

# Candour



Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR MINISTERS

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**Kupu Whakapono** – two years on.  
How are parishes using it to confess the faith?



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## Candour 2012

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## Contributions

We welcome responses to published articles. If you would like to write a piece replying to any of this month's featured articles, please contact:

The editor at [loisandbob@xtra.co.nz](mailto:loisandbob@xtra.co.nz) or phone (04) 801 6000.

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The next edition is published in November 2012. This edition will have the theme: 'Turn around Churches'. Stories and reflections from churches in decline, and dying, that turned themselves around. Contributions on this topic are welcome, and can be sent to the editor [loisandbob@xtra.co.nz](mailto:loisandbob@xtra.co.nz)

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# Kupu Whakapono – confessing the faith in Aotearoa

*Mary-Jane Konings, South Canterbury Presbytery*

**It is early days for the Kupu Whakapono in the life of our church and both its development and introduction were not without controversy. One of the more unusual sights at General Assembly 2010 was the supporters from both ends of the theological spectrum united in voting against the new confession. I suspect this was a sign that the writers had probably got it about right!**

If we are to honour our past new confessions need to be road tested in worship. My current experience, for what it's worth, is that we have only used it occasionally. There have been several celebration days where it has been important for the life of our congregation that we shared this together.

As a worship leader I struggle a little with the length. I'm conscious that the children don't 'get it' and that is an opportunity for us to do some work. In fact, what I might do is a series on introducing this to our children paragraph by paragraph and unpacking it at little. While it is long I wouldn't want to remove anything either. It just takes time to say anything worthwhile.

I also have a vague sense of guilt that I haven't really made an effort to use it more often. Are we really a national church or is it OK for individual congregations to ignore the hard work of talented men and women who offer this as a gift to the church? The Kupu Whakapono is a gift. It is ours. It is a fresh articulation of faith that locates us in our context, worked out by our most gifted theologians and poets. Like any gift we need to take it up if we are to discover its riches.

**T**here is an energy that comes out of rigorous debate when we are able to engage in the conversation in a way that respects the dignity and worth of the other.

What is our context and what is the role of a confession? We need to help people in all the stages of faith. Confessions are really important to people at a crossroads stage as they read a summary of the essentials. We need to be careful we don't present this as an entry requirement. As far as I know that's still Jesus' job! The brilliant thing about a corporate confession is that there is room to disagree and genuine unity happens when we confess and argue and tease out the implications. Coldly ignoring those who disagree with us and so avoiding the conversation appeals to the conflict averse but leaves us as a church and as individuals impoverished.

There is an energy that comes out of rigorous debate when we are able to engage in the conversation in a way that respects the dignity and worth of the other. We have not always achieved that in our church. But hanging in for the long term means we hammer out a lexicon of images, metaphors and language and somewhere in all that debate the presence of Christ abides.

If we are debating our confession of faith we are at least discussing those things that have always been held to be essential to the faith and not being distracted by red herrings. There are plenty of important issues but as the Christian church, we are the ones who bring Christ to the table as we are sustained by the table of Christ.

It is difficult to know how to round off this editorial without sounding like a salesperson (But wait! There's more!) or sending you on a guilt trip (you should use the Kupu Whakapono). So, I'll leave you with a further personal confession instead.

I confess I haven't used this enough in my context. But our Confession is worth having another look at, and I promise to try and use it more. Will you join me?

# Using Kupu Whakapono to explore and deepen faith

*Allister Lane, Wellington Presbytery*

**T**he chairs arranged in a circle. We each clutched a one-page print out of *Kupu Whakapono* and began reading it out loud together. Included in a brief introduction about the place of confessions of faith in our church tradition was a comment that confessions work best when spoken out loud together. And so we began the 7 week series reading this latest confession of faith from and for our church.

At St John's in the City we had been looking to offer a teaching and discussion series for people in our congregation who had expressed interest in exploring and deepening their faith, and it seemed that *Kupu Whakapono* offered a way to frame such a series. By taking a chunk of this confession each week we could discuss most of the significant Christian doctrines.

Looking around the circle of people it was clear that we had participants from various backgrounds. Some were new to faith or the Presbyterian tradition and others showed clear signs of longer exposure! It was going to be an interesting discussion.

Using *Kupu Whakapono* gave us an opportunity to develop material for this course that addressed people we knew and whose contexts we could relate to. Using *Kupu Whakapono* also gave us a way to stay close to a confession that has been expressed and accepted by the Presbyterian Church in Aotearoa New Zealand in this millennium. We were enthusiastic to use it as a framework that provided a logical structure for this discussion series, as well as to promote awareness of this new confession and its use in our life of worship and mission.

Here is how we formed *Kupu Whakapono* into chunks for seven weekly sessions.

## KUPU WHAKAPONO (Confession of Faith)

**From this land of Aotearoa New Zealand  
we confess that we believe in and belong  
to the one true and living God,  
who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Love before all love.**

**We believe in God the Father,  
sovereign and holy,  
Creator and nurturer of all,  
Father of Jesus Christ,  
sender of the Holy Spirit,  
and Judge of all the earth.**

**We believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour,  
truly human and truly divine,  
who lived among us full of grace and truth.  
For our sin he was crucified  
and by the power of God was raised from death,  
forgiving us, setting us free and bringing to birth God's new creation.  
Now ascended, he calls us to repentance and faith  
and restores us to God and to one another.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
the giver of life at work in all creation,  
who inspired the Scriptures and makes Christ known,**

1] Who is God?

2] Who is Jesus?  
3] What did Jesus do?

4] Who is the Spirit?

who transforms hearts and minds  
and gathers us into the community of Christ,  
empowering the Church in worship and in mission.

5] What is the Church?

We belong to this triune God,  
women and men,  
young and old,  
from many nations,  
in Christ *he iwi kotahi tatou*, [we are one people]  
witnesses to God's love in word and action,  
servants of reconciliation,  
and stewards of creation.

6] What's a disciple?

As God's people,  
we look forward in hope and joy  
to the return of Christ,  
to the new heaven and earth,  
where evil and death will be no more,  
justice and peace will flourish,  
and we shall forever delight in the glory of God.

7] What is our future?

By taking a chunk of this confession  
each week we could discuss most of  
the significant Christian doctrines.

Each session is deliberately given a very brief question as a working title to summarise the doctrinal content and to open up discussion. Some are not a close match to the content of the confession, but there is plenty of flexibility to adjust topics to have more or fewer sessions depending on however many are optimal for a given group and context.

**"The structure of the sessions around the confession was ideal and gave the sessions structure, context and focus. That certainly made it more comfortable and less daunting for me." - Tom**

In developing the content for each session we found the commentary material of *Kupu Whakapono* to be excellent in drawing out the important doctrinal points and giving biblical examples. To enrich the content further we quoted helpful theologians (Migliore, McGrath, Guthrie, Grenz, Gunton, Wright...even Calvin!)

Whilst we were pleased with the material we developed for our series, we recognised the importance of giving the group participants a chance to ask their own questions and raise the topics they wanted to discuss. Using *Kupu Whakapono* gave structure to our discussions and allowed us to touch on whatever people wanted to discuss and then bring it back to an overall framework to see how some of the important Christian beliefs sit together alongside and related to one another.

In addition to using extracts of the commentary and quotes from helpful theologians in developing the content of the series we included questions designed to provoke group discussion. As an example: "Imagine you have to explain who Jesus is to someone who has never heard anything about him. How would you begin?"

“Imagine you have to explain who Jesus is to someone who had never heard anything about him. How would you begin?”

For those participants who were *really* keen we provided additional readings as printed handouts for people to take away with them. These echoed the content of the session just concluded and yet typically offered slightly nuanced perspectives on the theme and/or approached it in a different way. Whilst these readings were longer than those we covered in each session we found it important to keep them accessible by choosing readings that were clear and logical in their presentation of Christian thought.

Using *Kupu Whakapono* to explore and deepen faith for people at St John's in the City was effective in providing a helpful structure to the significant Christian doctrines. Each week, as we spoke the words out loud together, we felt pleased to be using this new confession of faith in a dynamic and meaningful way to encourage one another in faith and discipleship.

*We would encourage use of Kupu Whakapono as the basis for discussion about matters of faith in your place. We are also very happy to share what we've used. If you would like to see the material we developed please contact Allister Lane, a.lane@stjohnsinthecity.org.nz*

## DIRECTOR, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SCHOOLS OFFICE

### APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FOR THE POSITION OF DIRECTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SCHOOLS OFFICE.

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE POSITION IS TO:

1. serve and strengthen the relationship between the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and those church schools which are affiliated to and associated with it;
2. develop and coordinate the provision of resources in keeping with the Christian and Presbyterian/Reformed character of those schools;
3. provide support and encouragement to those engaged in the provision of Religious Education and Chaplaincy in Presbyterian Church Schools;
4. engage with the leaders of Presbyterian Church Schools about what it means to have this special character.

This is a part-time position commencing in February 2013.

Enquiries, including requests for a copy of the Job Description, can be directed to the Principal of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

The successful applicant will be theologically trained, have a background in education, and be familiar with the Presbyterian and Presbyterian Church School contexts.

*Applications can be submitted to the Principal of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, Graham Redding: principal@knoxcentre.ac.nz*

*The deadline for applications is 30 September 2012*

# My Kupu Whakapono

*Fei Taule'ale'ausumai Davis, Northern Presbytery*

**From this land of Aotearoa New Zealand  
we confess that we believe in and belong  
to the one true and living God,  
who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Love before all love.**

“Love before all Love”; the term Aroha is universal within Aotearoa and would have been logical and natural to include here. I would have liked to have the trinity also referred to in the Māori language as an option e.g. Matua, Tama, Wairua Tapu. Matua is both parents and not just masculine, Tama is child and non-gender specific and Wairua Tapu is equivalent to Holy Spirit but highlights the all-encompassing sacredness of the Triune Spirit.

**We believe in God the Father,  
sovereign and holy,  
Creator and nurturer of all,  
Father of Jesus Christ,  
sender of the Holy Spirit,  
and Judge of all the earth.**

The Greek term “oikumene” as the whole inhabited earth and creation better encompasses God’s creation. God alone is the judge of God’s creation and highlights the Supremacy and Divine as having dominion over creation.

**We believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour,  
truly human and truly divine,  
who lived among us full of grace and truth.  
For our sin he was crucified  
and by the power of God was raised from death,  
forgiving us, setting us free and bringing to birth God’s new creation.  
Now ascended, he calls us to repentance and faith  
and restores us to God and to one another.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
the giver of life at work in all creation,  
who inspired the Scriptures and makes Christ known,  
who transforms hearts and minds  
and gathers us into the community of Christ,  
empowering the Church in worship and in mission.**

**We belong to this triune God,  
women and men,  
young and old,  
from many nations,  
in Christ he *iwi kotahi tatou*, [we are one people]  
witnesses to God’s love in word and action,  
servants of reconciliation,  
and stewards of creation.**

**As God’s people,  
we look forward in hope and joy  
to the return of Christ,  
to the new heaven and earth,  
where evil and death will be no more,  
justice and peace will flourish,  
and we shall forever delight in the glory of God.**

Having grown up with the Apostle's Creed this does take a bit of getting used to. In my last Parish, which some members considered a "non-creedal" congregation by choice, I seldom used any Creeds in worship as it was alienating for many of these members.

To be honest, Kupu Whakapono probably hasn't really found its way to the front of the church. Maybe those involved in the birthing of it have adopted it and have chosen to incorporate it into their parish life. However, I'm not entirely convinced those of us on the periphery who may have heard it being debated at General Assembly have really grasped the point and purpose of the changes.

I do appreciate the sentiments behind it. However, I don't think there has been a real attempt to be deliberately inclusive and depart from gender specific descriptions of Father and Son. If Kupu Whakapono really claims to be "Kupu", words that state our faith, then a more complete attempt at using Te Reo more freely within the text would have been genuinely inclusive and better representative of Tangata Whenua as well as stating our appreciation as a Church of belonging to Te Aka Puaho and not the other way round.

### MY "KUPU WHAKAPONO"

It feels as if Pacific Islanders still cannot be trusted with anything really - buildings, property, money, establishing our own Synod or own Church Court. It feels as if we need to be monitored and policed. When will this stop? When are we going to really begin to trust one another? It is time for the PCANZ to sit up and listen and take seriously our commitment to a partnership with one another that is reciprocal, giving and receiving, sharing of knowledge and resources, teaching and learning.

This year's Assembly is an opportunity to really test the waters of our baptism and our commitment to genuine partnership. We are still being 'drip fed' our resources and money and spoon fed our faith in languages and practices that judge and separate, rather than kupu whakapono, words that embrace and celebrate our faith journey together.

So when we talk about Kupu Whakapono it can't be tokenistic. It is not just an academic exercise, it is an exercise of faith and trust and celebrating our uniqueness as a Church and the privilege we have to share it with so many who do not have Scottish or European heritage. If we are to truly embrace Kupu Whakapono then we need to let go of the keys, the purse strings, the power, the dominion of the PCANZ and begin a new journey of faith that trusts one another and embraces all God's people as equal partners and brothers and sisters in Christ.

We need to allow our wairua tapu, the sacredness of what it means to be Māori, Pacific, Palagi and Asian and our expression of that sacredness, to enter into partnership which has no conditions attached. Love before all Love - Aroha, Alofa - is unconditional with no strings attached. This is what it means to truly walk and talk our faith, our Kupu Whakapono.

"We need to allow our wairua tapu, the sacredness of what it means to be Māori, Pacific, Palagi and Asian and our expression of that sacredness, to enter into partnership which has no conditions attached."



# We are not alone

*Sarah Mitchell, Southern Presbytery*

**They are young – little children and teenagers. They love being part of the church family and involved in worship leadership; their piping voices join confidently in the spoken responses of liturgical worship. They assure the congregation of their knowledge that God is with us – that we are God's beloved people.... We are not alone.**

She's in her early 20s - thoroughly church-ed; returned home after 6 months OE, travelling the worlds between university study, family and working life. "That first Sunday I came back, I realised what I'd been missing. I found myself in tears as together we recited the Affirmation of Faith" she told me.... We are not alone, we live in God's world.

He's in his late 50s - always been a bit cynical about a church that seemed rather hypocritical. With his deep commitment to social justice, he has found a place now where he can exercise leadership knowing that all people are welcome and can find a place at the table of Christ... called to be the Church ...We are not alone...

She's in her late 30s - recently returned to the church after a period of disillusionment; passionate about living a life of non-violence so that all people might have abundant and flourishing life; refusing to embrace all the rules, regulations and belief statements of the PCANZ. "I love the Affirmation of Faith, every time we say it, I am moved and inspired" she tells me .... reconciling and making new... We are not alone ....

His busy professional life pulls him in many different directions; a practical 'doer' and an articulate thinker; he's mounted his own private (church-supported) protest over many years – you won't see him wearing any colour, when he comes to worship; he's dressed in sober black and white, whilst that regulation about sexuality and leadership is in place.... seeking justice and resisting evil ... We are not alone...

**That first Sunday I came back, I realised what I'd been missing. I found myself in tears as together we recited the Affirmation of Faith" she told me.... We are not alone, we live in God's world.**

He's in his 80s and life continues to be unkind to him; unsure of what he believes now, but feeling embraced within a community of love, even whilst keeping his distance. He hesitatingly comes to his feet at the invitation for "those who are able" to stand and join in the Affirmation. Living with respect in creation ... We are not alone....

She's nearing the end of her long life - a life of deep faithfulness in living the Way of Jesus through both the joyful and the tough times. Now restricted in many capacities she continues to be deeply loyal, embracing change with generous hope and confident love... In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us... We are not alone.

Every Sunday the congregation at Knox Church Dunedin is invited to recite this United Church of Canada affirmation of faith. Many now know it by heart. It's not a creed. It's more open-ended than that, and yet for many it is still too prescriptive. It's the closest we can get to saying something together; knowing that words are not enough to speak of the Holy Source of our Being, Goal of our Longing and Horizon of our Becoming. We've not been able to embrace the prosaic Kupu

Whakapono, with its long definitive statements and its confining and prescriptive commentary. We prefer an affirmation which will dialogue in an open manner with our lives, with contemporary hymnody, prayers, readings and preaching and which allows space for the dynamic, dancing, invitational Spirit to evolve and emerge, working in us and others as we seek to worship and live as people of faith in this challenging and transforming 21st century journey. We are not alone ...

**We are not alone,**

**we live in God's world.**

**We believe in God:**

**who has created and is creating,**

**who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,**

**to reconcile and make new,**

**who works in us and others by the Spirit.**

**We trust in God.**

**We are called to be the Church:**

**to celebrate God's presence,**

**to live with respect in Creation,**

**to love and serve others,**

**to seek justice and resist evil,**

**to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,**

**our judge and our hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.**

**We are not alone.**

**Thanks be to God.**

## AUCKLAND

### DOWNTOWN MINISTRY APPOINTMENT (PRESBYTERIAN-METHODIST)

This is an exciting and challenging position that calls for a creative development of Ministry and Mission in Downtown Auckland.

The person appointed will preferably live in the Downtown area, will seek to connect with the civic, commercial and business world along with apartment dwellers, building a new faith community or communities.

At the same time there is some responsibility for the ongoing life of the existing St James and Aotea congregations.

For a full job description email [forbesw@ihug.co.nz](mailto:forbesw@ihug.co.nz). Applications close 30th September

# From “Jesus Christ is Lord” to Kupu Whakapono: Confessing the Faith in Aotearoa New Zealand

*Graham Redding, Principal Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership*

“Jesus Christ is Lord”.

As far as we can tell, this four-word declaration is the earliest Christian profession of faith. In Philippians 2:10-11 a day is anticipated when, at the name of Jesus, every knee will bend and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This confession is intensely personal. For the earliest Christians it was also intensely political, for to confess Jesus Christ as Lord was to reject all other claims to the title, including Caesar’s. For many of them this led to persecution, imprisonment and even death (cf. Acts 8:1-3).

“Jesus Christ is Lord”. Has there ever been a more simple yet dangerous and subversive profession of faith? The Confessing Church movement in Nazi Germany discovered to their cost the answer to this question when they framed the Theological Declaration of Barmen (1934) and appealed to the lordship of Christ in their refusal to grant absolute authority to the National Socialist state. Almost fifty years later the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa drafted the Belhar Confession (1982) which declared apartheid to be a form of apostasy that threatened the truth and integrity of the Gospel.

At certain points in history churches have felt it necessary to publicly declare what they believe to be true

The Barmen Declaration and Belhar Confession demonstrate in a graphic way that beliefs matter. At certain points in history churches have felt it necessary to publicly declare what they believe to be true. Such declarations or confessions of faith speak the Faith which the Church has received into particular situations. They are simultaneously catholic (universal) and contextual (situational). Kupu Whakapono’s commentary says as much when it posits that “confessing the faith is a continuing responsibility of the Church, as it seeks faithfully to proclaim in changing times and contexts the unchanging Gospel once delivered to the saints.”<sup>1</sup> The catholicity of Kupu Whakapono is evident in the extent to which it prioritises faithfulness to scripture and the Church’s doctrinal and confessional heritage, including the ancient ecumenical Creeds.<sup>2</sup> This was clearly a priority for the workgroup that had been tasked by the 2002 General Assembly with drafting a focal identity statement for the PCANZ that might be deemed suitable to become a new subordinate standard for the church. The workgroup’s membership was expanded after leading figures in the AFFIRM movement voiced concerns about the biblical orthodoxy of the version that was presented to the 2008 General Assembly. It was clear at that Assembly that Kupu Whakapono would not win the

<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 5 of the Kupu Whakapono Commentary

<sup>2</sup> Cf. paragraphs 5 & 6 of the Commentary

support of the Assembly without an endorsement from AFFIRM. Subsequent versions, including the one that was ultimately granted the status of a subordinate standard at the 2010 General Assembly, reflect the endeavours of the expanded workgroup in achieving doctrinal agreement.

That Kupu Whakapono constitutes an emphatic statement of doctrinal orthodoxy cannot be disputed. The scope of its doctrinal coverage is impressive. Its commentary reads as a mini-systematics, traversing such subjects as the doctrine of God, Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology, mission, scripture and the sacraments. Whilst it is part of the same doctrinal heritage as the Westminster Confession, it also serves as a healthy corrective to some of the Westminster Confession's doctrinal failings.

And it has the added advantage of being able to be used as a Confession of Faith in worship. It serves a doxological as well as a doctrinal purpose. This is not an easy thing to achieve. For something to work doxologically it should engage the heart as well as the mind, as does a good hymn, worship song or prayer. When Kupu Whakapono was presented to the General Assembly, one of our Church's most able singer-songwriters, Malcolm Gordon, performed a sung version that constituted one of the doxological high points of the Assembly.

Despite that strong start, however, Kupu Whakapono does not appear to have gone on to secure a prominent doxological place in the life of our Church. Why is this? I would posit three main reasons:

**Firstly**, confessions of faith seldom play a significant role in worship services nowadays. Yes, many churches will still trot out the Apostles' Creed at baptism and ordination services, and some still recite the Nicene Creed or contemporary equivalents at communion services, but for the most part confessions of faith have been dropped from regular patterns of worship. It would seem that we are a confessing church in terms of our heritage, but not in terms of our actual practice.

It also serves as a healthy corrective to some of the Westminster Confession's doctrinal failings

**Secondly**, Kupu Whakapono lacks the sort of kairos moment that gave birth to the likes of the Barmen Declaration and Belhar Confession. The main impetus behind the drafting of Kupu Whakapono was not to speak into a key moment in our nation's history but rather to produce a new subordinate standard for the Presbyterian Church. To use a culinary metaphor, it offers us meat and three veg – a solid meal to be sure, but not something that excites the palate.

**Thirdly**, Kupu Whakapono, by virtue of both its length and phraseology, does not lend itself easily to doxological usage. Despite having one or two stylistic flourishes, including the incorporation of some te reo Māori, frankly it's a bit of a mouthful. It's as though the poetic quality of earlier versions has been sacrificed on the altar of doctrinal precision.

The end result is that although Kupu Whakapono is on our books, it has yet to find a place in our hearts. Although it scores highly as a subordinate standard, it struggles as a confession of faith.



# Disciple-making

*Peter Cheyne, Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*

**P**eople said it couldn't be done! The PCANZ couldn't produce a statement of faith that would gain wide support. Undeterred, a faithful team persevered and with commendable interaction with the feedback received from many quarters, Kupu Whakapono was born and was adopted by the General Assembly.

## Now what? Is it useful to us?

In my travels around the country I have not seen it used frequently but I have seen it used on occasions. And, of course, I get only a very limited view of what is happening in our churches.

Clearly there is value in having a statement of what we believe can be used in worship and for teaching. A third use is implied by the term "subordinate standard". A standard is something against which other things can be measured. A good statement of faith describes orthodoxy.

Teaching, worship and orthodoxy are all crucially important. Understanding and declaring what we believe are crucially important. However, they are also not enough.

Old models of preparing people for church membership focused on teaching certain truths. People attended classes prior to confirmation, for example, and learned some basic doctrine, denominational distinctiveness and "churchmanship". It involved the head and the classroom. And it bore little resemblance to the way Jesus made disciples.

## I said old models, but maybe it still happens.

It is simplistic but helpful, I believe, to think of maturity in terms of head (our beliefs and attitudes), heart (our character and passions) and hands (our actions and lifestyle). Learning doctrine helps with the head component. But a fuller understanding of discipleship also includes character formation. We all know of people who have above average biblical or theological knowledge but whose character bears little resemblance to Christ's.

Going yet further, discipleship also includes lifestyle and active Christian service. Again, doctrinal knowledge is insufficient. The apostle Paul exhorts us not just to know the gospel but to conduct ourselves in a manner worth of the gospel (Phil 1:27).

The more successful discipling models emphasise action more than knowledge. Discipleship groups will hold members accountable (in a very loving way, of course) for putting into practice the things they are learning. Have we shared our faith with anyone this week? Have we spent regular time with God? Last week's study was on reconciliation. What have we done about that since? These groups bear some resemblance to John Wesley's class meetings.

When the focus is on the living out of our faith then there is also more emphasis on the leader's modelling rather than just teaching it.

"Imagine what church life would be like if we had an increasing number of people who were being "conformed into the image of His Son"

It will be no surprise that effective disciple-making focuses on obedience. Jesus' Great Commission was not that we should "teach people everything I have commanded". It was "teach people to obey everything I have commanded". There is a world of difference between them. Teaching obedience requires much more of us. It implies radically transformed lives – lives aligned with Jesus Himself. Christ-likeness is not just a matter of the heart, or even the head and the heart; it is a matter of the hands as well. Followers of Jesus will live and act and minister like Jesus.

I am not sure that I have fully absorbed the impact of 1 John 2:6: *Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus lived.* We might also think of Jesus saying that whoever believed in Him would do the things He had done and even greater things (John 14:12).

Our disciple-making mission involves far more than teaching doctrine. Doctrine was important to Paul but his letters frequently turn from doctrine to the lifestyle the doctrine requires.

The apostle Paul exhorts us not just to know the gospel but to conduct ourselves in a manner worth of the gospel

Some time ago I did a course during which I wrote down my beliefs, why I believed them, the values that were based on those beliefs and the actions that follow from those beliefs. It was a valuable exercise but some of the actions I wrote in red because I realised they didn't match what I said I believed. If I really do believe that prayer is communication with God, why don't I pray much more? By their fruits you will know them!

Our task as ministers is certainly to teach truth and to work so that our people know what to believe and why. We are a confessional church and Kupu Whakapono is a valuable tool for that. It is ours. It arises out of our context. But Kupu Whakapono points us to a bigger task. We must go way beyond doctrine, ensuring that our own lives demonstrate not just the beliefs of Christ but also the character of Christ and the works of Christ, and then nurturing that same fully-rounded Christ-likeness in others.

Imagine what church life would be like if we had an increasing number of people who were being "conformed into the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). Imagine having all those compassionate, forgiving, passionate, focused, discerning, disciple-making people in our churches.

# What were you expecting?

Martin Baker, Assembly Executive Secretary

**I**t is a curious thing travelling to the United States around Christmas time. While in secular New Zealand you can drive through towns and find Christmas decorations adorning all manner of buildings and life size replicas of the manger, Mary and the infant Jesus but in the States there is little visual evidence of the Christmas season being celebrated at all. People say 'happy holidays' rather than 'Merry Christmas' and while churches in the US might be full on Christmas Day, walking the streets of larger cities on 25 December can seem almost like business as usual.

All this seems especially odd since we probably know more about the religious credentials of the American presidential candidates and their running mates than we know of many other political leaders, including our own. Commentary from online news agency *Daily Beast* observes that "... among the four leading men now in the presidential/vice presidential spotlight, the only mainstream Protestant is black; two of the remaining three contenders are Catholic and one is Mormon". And then, typically, when Americans discuss the role of religion in US politics they provide a lengthy explanation of the role of the American constitution in separating church concerns from those of the state.

Occasionally the religious convictions of our politicians are reported, last week for instance the *New Zealand Herald* told us that John Banks held to a rather literalist view of the creation stories. We can also read that Deputy Prime Minister Bill English is Roman Catholic. Jenny Shipley, Jim Bolger, Geoffrey Palmer, David Lange and Robert Muldoon have all professed to be Christians at points in their political careers. However, the religious convictions of our politicians are often represented as either being a somewhat peculiar and private idiosyncrasy, or at least peripheral to the political ideology which they espouse.

Perhaps there are other reasons why we in New Zealand seldom hear or read commentary about the beliefs and faith convictions of our leaders. Maybe we have a fear of people with strong convictions. That idealism is always a sign of naivety, and that those in public office with religious beliefs will have us rioting and effigy burning in the streets before you can say Michael Joseph Savage. People, who explicitly connect their faith to their politics may not be safe in roles of national leadership!

You can imagine the range of feedback I have received after sending out a memo about the safety and use of buildings. The most interesting discussions I have had since the memo has been with people who affirm that none of our buildings should be safe places. I like it when people tell me that the proclamation of the Gospel is never a safe business to be in.

One of my favourite writers on religious matters is the rather iconoclastic Annie Dillard. In, *Teaching a stone* to talk she says:

"On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return."

**D**uring challenging times of change it seems especially critical to speak of our expectations

Justice Joe Williams, a Te Whaiti scholar, whom I listened to last Saturday at the 40th celebration of the scholarship awards, made the point that the key difference the scholarships made for the boys who received them was to create an environment of expectation. Not impossible achievements, but an active expectation that each boy would fulfil his potential with the skills and gift that he received and developed.

During challenging times of change it seems especially critical to speak of our expectations, for ourselves, for the congregations we lead and for the society in which we live.

I hope we all have moments when the Spirit moves, and we have a sense of 'this is how it is meant to be' or 'this is what it could be like'.

Thank you again for all your work and service.



## THE COUNCIL OF KNOX COLLEGE AND SALMOND COLLEGE INC MASTER – KNOX COLLEGE

Knox College is one of New Zealand's oldest and most prestigious residential colleges. It accommodates over 220 young adult residents and is a recognized community with a mix of modern pastoral care and traditional community values. It is affiliated to the University of Otago, and is owned and operated in close association with its sister Salmond College by the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. (PCANZ)

This is a rare and unique opportunity for an enlightened, pragmatic and experienced leader to enhance and sustain a scholastic community committed to realizing the academic potential, the community spirit and the cultural enrichment of each of its predominantly undergraduate residents through balancing the academic, cultural, spiritual and social aspects of University residential life in a manner consistent with the ethos and values of the PCANZ.

Your wealth of experience operating at a senior management level will enable you to manage this challenging and complex multi-disciplined operation. Your staff management experience, leadership and strong communication skills will inspire a diverse team who take great pride in working at Knox College. Your sound financial management background will

enable you to operate a significant budget, and your property management experience and strategic thinking ability will ensure the College continues towards its vision of excellence. Your ability to work collegially will build a strong relationship with the Master of Salmond College, so that both colleges will have an enhanced quality of experience for their residents.

Important, is your ability to build rapport and demonstrate empathy with young adults studying at Otago University. With the focus on academic excellence, you will also have a tertiary qualification.

Accommodation is provided in this full-time permanent live-in position.

**Applications close on 12 October, 2012,** with the Bursar, Knox College, 9 Arden St, Opoho, Dunedin, 9010.

For a copy of the position description and any other information, please email [bursar@knoxcollege.ac.nz](mailto:bursar@knoxcollege.ac.nz)

### APPLICATION INFORMATION

Please complete a separate application form and include a separate copy of your curriculum vitae and supporting documentation. For ease of processing and to avoid cost and waste, we ask that applications are not presented in folders.



# Coming Out in the Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Andre Muller

Liz Lightfoot (ed.), *Outspoken: Coming Out in the Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011). ISBN: 9781877578083; 218pp.

**I**n mid-2009 Liz Lightfoot, an independent researcher working under the supervision of Dr John Paterson of the University of Waikato, interviewed eleven subjects as part of a project aimed at documenting the stories of gay and lesbian people within the Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. Whatever the merits of the 'Listening Process' upon which the Anglican Communion embarked in the wake of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, it has become increasingly clear that many gay and lesbian Anglicans feel their stories have not in fact been heard. In publishing the edited versions of her interviews Lightfoot hopes, in a modest way, to redress this situation if only by showing that at least some gay and lesbian people have been so hurt by the Church as to have abandoned all hope that the 'Listening Process' is anything other than a charade concealing a profound lack of courage on the part of those charged with her leadership.

If this reveals an irony at the heart of a project commended as a contribution to that process, it is perhaps one that brings a measure of clarity to the situation in which Anglicans (and, by analogy, members of other Churches), find themselves by drawing attention to the limits of an official process that has, by its inability to bring about effective change, done a great deal to foster cynicism on the part of the very people it is claiming to serve. Such a process is yet to prove itself a means by which the complexity and depth of the often painful experiences of gays and lesbians within the Church is rendered audible to clergy and laity alike. To talk of the need for honest dialogue while in practice allowing a 'don't ask, don't tell' policy to flourish at both official and unofficial levels, is simply to have failed to hear the voices of gays and lesbians.

It may seem rather strange to press the logic of Lightfoot's book in this way, since it is presented as a piece of qualitative research that aims to conform to academic standards (indeed, it is published by a university press). But Lightfoot is aware that the role she is playing is more than that of the neutral observer. She believes her research to be 'primarily about justice and about what is done, how people are treated in the name of God' (p. 15), and this as a way of outworking a 'gospel bias ... to the oppressed and towards justice ... to the suffering and towards healing ... to the captives and towards liberation'.

Given such commitment, it is curious then that Lightfoot hedges at the very moment when most is at stake, claiming that when it comes to the issue of homosexuality, 'the definitions of justice, healing and liberty are up for debate'. This is fine in so far as empirical descriptions of the way in which that issue, or rather set of issues, is being played out within the Anglican Communion go. But it is clear that the justice with which her research is concerned is incommensurate with policies that would exclude gays and lesbians from full participation in the Church. To appeal here, as Lightfoot does, to the supposed ability of the Anglican Church to accommodate a range of views on the subject, or worse, to theological clichés that insist that 'God is beyond theology' and 'sexuality is no barrier to God's love' (p. 16) is to beg the very question at stake. It is hard, particularly when reading the introduction, not to feel that Lightfoot wants to answer that question while, at the same time, pretending that she isn't.

The bulk of Lightfoot's book is, of course, taken up with the edited versions of the interviews she conducted between May and July 2009. The experiences of the eleven interviewees are, as one might expect, enormously diverse. It would be perilous to attempt any generalisations were it not for the fact that Lightfoot herself encourages us to do so by offering at the end of each interview some reflections that 'might help the reader's understanding of the participant's experience' and by summing up the key themes that emerge from her interviews in a concluding 'postscript'.

There is a quite proper sophistication to the analysis Lightfoot offers in the concluding pages of her book, recognising that the process of 'coming out' is an enormously complicated one for gay and

lesbian people within the Church. 'The cost of integrity in the church is devastatingly high', one of the interviewees remarks and Lightfoot sees in this comment a way of approaching one of the key problems gay and lesbian Christians face.

Indeed, notions of personal integrity and therefore notions of the self, play a profoundly important role in many of the experiences of Lightfoot's interviewees. To cite but one example, after coming out to his wife (of more than thirty years) and children, 'Rob' (all the names are pseudonyms) tells Lightfoot that he decided to write them a letter saying 'I love you and all the rest of those nice, humane and truthful things but I have to be true to myself too. There's not much point living a lie and having you people happy and me not. I've got another thirty years perhaps, if I play it right.' If many of the other interviewees come off sounding less childish than this, the imperative to be 'true to myself' is one that continually resurfaces throughout the book as an explanation, even justification, for often painful and sometimes tragic decisions.

At this point we begin to see the sort of work that is being done by Lightfoot's insistence that 'people's lives are sacred ground'. Although it is not immediately clear what she means by this claim, it effectively functions as a way of forestalling any attempt to question the Emersonian framework that supplies the moral imperative to be 'true to myself'. It was the American novelist and host of *A Prairie Home Companion*, Garrison Keillor, who once remarked that Ralph Waldo Emerson had a great deal to answer for, not least because his writings encouraged men and women who would have made fine accountants and bus drivers and lawyers to become very bad writers and musicians and artists, and to find in their supposedly artistic temperaments the warrant for jettisoning ordinary virtues like kindness and patience. They were told to throw caution to the wind, to escape from the ordinary obligations and responsibilities that constrained their lives, and to be true to themselves. Only the selves they were being true to were selves in the process of becoming monstrous precisely to the degree that they were being extricated from concrete and unspectacular obligations to others.

“Indeed, notions of personal integrity, and therefore, notions of the self, play a profoundly important role in many of the experiences of Lightfoot's interviewees.”

Monstrous and, we might add, incoherent (which may be the same thing), since the attempt to orientate myself, to find my bearings within the world, by appealing to myself is necessarily self-defeating. Not only does it trade upon an essentialism that is profoundly problematic – a stable self, at one remove from our interactions with others (a self, therefore, behind the public, historical self) that is simply there to be known. It also presumes that knowledge of that self is a rather straightforward affair. It was the early church theologian Augustine of Hippo who pointed out that we are not, in fact, perspicuous to ourselves; we cannot simply lay ourselves out like a map. There is no vantage point from which we can obtain a clear enough vision of ourselves for us to be able to say at any one point in our lives, 'now, at last, I am truly being myself'.

The question here is whether the Emersonian logic to which many of the interviewees in Lightfoot's book appeal as in some sense offering justification for actions they have committed can actually do the work it is claiming to do. When 'Rob' tells his family that he has to 'be true' to himself, or 'Edward' says that one of the best things about his new homosexual life is 'just being open ... just being myself' (p. 33), or 'Janet' suggests that the root cause of the sense of emptiness she felt while married was that she was 'unfulfilled in terms of who I am' (p. 41), or 'Gareth' says that it is out of

'my spiritual journey that I've discovered and come to terms with who I am' (p. 151), even when 'Naomi' says that 'the Church is my home, where I am myself' (p. 118), one has to ask whether the sort of clarity that is being presumed here is the sort of clarity that human beings can have with respect to themselves. And if it is not, we have to admit that if we are to try to come to terms with the experiences of those interviewed in Lightfoot's book, we must press them to provide deeper, more adequate, accounts of those experiences.

'What precisely do you mean when you say you are just being yourself?' is the sort of a question a good interviewer ought to ask. At the very least, we might expect Lightfoot's postscript to contain some analysis of the Emersonian framework that plays such an important role in many of the interviewee's accounts of their experiences. Instead, Lightfoot offers her readers an exemplarist Christology that has itself been thoroughly domesticated by that framework. 'What I see in the life of Jesus', Lightfoot writes, 'is someone integrated. Not someone living, as we all do to some extent, on conflicting, disparate planes. He was what he seemed; he was what he claimed to be' (p. 214). To point out that such a picture of Jesus bears little resemblance to those offered in the Gospels would be to misunderstand what it is that Lightfoot is doing here. She is not commenting on the historical, flesh-and-blood Jesus, but rather seeking to legitimate one particular – and highly modern – account of what it means to be human. 'My understanding is that our Christian journey is one towards integration of the parts of us that we might prefer not to face' (p. 214). Only an Emersonian could write of the Christian life in such terms, freeing it from any real connection to the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, indeed, reinventing that life so that it conforms to pictures of what it means to be human that would have been sheerly unintelligible to pre-moderns.

Lightfoot's book is marked by a curious naivety. She wants to make a number of substantive claims without engaging in the sort of critical analysis that those claims demand if they are to be convincing. She asserts, and then pulls back at the very points when most is at stake. In so doing she is not serving the subjects of her interviews, but abandoning them. Neither is she serving her readers who find they are unable to gain real purchase on the experiences of those they are reading about precisely to the extent that the notion of 'being myself' remains unexamined.

In the end, what we are left with are stories that in themselves are rather unremarkable: a man leaves his wife for his gay lover, only to find that some people in his local church are not sympathetic; a devout woman discovers that she is a lesbian and has to rethink certain aspects of the conservative theology with which she was brought up; and so on. Such stories are valuable in their way, but not very interesting. And this because Lightfoot does not allow us to get into the inside of them, in the way, for example, that Joseph Conrad enables us to gain some purchase on the experiences of Tuan Jim, or William Stryon on those of Peyton Loftis. If Lightfoot is right to say that selves are 'sacred' then this must be an invitation not to call a halt to our enquiry but to probe deeper, knowing that in the end, as Augustine understood, it is not we who confer meaning on our lives, but one who is closer to us than we are to ourselves.



# KNOX CENTRE FOR MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP

## MINISTERS' STUDY GRANTS

Are you a Presbyterian minister planning on further study? **Do you know** that you can apply for a **study grant** from the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership?

Applications are invited in March and September each year for post-ordination study grants for ministers in good standing of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. These grants are made possible through the generosity of the Mary Ann Morrison and M S Robertson estates and are administered by the Senatus of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

### WHAT ARE THE RULES?

1. The proposed course of study will aid the applicant's professional development.
2. There is a potential benefit to the Church and the probability of significant service to the Church.
3. Parish and presbytery approval has been obtained for the study, where appropriate.

Priority is normally given to assisting with the payment of **academic or course fees** for an approved course of study. Other costs associated with undertaking certain courses of study are considered on a case by case basis, but **do not include** the purchase of books or equipment. Where overseas travel is involved, applicants should first apply to the **Best Travel Fund** <http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/for-ministers/best-travel-fund>

Under normal circumstances, grants do not exceed one-third of the study costs involved and may be held in conjunction with other scholarships and grants other than the Postgraduate Scholarship. Grants are not made retrospectively and relate only to costs to be incurred by the scholarship holder themselves.

**Please note:** successful applicants who move to ministries or other positions outside of the PCANZ within two years of receiving a grant may be required to repay up to 50% of the grant received.

### HOW DO I APPLY?

Applicants are asked to address the criteria and set out their expected costs including conference fees, tuition fees, basic accommodation and travel, and to supply any other information that may be relevant.

**Enquiries to:** The Registrar, Knox Centre for Ministry & Leadership, Knox College, Arden Street Opoho, Dunedin. **EM** [registrar@knoxcentre.ac.nz](mailto:registrar@knoxcentre.ac.nz) **PH** Phone: 03 473 0783

**Closing date for the next round of applications: 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012**