian and fully Pacific Islanders.

8 Summary

MANY STRANDS – ONE MAT in the making, honours the whole network of relationships. This has been and will continue to be embodied by the Synod in its operations despite our ethnic diversity. This dynamic of relationships echoes the dynamic of the relations between “the Three Persons who together constitute the Deity”.⁵ Therefore, the model of the Trinity offers helpful insights for a theology of ‘Many Strands – One Mat’. This model portrays a relational, connected, ever-present, passionate Weaver God and Creator who is inviting

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:12

² Stanley J Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei, The Matrix of Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 43.

³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁴ Colin E Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168.

⁵ Basil of Caesarea, Letters in *Document in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge, 1975), cited in Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 81.

us, as the church to each offer our strands and share in weaving the Mat of creation.

9 Reasons to become a court

9.1 The spirit of the multicultural church within the Presbyterian Church

The Pacific Island Synod discussed how the decision making of the Presbyterian Church could embody the nature and the spirit of a multicultural

church described in the Preamble to the Book of Order (refer section 1.5, A.3). It states "The Church has become a multicultural church. Immigration from Pacific Island and other nations through the world have transformed, continue to transform and contribute to the multicultural character of the Church." This is the spirit of partnership.

As we think about how we work on such a spirit of partnership we offer you insights from "The Isaiah Vision" by Raymond Fung. A book appropriately subtitled "An Ecumenical Strategy for Congregational Evangelism." We see his work as a strategy for being Church. The text for the Vision comes from Isaiah 65: 20-23:

"No more shall there be an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person that does not live out a lifetime. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat. My chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, or bear children for calamity."

We offer you Isaiah's summary of the vision. God wants a community in which:

- Children do not die
- Old people live in dignity
- People who build houses live in them
- Those who plant vineyards eat the fruit

Raymond Fung went on to say of the vision:

- It makes universal sense
- It communicates well
- It is easy to relate to our own context
- It helps us to assess human behaviour, actions and policies

He says, *"the vision is about partnership. Partners are equal, know their limitations, know what they have to share and expect others to give their fair share. Partners have their own favourite agenda, but do not impose it on other partners."*

9.2 The Spirit of Unity within the Presbyterian Church

Furthermore, the Presbyterian Church's commitment to unity is also described in the Preamble to the Book of Order (section 1.6 A.4&5) thus: "Another sign of unity was the decision in 1969 for 28 churches of the Congregational Union to join the Presbyterian Church, bringing with them their Pacific Islander members. The Church continues to give expression to the union all Christians enjoy in

Jesus Christ. This is the spirit of the gospel.⁶ The Gospel is kerygma – both word and action.

9.3 Brief History

9.3.1 Past

It is no doubt that the spirit of the gospel was the spirit in Reverend Challis' heart towards the Pacific Island people. The former European missionary to the islands, Reverend Robert Challis helped influence the way the Pacific Island Congregational Churches (PICC) developed during the 1950s and 60s.

There is no question of his commitment and loyalty to Pacific Islanders and their spiritual development in the New Zealand context. He strongly advocated the belief that the way ahead for Pacific Islanders was to learn as fast as they could the ways of the Europeans. Such a philosophy did however cause some resentment amongst Pacific Island leaders and people. It came as no surprise therefore that the solution he offered to the PICC (when the Congregational Church of New Zealand took a downward turn owing to a decline of membership) was to join a much bigger and powerful European Church – the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. A leap of faith? Blind or open? There is no doubt that both the PICC and the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand (as it was then known) had their own respective reasons for agreeing to merge. Given the ecumenical mood of the period, such a move was probably in line with theological and liturgical world-wide trends. The call for Church union was strong. The cry 'we are all one in Christ' was loud and clear. The merits of theological and sociological cross-polynisation became powerful incentives to facilitate and accommodate dialogue. Both sides stood to gain, and they have.⁷

9.3.2 Present

We came from different points of the world in our own vaka/boats, from Europe, Pacific, Asia as tauivi (non-Maori). And as our history shows, we merged onto a bigger ship, building relationships as we journey to many seas doing mission together. As Pacific people within the Presbyterian Church, we have been almost 40 years in partnership. The frustration is that when we sail the Pacific Ocean, we've only been consulted on how to maneuver the ship, rather than given the authority to steer and lead us through the waters that are familiar to us, and in which we are ably experienced.

The Pacific Island Synod is now functioning and growing into its mission, but in many respects it is 'treading water' because all substantive decisions remain with Presbyteries. Synod has structure without force, appearance without authority.

The Pacific Island Synod does not want power of veto. What is sought is freedom and responsibility for the oversight of Christ's mission among Pacific Islanders, under the authority of the General Assembly. For the Pacific Island Synod to become fully integrated with the Presbyterian Church, is a stronger

⁶ John 17. 11

⁷ General Assembly 1994

voice within the decision making structure of the Church, resource sharing, honest conversation, (confronting yet dialoguing) whilst retaining our mana, our uniqueness. Significantly, this pattern is of the essence of the Church, the Body of Christ.

9.3.3 Future

We call the Church to express that same spirit (the spirit of the gospel) in our own day. That is the spirit of respect, of fairness, of justice, of unity, and of mutual belonging. The spirit of 'connecting together' which we all need to help each other find the fullness of the gospel and provide a broad and open witness to the world.

In sharing the same standing as the presbyteries, with the same authority and responsibilities, the Pacific Island Synod will also have the same obligations to the General Assembly and the whole church's mission as are undertaken by the presbyteries.

This is not an attempt to be separatists – it is the development of specific aspects of cultures, languages and spiritualities, drawing on the strengths and wealth of our traditions; and expression of this within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, and specifically within Presbyterian Church.

What is sought is the natural progression of the Church's stated commitment to the multicultural church and to the unity of all Christians in the Presbyterian Church. And most importantly, it is a call to shape the life of our church more and more deeply in paths of discipleship and mission.

One of these paths is openness through dialogue. Dialogue is a process of mutual empowerment, not a negotiation between parties who have conflicting interests and claims.

In dialogue we affirm hope. Dialogue is not an end in itself. It is a means of building bridges of respect and understanding. It is joyful affirmation of life for all.

In dialogue we grow in faith. Dialogue drives all communities to self criticism and to rethinking the ways in which they have interpreted their faith traditions.

In dialogue we nurture relationships. Building bonds of relationships with those considered "the other" is the ultimate goal of all dialogues.

In dialogue we must be informed by the context. Dialogue takes place in a concrete setting. Awareness of such realities as historical experience, economic background and political ideologies is essential. Further, differences in culture, gender, generation, race, and ethnicity also have an important impact on the nature and style of interaction.

In dialogue we strive toward mutual respect. Dialogue partners are responsible for hearing and listening to the self-understanding of each other.

Dialogue is a co-operative and collaborative activity. All partners need to be included in the planning process from the very beginning to decision making at the end.

In dialogue we strive to be inclusive, since dialogue can easily become an elitist activity and be confined to a certain strata of society.⁸

We honour the Church's bicultural partnership with Te Aka Puaho as the essential first step on the journey towards multiculturalism. The challenge is to find new ways of discovering what integrity we can trust in each other by how much we may be prepared to live respectfully with what diversity God has given us.

As we shape the Church for its missionary calling, let our prejudices, grievances and our fears be replaced by exercising mutual forbearance, understanding, forgiveness, grace and LOVE. Just as the Father loves the

Son and frees the Spirit to serve the Son, so too, may the church work flow and interact together so that we are all part of the one proclamation: TO MAKE JESUS CHRIST KNOWN.

Ngatokotoru Ine

Moderator, Pacific Island Synod

⁸ The World Council of Churches presented a paper on the principles for dialogue.