

CANDOUR

News and Views for Ministers

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Leaving Ministry

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Noticeboard

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The articles in *Candour* reflect the views of individual ministers or contributors writing in a personal capacity. They are not representative of the Church's official position. Please approach the author for permission if you wish to copy an article.

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:

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Glen Innis Vacancies

June 19-26	Homestead/Cottage
June 26-July 3	Cottage
July 3-10	Cottage
July 10-17	Cottage

To enquire about vacancies, please email glen.innis@xtra.co.nz or telephone 06 855-4889. Ministers are welcome to inquire regarding vacancies due to cancellations.

Ministry Study Grants

Senatus of the SOM have completed awarding the most recent round of Ministry Study Grants. The recipients are:

Rev. R Robati-Mani, Rev. Dr. M Schwass, Rev. D. Fergus, Rev. D Mansill, Rev. Dr. J. Roxborough, Rev. S. Jourdain. Rev. W Matheson, Rev. S Yeoman.

Grants made totaled \$29,800.00

We also awarded the Stewart McKay Sander-son Scholarship, to the value of \$2,000.00.

The next round of applications will be invited in September of this year.

Bush Telegraph

Are you on the list?

Bush Telegraph is sent out by email on the 1st of every month. It contains updates from the Moderator and Assembly service team, information about new resources, a noticeboard, the latest job vacancies and news about events around the country.

To register for *Bush Telegraph*, visit www.presbyterian.org.nz/btsubscribe, where you can enter your name and email address.

If you can't receive information by email, contact Amanda Wells to discuss alternative arrangements (04 381-8285).

Make sure you're receiving the Church's monthly news update.

Fear, change and CVs*

Amanda Wells

This week I read that “be not afraid” is the most common single line in the Bible. You probably already know this, but to me it was a new and moderately compelling fact. I’m not sure that the intent behind “be not afraid” always matches our key messages. If you could randomly sample the mass of Christian communications around the world, I suspect “be afraid” would fit better. Perhaps this repetition shouldn’t be given undue significance. But if I want someone to remember something, generally repeating it as often as possible proves most effective.

Fear of what others think and fear of making the wrong decisions only limit the working out of our gifts. Ask people to list the cons of a major decision, and they will always involve fears of some kind, whether concerning material survival, perceived reputation or the extent of your abilities. Perhaps freedom from fear is one of the greatest things Christianity can offer our anxiety-driven world, if we let the message sink in.

Most people are afraid of change, which is something that this issue of *Candour* confronts. Leaving ministry must be a truly scary step. It involves stepping aside from a job better defined as a way of life or even a mindset. Who do you become when you’re not actively serving? What’s left of you when “minister” is gone? Or are you always a minister and always seeking to serve? My solid Protestant background tells me we’re all really ministers, none less important than the other, but that can’t deny the reality of active ministers’ set-apartness. Taking away that things that have always defined you can produce interesting results: remove work, change location and create physical distance from your family/support network, and few will emerge unscathed. It’s not something I feel like trying again in a hurry. But it’s the scale of change that many on the verge of retirement face.

As a career, ministry must be especially hard to leave. Even if you feel called to a job in the secular world, you don’t have that same sense of being consecrated, of having a vocation that transcends 9-5, and of experiencing that unique mix of expectation and adulation dished out by the people you serve. It’s hard enough to leave a normal job. Despite talk of portfolio careers and the relentless pursuit of wealth, most people feel a degree of loyalty to their employer that is far from reciprocated.

A friend, who is in the process of recruiting a new team member, asked me (as a representative Christian) if I would put “Christianity” under the list of hobbies/interests on my CV. After I had finished laughing, I said “no”. Not just because I would hate to create erroneous “Bible basher” expectations, but because to me faith isn’t a discretionary leisure activity. It’s something that informs your being and becomes inextricable from who you are, not a fun pastime that you can engage in or discard at will. More like a watermark than a list item.

Having the foundations of your life and the day-to-day matter of your existence inextricably intertwined must be both really rewarding and really difficult. To step away from this seems to require some kind of deprogramming, whether intentional or accidental. In this issue of *Candour*, we’ve got a number of perspectives from ministers who have crossed the boundary into retirement from active ministry, as well as some stories about stepping away from ministry, whether permanently or for a time.

On the back page is a letter from the website of Australian Baptist minister Rowland Croucher, who has set up a ministry devoted to “Australia’s and the world’s pastors, ex-pastors, church leaders and their spouses”. Check out <http://jmm.aaa.net.au> for some fascinating and disturbing reading about leaving ministry. The section on being bullied in ministry opens up a Pandora’s box of traumatic experiences that reveal how hard it is to be stuck in situations from which your vocational skills preclude escape.

The next issue of *Candour* has the theme “Being Called”. I’m away running media workshops for the rest of the deadline period and have run out of time to commission contributions, so if you would like to contribute an article spontaneously, it would be very welcome. We’re looking for contributions on sustaining and re-examining your Call, discerning and encouraging the Calls of others, recruiting more ministers, and staying focused for the long haul. Email me at candour@presbyterian.org.nz

The August issue of *Candour* will canvass “Theology and doctrine”. If you’ve done some interesting study leave research recently that you would be happy to share, or would like some space to explore a burning theological issue, please get in touch.

*Not co-operating ventures but curriculum vitae

A change of ministry context

*Richard Lawrence**

Sometimes people ask me why I left ministry. This question renders me inarticulate for a moment. I do give an answer so as not to be rude but at the same time I'm usually dissatisfied by the shallowness of what I say. I'm glad to have this chance in writing to be more a little more reflective and considered.

It's certainly true that I have moved away from parish ministry. I was a parish minister for 20 years: in Picton, Johnsonville and then Hamilton, from 1980 to 2001. It was a rich and rewarding time. The question, then, is why I moved from the context of ministry in a parish to work at a polytechnic, where I nonetheless understand that I am still part of the ministry of the whole people of God.

In about 1998, Korean people starting attending St Andrew's Church in Hamilton. They asked for English language tuition and quite soon we had started classes at the church centre. I soon realised I was working in a new, spirited way — planning, organising and teaching a large number of people. The people of the parish were supportive, especially as I worked hard to continue to fulfil the day-to-day work of parish ministry. It was clear to me after a few months that enthusiasm alone was not enough. I needed training. I began a Post-Graduate Diploma in English Language Teaching at the University of Waikato. At first it wasn't too difficult to do one paper each term and also to continue full-time in parish ministry.

After two more years of full-time ministry and part-time study, however, it started to become apparent that I couldn't be both the teacher and the parish minister I wanted to be. At this stage I was enrolled in a Master's programme at the University of Waikato. I could also see that after nine years at St Andrew's, I was in danger of coasting or repeating myself too much in parish ministry. In July 2001, at the age of 49, I applied for a position I saw advertised in the newspaper, a position in the School of English Language at the Waikato Institute of Technology and was offered the position. It was a wrench to leave the people of St Andrew's after nine years of leading worship and taking part in all sorts of events in the lives of the people. At the same time, it was energising to move to the new position.

I began work at WINTEC a month after leaving St Andrew's. As well as teaching for around 20 hours a week, I was asked to take some responsibility for the pastoral

care of around 250 international students, mainly Chinese and Korean young people.

There was a lot to learn, quickly. I graduated with an MA in Applied Linguistics in 2003.

At the beginning of last year, I began work on a project arising from a contract between my employer, WINTEC, and a company in Auckland that specialises in putting educational programmes online. I am now an instructional designer and content writer, writing language learning programmes that are being marketed overseas. I continue also to teach for a small number of hours each week.

I didn't leave parish ministry out of a strong feeling of dissonance, still less cynicism or burnout. I simply felt a strong "calling" to renewed academic work, to teaching and to the whole area of applied linguistics.

I would support anyone who felt a need to leave parish ministry because of burnout, or excessive cynicism or weariness, and perhaps for reasons of conscience, but I'm slow to give advice. We are unique and our circumstances differ. Yet we have similar human feelings in the different seasons of life and ministry; feelings of both diminishment and weariness at some times, and excitement and hope at others.

Looking back, I can see that I was preparing for a position outside parish ministry for about five years before I actually made the move. When it came, it did not feel too abrupt but it was certainly a distinct change, from a world with which I was familiar and had many friends, to one in which I was a beginner and had to build up new networks amongst new colleagues.

I was keen to see if I could "make it" in the world. I was interested, too, to explore the freedom to serve the Gospel without depending on the church for my livelihood. Nonetheless, the main reason for making the move was to respond to another voice. It was another calling, not just to learning and teaching language but to the world itself.

My advice, such as it is, would be this: if you feel predominantly cynical or weary, think about a change of context for ministry. Identify what does make you excited in career terms and start preparing yourself long be-

fore you have to make the change. Talk with those closest to you so that you can plan your lives together, as far as we can ever do that. We are probably never too old to change but there's no doubt that it doesn't get any easier as you get older.

The cost of change is sharp, particularly in moving away from a high calling such as parish ministry, but the cost of not changing may be heavier still, in terms of health, faith and a sense of personal fulfilment.

If you are called to a change, interpret what is happening theologically. Accept that it may be the way the Spirit is prompting you. Speak to people you trust so that they can help you articulate what is happening. Read the words of those who have made a change. In my case I read and reread the slim SCM book *Working like the rest of us*, by Richard Pym, a person whose thoughts about the church are much more critical than mine but who felt drawn to another area of work; in his case, the theatre.

Changes bring doubts, questions and misunderstandings. It is part of the cost of the change. I was supported wholeheartedly by those closest to me. I was moving into an area in which I sensed new energy and for which I seemed to have some skills and readiness but there were still feelings like fear of failure in the new position, as well as a sense of "letting the side (the church) down".

In my new position, I have learned a lot about how the Church is perceived. I have worked alongside colleagues of all sorts of nationalities and backgrounds. But to write about my experience in the new context would be a different article. Suffice to say that, having made a change and survived it and flourished through it, I still see myself as a person of faith, with more changes ahead. I am more than ready to speak with anyone who wants to talk with me about responding to different voices of the spirit and about working in a new context.

**The Rev Richard Lawrence is an academic tutor and instructional designer in the School of English Language at the Waikato Institute of Technology in Hamilton.*



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P O Box 26 020, Epsom, Auckland 1030.

Closing Date: Friday 16 June, 2006

Taking time out from parish ministry

John Howell, St Paul's Union Church, Taupo

After leading ministry in three parishes, I had the opportunity to have my wife's career make the choice of what we would do for a while. So I took leave of parish ministry and turned my mind to social services. This was helped by completing a diploma in business studies through Massey, which enabled me to have an understanding of business practice. After time out of parish ministry, I feel I bring a refreshed view to the pulpit and to leadership.

I found working for Anglican Care (Waiapu) a productive experience,

and it allowed me to consolidate my management skills in practice. Anglican Care does have a working relationship with the Church, in contrast to Presbyterian Support Northern. I gained a detailed understanding of aged care, in particular how Government underfunds this sector. Having seen a number of boards in operation, my opinion of the competency of governance in the social service agencies is that it is low. There is a reluctance for boards to develop competent governance polices or to undertake governance training. All organisations have politics. By working outside the Church for a while, I gained a perspective of how the Church compares.

The Church benefits when it ordains ministers later in life who have had a previous career in business. They bring an understanding of how organisations operate, their politics, how people are treated, and the strains and stresses of working life. Similarly, taking time out from parish ministry and seeing life in the secular world is equally beneficial.

I see three basic functions required of a parish minister. The first is in governing and leading a parish (leadership and management skills), the second is leading worship (public presenting and communicating skills), and finally pastoral care skills (people skills). Good people skills are essential and foundational; the other skills can be added with relative ease. If ministers maintain a good level of skill in each to these three functions, then these are transferable to secular organisations.

Leadership relies on good people skills. Regrettably many leaders, and the personnel agencies that give advice on appointments, are remarkably thin in this human

dimension. Generally the Church is much better than its secular counterparts. Secular organisations are much better at organisational assessment, and at aligning mission with organisational performance. One thing each parish should be doing is an annual assessment of how things are going, and what they are planning in the year (or more) ahead. Appreciative Inquiry methods avoid assessment being seen as looking for defects.

There are benefits for both parish ministers and the church

I guess what I am saying is that there are benefits for both parish ministers and the

church for ministers to take time out. I certainly feel that I bring the insights gained to the pulpit and parish leadership now. And I can say with confidence the insights of the Gospel are certainly needed in many secular organisations.

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Lester Simpson
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The changing role of ministers

David Grant, minister emeritus, North Shore

It wasn't hard to leave. I was sick, and even though I could have continued, fuelled by a daily dose of pills, I was not enamoured with collapsing into a half effective shadow. So I retired early after some searching conversations with my supervisor and went through the proper protocols as formulated in the trusty Book of Order.

There were regrets. No longer the privilege of preaching – uncovering the mysteries of Scripture and faith. No longer the privilege of meeting people in their own homes or work place and listening to their wonderfully rich stories. No longer the privilege of hearing confidential stuff, which needed to be spoken for healing's sake, but could never be repeated. No longer the privilege of working with talented people to stage a complex, weighted, satisfying worship hour (or two, or more) on Sunday. No longer the privilege of trying the new, novel idea, only some of which met a need, and yet would still be tolerated.

I reckon being a minister is 95 percent privilege and 5 percent rights. Over the years, I have seen the percentages close as ministers claim their "rights", knock off their visiting, close their study door (and call their study an office), cease being available 24/7, quit on a high standard of preaching, give up on ordered worship, and at the same time closet themselves in computer companionship.

Not everyone is doing this, of course, but I believe the trend is there, with a consequent loss of opportunities for grace shared, and so a consequent loss of grace practised, which spills over into our denomination. A denomination that is now out of sorts and unable to practice grace, because grace is weak, and truth makes its strident claim over grace.

And so there is a consequent damaging of collegiality and love for all the partners in ministry. When I was ordained, there was a sense of care, love and support for all my colleagues, which crossed the theological divides. Those divides seem now to be cherished as a virtue, and the many truths we hold seem to take precedence over grace.

A mate of mine and a former colleague in ministry – not of the same theological persuasion – meets with me for coffee on Friday mornings. We wonder, and mourn a bit about our Church. But we realise the immense possibilities of the Gospel with its power to inform and redeem, when it is read with rigorous resolve, while respecting its

unfathomable genius to gift each one a place to stand; each one room to move.

These two old crusties are realistic enough to know you can't go back to what once was; indeed what once was is often highly suspect anyway: like a mild suspicion of women in leadership; like hymns that make your theological antennae cringe (all out of Church Hymnary 2); like meetings moderated to the advantage of the articulate, white, authoritarian male; like a settled parish community still able to ignore decline and the absence of effectiveness – that is what it was when I was ordained. I would be uncomfortable about that now.

So change has been a constant companion, and through the changes we have had to adapt, producing all manner of resources for a listening community that is also adapting through similar changes in their careers and social arrangements. Surrounding and oozing through the change are the profound shifts in the intellectual framework away from that shared by our mothers and fathers, where certainty can no longer be the norm, and narcissistic individualism is rampant, and every minority group has access to the microphone (or internet), with consequent claims for their truth.

What happens to all those resources that gave everyone attending church on a given Sunday a place to stand? Such as prayers, which are less triumphant, and less stridently certain, and more engaging in conversation with the Other? Such as meditations, which have seeking capacity rather than knowing capacity. Such as sermons, which converse with the text, and rigorously engage the text, rather than sermons that merely reiterate the faith of the Church. Such as structured experiences, which put the Gospel and the secular into conversation. Well, they all sit in a box in the garage. Am I sorry about that? No; they all have been given – delivered – and the people have taken out of them what they will. I have no dreams for them.

I have dreamt about writing, but as yet the dream has not landed. In the meantime, I engage with God's good earth, I play around with timber, enjoy our own home, and my recovered health. I worship in a little local Methodist community church, and give them one service a quarter. That's enough.

Moving into a new ministry phase

Harry Swadling, minister emeritus, Wellington

This is an intriguing theme for an issue of *Candour*. The only way a Christian can “leave ministry” is by leaving the faith itself. We are all committed to ministry in one form or another.

But this is, perhaps, a quibble. Let us assume that the theme is leaving the full-time (?) pastoral ministry of the church. This is something that comes to most ministers. And this is an area I do know a little about, having done it myself and having observed many others doing it with a greater or lesser degree of success.

Whether we like it or not, the Book of Order requires that ministers retire from their charge within a certain period following their 65th birthday. This rule came in at the very time I commenced ministry and I believe it is a good rule. Too often in those far-off days ministers continued in a parish long after their “use-by” date. There needs to be a re-evaluation and probably a change of pace and this seems to me a good point to do it.

But retirement does not mean the end of ministry. In my own case, it has meant two terms of locum work while ministers have been overseas, a period of volunteer work with the Iona Community, two months with the United Church of Canada as a part-time locum, some work on behalf of the national church, tutoring for EIDTS and a little bit of supply preaching. It has been a very satisfying period in my life. Others will have different stories of how they have offered ministry after retirement.

But there is another side to leaving ministry. There are some things that must be left behind. One is no longer the minister of St Whoever’s, with the kudos and responsibility that goes with that position. It is my very strong belief that when a minister retires, they must remove themselves physically from the district where they have served. Unless this is done, there will be a constant association with the former parish. Funerals and weddings are best avoided - the new incumbent needs space to do his or her own thing. The fact that the Rev X baptised the last five children has nothing to do with it. The fact that the Rev Y buried Dad has nothing to do with the new situation. It is all too easy to develop a cult of personality.

After retirement, the most that can be expected is your picture on the wall and an invitation to the centenary!

Moving to a new community can present problems. No longer is it possible to feel at home in all congregations of our denomination but it should be possible to find a faith community where one feels comfortable and even challenged. And there are always opportunities to be useful (that is, to exercise a ministry!) in the new faith community. There is also life outside the church. Ministers are (or

ought to be) gregarious people who will fit into sports clubs (golf or bowls, not necessarily rugby), service clubs and community volunteer work. There is a great big exciting world out there waiting to be explored!

To claim that it is possible to retire in the parish and place where 10 or more years of fruitful full-time ministry has been exercised without cramping the style of a new minister evokes the call of the Tui - “Yeah, right!” We don’t leave ministry on retirement: we just leave the place where we have been ministering. A new life beckons. Enjoy!!

A new life beckons. Enjoy!!

Have your say!

This is a General Assembly year, and input from the wider church is being invited on a number of different matters before the proposals are presented in their final forms to GA06.

The **stipend review**, **School of Ministry review** and **General Assembly meeting review** documents have all been issued to ministers during May. Please note that the deadline for feedback is 28 June.

For details about how to contribute feedback and to see other matters that will be considered by GA06, check out:

www.presbyterian.org.nz/ga06

Two adjustments at retirement

Jack Foster, minister emeritus, Waikato

I retired to Whangamata in November 2002 from my last church, Papakura First. An amazing farewell that was put on for Carole and me. People travelled from all over the place. But leaving a grand farewell and accepting the new career of retirement was a shock. There was grief as well as excitement of not having to work every day, attend meetings as well as think about preparing worship services and writing sermons. When I thought about retirement, these were the things that came into my mind: not being up the front as the preacher and grappling with financial survival.

The first adjustment is settling into a church where you will be in the seats and not up the front. It is an interesting reversal of roles and the danger for a retired minister is being Mr Critic at Sunday lunch munching up your pastor and deciding your way of doing it was probably best. It took me awhile to settle in the church that we are in. Carole got involved in a group mentoring young mums and settled quickly. It took a while to find my niche! You may find the same reactions when you retire. You hold back from either getting too involved or not wanting to be involved. Some of the personal irritations can include a minister who has an entirely ministry style from yours. You are not consulted and are no longer the final decision-maker, as you used to be! People pass you to ask if the minister is available. That is not your job anymore.

So I made my first adjustment: to be as helpful as I could for the minister, and if he wanted to talk stuff through I would lend an ear. I wanted him to know that he could trust me being there. I was not going to undermine his leadership and vision. We have made a pact to be honest in the time we share together. Having a retired minister in the congregation can be a blessing or a pain! We have to make the right choice as to what we will be, and being a helpful retired minister can be really encouraging for the incumbent pastor and the church.

The one thing I refuse to do is to attend evening meetings. We are free now to catch up with family, rugby, and grandchildren. I do run a home group and enjoy the company each week. It is important for us to use our gifts and wisdom that will be helpful for the local congregation.

The second adjustment: When I retired a good friend of ours said, “you have been a minister for a long time and had an important role in that position but are you finan-

cially able to survive as a retired person?” He went on to say that some of his friends had retired from big companies and were comfortably well off and maybe we have had a greater responsibility in our job than they did! This person was expressing concern for us and we thanked him. Nevertheless, retirement means a restricted income that dictates what you can do and not do. You need to be careful about spending. I was concerned reading the percentages in the report concerning ministerial remuneration. It’s hard to save for your retirement on a stipend. If there are double incomes coming into the manse, it certainly relieves the financial pressure, but even then we can be unprepared.

Carole and I were invited to buy into a property at Whangamata nearly 30 years ago. Our friends opened the door for us to own some land. It was a partnership that lasted three to four years and then they wanted out and we raised capital to buy it. Thanks to a good mother-in-law and the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand for the housing loans.

Repaying the loan was a challenge but worth it while we were working. Try to be mortgage free before you retire. Buy a house well before your retirement because a mortgage payment after you have stopped working is not a good idea. Certainly it will be difficult to service the loan. If you have investments, let them work for you. Use the interest to pay for the capital work you do on the property, or when you have to make larger purchases. Make sure your car will last for a while because it is costly on your new income to replace it.

Talk over your budget and investments with a reliable advisor. You are not earning the same when you retire. Rates bills are increasing and, along with other charges, they eat up your income. This week the Southern Cross has hiked its cost and we have to review it as a couple. Keep a watch on credit cards or any form of credit. Pay as you go as much as you can. If you are still away from retirement and have not got a house, buy one or accept a gift of a house from a wealthy church member! You need somewhere to go to when you retire. God will provide but he will need our motivation for it to happen. At the same time retirement is great – not to be feared – and careful budgeting and wise expenditure will allow you lots of freedom. Ultimately you will enjoy the new life of retirement.

Does a Christian ever retire?

Len Currie, minister emeritus, Wellington

I left ministry with a bang! Travelling along the Foxton Straights on cruise control at 100kmh, both Jocelyn and I went to sleep and veered across the road through New Year traffic into a ditch, smashing into a culvert. We thank God for His hand upon our lives. We hit no oncoming traffic and are still here to share the wonder of Him who is the way, the truth and the life.

Sixty-five was the expected age I would retire. When I see American preachers like Charles Stanley and Dr Robert Schuler still preaching in their seventies, I wonder why the Church expects us to retire at 65?

The greatest transition for me was moving from “doing” to “being” – and God made us human beings! Parish life for most of us is unending meetings, pressured deadlines to meet, the one or two challenging people who test us to the limit and the weekly preparations of expounding God’s Word – doing, doing, doing. Now retired, I am free from all that pressure, stress and can “be”. Does it mean I do nothing? No.

About six months after our accident/retirement and on our way to physio, Jocelyn and I called into a café for coffee. Afterwards I was standing outside a shop and a stranger came up to me and said: “I saw you in the café and have been looking for you for the last 10 minutes. God told me to tell you that He hasn’t finished with you yet. There is still more for you to do.” Wow! God’s never spoken to me like that before. I’m retired but not finished! God has been amazing in the way He has opened up opportunities for me to preach. Preaching to 300-plus people in a Pentecostal church on Pentecost Sunday; preaching to a young people’s Presbyterian Easter Camp and invitations to speak at Presbyterian and Baptist churches. Jocelyn and I have had the opportunity to run the Alpha Marriage Course in the local Baptist church and in the Presbyterian church we attend. God is good.

Being a pastor at heart, the hardest act of retirement was severing ties with the people in the parish where I had been the minister for over 10 years. As we have our own home, we still live in the area of our last parish. However, one is expected to cut ties and allow the new minister full reign, which I have done.

One of the great things of my retirement was the parish calling a new minister a year before I retired. During the

year I was able to mentor and slowly shift responsibilities over to the new minister. Halfway through the year, he took over many jobs including chairing session.

In all I’m grateful to God for His call into ministry with the Presbyterian Church and for sustaining me through the ups and downs, the stress and the delights of ministry and for opportunities He is opening up for me in “retirement”. Does a Christian ever retire?

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Facing retirement on your own

Jim Battersby, minister emeritus, Auckland

I was ordained in 1953, and retired in 1987. Like many of my generation of students, I felt the Call to ministry early after leaving secondary school, and so ministry became my whole career. I am grateful to have been reared in, trained by, and to have had an interesting occupation in, the Presbyterian Church, and to have been cared for by the Church in my retirement. I served 22 years in three parishes, and about 13 years in a hospital chaplaincy. Once or twice, during what seemed fruitless times, I wondered about finding another occupation, but I knew that if I left the ministry, I could never live with myself. The memory of my sense of Call, and the weight of the Presbytery's hands upon my head at ordination, was too great, and self-affirming. In my work, my beloved wife backed me up completely.

In the late 1970s, we were advised, if we were able, to acquire a home and put tenants in it. This would be a help in paying off the mortgage. Any maintenance could be set against the income for taxation purposes. In 1981, after I received my share from my parents' estates, we bought our house!

It was, of course, the first home we had ever owned, and I took pleasure in cutting down a wrongly placed eucalyptus tree without having to ask permission of the Church authorities. Perhaps that was a statement in itself.

I must admit a certain discomfort when I decided to resign my appointment and retire early. My wife and I felt I could no longer serve in what had become an uncomfortable situation. We estimated that if I had continued two more years until I was 65, there would have been at our disposal an increased amount of \$20,000. We decided it was worth it to forgo that, and be happy together. I could still exercise ministry in other ways. So in that sense I consider I have never "left the ministry". I am still a "minister-in-good-standing", granted emeritus status, and my name is still on the roll of officiating ministers for conducting marriages. But I am no longer in constant active service in parish, or similar ministry.

We found great delight in fashioning and altering our house, working together on many projects, as well as continuing the tradition of our generation of "outside mainly for the man, inside mainly for the woman". In the year after my retirement, we founded an organisation, "Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi", which is flourishing with 1600

members, and in which I am a guide and still play an active part. About three years after I retired, we entered a period of illness; first for my wife, Barbie, and then for me. The house was on three levels, and I was struggling to care, as I wished, for the quarter-acre section. We knew we must find some suitable alternative with which both of us, or one of us, could cope. We wanted to find a home where we could be secure, happy, and fulfilled, and relieve the family from any immediate responsibility. I had seen the great strain put on my sister by caring for our aging parents. I had seen many similar situations in parish ministry. After much looking around, we decided that Hillsborough Heights Retirement Village, in Mt Roskill, Auckland, was where we should move to, "when the time came". Finally, after an operation for prostate cancer, we knew the time had come to make the move. We told our children, "sooner or later, there will be only one of us". At first they found this hard to accept.

We had a happy year settling in, followed by a three-month trip overseas, during which Barbie became ill, and our plans had to be changed considerably. Barbie died five days after we returned. My life exploded.

I wrote an article for *Candour* in 1999 – "To Hell and Back", in which I told what I went through. So I will not repeat that phase. But one important thing was that a short while after I was left on my own, I very purposely decided that I could either sit and mope at home (it was very tempting to wallow in my grief), or get out and make a new life on my own. Looking back, I made several bad judgements in that early period. After two or three years, I found a lady companion with whom I felt I could make a new life. But she wanted nothing more than companionship – and after three years she ended our relationship. During this time I had the experience of falling out with my own Church, and after much pain, finding God's reconciling love in a very wonderful and powerful way. It altered my concept of God, whom I now see as wholly loving, never punishing, and wanting to shed his love for the world through each one of us.

Now it is nearly nine years since I have been on my own. I am experiencing a new life, "solo". I would exchange it to have my Barbie back, but as that is not going to happen, I am seeking to live life to the full. I have joined in a number of village activities; I am secretary, and will shortly be chairman of the Residents' Committee; un-

officially I find opportunity for ministry within the village, including conducting some funerals; I assist in my Church where I can, leading worship when I am called on, leading a weekly "Conversation Class" for new New Zealanders, and sharing in revising the Parish Directory every two years; I am still active in the conservation work we founded; I celebrated my 80th Birthday last year with several parties, a tandem sky-dive from 15,000 ft, and assisting in a vacant parish for four months, mostly with Sunday services. What I am saying here is that life must go on, and it can take strange roads we never thought of travelling, as we enter differing phases of life. In this I have discovered a new side of myself.

I find that I have been thinking about my faith more in retirement than in the active ministry. I am grateful for what the Presbyterian Church has done for me. However, I have come to see very clearly that our beliefs are mainly man-made doctrine. For example, what we believe about the nature of ministry and the sacraments, differs from, for instance, the Catholics, Baptists, Society of Friends, etc. We cannot all be right, nor can we all be wrong. We just think differently.

So after years of pondering, I have come to the conclusion that for me there are just three main tenants of faith:- 1. God loves me, and all other people; 2. In the incarnation, God entered this world in a very special way in Jesus, hallowing all of life. 3. Jesus is my Lord and Master – others may well have other masters. These are, of course, not world-shattering revelations. I'm sure countless others have held such views long before me. But, as I said, these have become my firm convictions.

Let me sum up a few of the learnings I have discovered since I retired. I pass them on for whatever use they may be to others:

1. When contemplating retirement, try to purchase a home that can be suitable for retirement, or give an equity to enable you to purchase a retirement home of a later different choice. If you can buy a home early (eg with a legacy), buy, and put reliable tenants in it.

2. Think of what you may be like in 10 years time. It seems that after 65, strength fades quickly, and dormant illnesses can erupt. (Prostate cancer caught me up when I was just over 70). A smaller section you can handle in years to come may be better than one to expend your energy on when you first retire.

3. Don't, as I regret doing, spend so much time on your section or hobby, that you leave insufficient time for your

wife or husband. These can be wonderful years together. They may not be long.

4. Acknowledge the fact that sooner or later there will be only one of you. Men, learn at least basic cooking and housework if you don't know something already; Women, make sure you know all about handling the family finances. Both of you, make sure you leave information for your family so that they know what financial arrangements you have, and where information is stored.

5. Seek to retain your faith links, but don't be a nuisance to your minister telling him or her that you know a better way to do things. Just be glad of an opportunity to continue serving wherever you are best needed. (Here an aside to parish ministers. Many retired ministers miss deeply the lifetime's opportunity to conduct Holy Communion. You may help, by inviting one in your parish to do this sometimes.)

6. Be prepared for new things to happen which may challenge or change your thinking. And don't be afraid of this happening. Keep growing.

7. In my chaplaincy days I spoke to others about grief, death and dying. When deep grief came to me, I realised I had in fact known little about it before, and I was powerless to help myself. I accepted outside help. During retirement I have known the depth of loss, emotional weakness and gaining a huge new strength, the pain of surgery and the impatience of recovery; I have experienced love and rejection, success and failure, the joy of giving and the humility of receiving, aloneness and companionship; the wonder of becoming a great-grandfather and the sadness of being able to see these children so seldom; the thrill of being needed with something to contribute and opportunities to exercise my training and experience; the frustration of diminishing of physical strength, and the challenge of the computer world, facing and meeting challenges out of the ordinary for me, and the ability to look after myself as both "husband and wife". In short, I have discovered that life continues, if you "grasp it by the throat". I rejoice in having reached middle age!

A last word to any who may be thinking of leaving ministry for a new occupation. Yes, ministry may be conducted through many occupations. But our Lord has called us to serve as agents in His Body, The Church. For whatever situation he needs us, he will give us strength to cope. His promise is real, "I will never leave you or forsake you".

Retirement: A time for change?

Nolan Martin, minister emeritus, Gisborne/Hawkes Bay

The thought of retirement comes as a threat for some ministers. They do not see the possibilities that it offers to change direction or to adjust priorities, and it looms like a dark cloud on the horizon rather than an opportunity to use the skills developed over the years in a supportive way within the community.

No one can determine the course of retirement for others, since individual factors like health, family concerns, age all affect what plans and decisions can be made. Yet with reasonable health, retirement at age 65 – the present situation – opened up many avenues for me personally and for others whom I know.

We lived in manses throughout our ministry and paid ourselves “rent” from our stipend each month, which we invested in bank deposits enabling us to purchase our home when we retired. Today many ministers buy into their own home during their ministry and so cover the provision for a home on retirement. Circumstances often determine which avenue is best but some such preparation is a basic necessity to give a sense of future security.

Five years before retirement, I intended to move into an associate role to “wind down” from full responsibility, and though this did not happen it was a move that had its compensations. On retirement I accepted the role of chaplain, Presbyterian Support East Coast, on a half-time basis, which was free from administration responsibilities but has enabled me to continue with pastoral work - especially within three local Elder Care Centres - now for over 14 years. I know one minister emeritus, in another city, who has conducted a weekly service at a rest home for the past 20-plus years and, after over 1000 services there, still finds the Good News to share with the residents! Retirement does not limit proclaiming the Gospel.

The role of pastor – being a shepherd to the flock — was ingrained into us in our training. Not just for maintenance, but for mission, as we read in recent articles in *Candour* by Jim Wallace and Allan Kerr. In the “great years” of our church’s growth, it was the home visiting that brought the expansion. “A home-going parson makes a church-going

people” was the phrase. I believe it is still true. How else do we minister to people, create relationships, and communicate the Gospel to the real person? This is an area in which retired ministers, with proper care, may offer their experience to another minister/parish.

Retirement does not prevent ministers becoming an interim moderator or member of a board of nomination when a vacancy occurs. In fact, many presbyteries depend on them, and it is good for parishes to benefit from the preaching and guidance that comes from their years of service in the Church. Many parishes value the pulpit ministry offered. I appreciate the opportunity of preaching twice a month to a small but loyal congregation, of which I have been interim moderator for the past eight years.

In this task I enjoy being part of a local exegesis group that meets weekly to share the preparation of the readings from the lectionary for the following Sunday.

The cross fertilisation of ideas from ministers with differing theological viewpoints means we all grow and this may well be the best professional development for our task as preachers of the Word. It also provides us with an avenue for exchanging ideas or concerns affecting us personally, or the life of the parishes we represent.

Ministers emeritus are usually associate members, who can contribute to the discussions and decisions of their Presbytery. They may also have responsibility within it and become conveners of committees in which they have some special interest or concern.

The role of presbytery clerk, which can require considerable time commitment, is one that I personally found fulfilling in retirement. Other retired ministers have taken over temporary roles in church administration at national level for the same reason: they have developed expertise in the area of governance and decision-making and made themselves available when needed. The church has always acknowledged the need for such men and women, whether ordained or not.

The role of pastor — being a shepherd to the flock — was ingrained into us in our training

Retirement also allows ministers to continue to act within the community but without the tension that sometimes develops between parish/church and non-church activities. So continuing membership of, for example, college boards, Inter Church Hospital Chaplaincy, Seaman's Organisation, Bible Society, Parkinson's/Stroke Society, Sports Clubs, Cultural Groups etc, are activities by local retired ministers whom I know. The ability to deal with personal relationships developed through years of pastoral ministry is an invaluable asset to offer any organisation, and most groups appreciate the input of this experience. Hence I still enjoy my role as a trustee and an active member of the Lindisfarne College Council.

Retirement is a time when ministers are free to say "no" in a way they do not always feel comfortable with in a parish or other appointment situation. The terms of call or appointment are no longer binding, so there is a freedom to choose that is not there in the commitment to parish

or equivalent responsibilities. There are free weekends, freedom for travel and holidays as you wish. Personally, that freedom of choice is the most important change but there is still the sense of commitment to ministry that I took at my ordination 55 years ago, which makes it difficult to say "no" at times.

Perhaps that is because I regard the ministry not just as a "job" or a "work choice" but a vocation, a "call" that is not governed by union rules and regulations or business management, but is a "life choice".

So for me, retirement has not been simply a time for a change of emphasis, a change of focus, or a change of direction, but a time to be re-treaded to continue the journey.

It may not be so for you. The choice is yours.

Thinking of study leave?

Paul Dyer will be offering his third **Mid Ministry 28-day residential programme** at Houchen Retreat House in Hamilton from 1-8 October. This programme is for those who

- have at least 10 years experience in a particular lay or ordained Ministry
- would like to take study leave with the support of others,
- would like to reflect on what they have done and make decisions about their future goals in life and in ministry;
- would like to receive resources to feed their theological thinking and support their ministry practice.

Several tools, including the Expanded Myers Briggs resource, will be used to provide personal and group insight. Each day will provide time with a specialist in theology or ministry practice. It is anticipated that the main aspects of Biblical Studies, Theology and Ministry will be covered. The central brief for each specialist is to talk about the new frontier that excites them in their area of expertise and interest so as to provide stimulus for our reflection and thought.

For example, in the 2005 programme, in addition to the day visit to St. John's College, where we met with Rev. Peter Davis, Judith Bright, Dr. Jenny Te Paa, Dr. Philip Culbertson, and Bp. Wilson Halapua, other speakers were:

Michael Hewat (Creative theology through Art); Annie Walter (Creative Theology through use of symbols in Liturgy.); Karen Morrison – Hume (Director of Anglican Action, Waikato); Dr. Keith Carley (Recent developments in Old Testament Theology); Prof. Elaine Wainwright (Recent developments in New Testament Theology); Bp. David Moxon (Aotearoa Spirituality); Nikki Leonard (Guidelines for Meditation / relaxation); Br Kentigern SSF (Franciscan Spirituality)

The Appreciative Inquiry process is offered among other tools for training in a process of discernment and change. The programme will require some prior reading and individual support will be available, if required, by people off-site.

The cost of the programme is \$3,000 (ie \$107 per day). This includes meals and single room accommodation and study, Expanded Myers Briggs & Appreciative Inquiry workshops; and an invaluable course manual and other resources.

For further information and a registration form please contact:

Houchen Retreat House, 83 Houchens Road, Hamilton.

Phone: (07) 843 5538 Fax: (07) 843 2386

Email: houchen.house@xtra.co.nz

The Mid Ministry Refreshment and Development Programme reports to the Anglican Tikanga Pakeha Ministry Council and is provided with the support of Houchen Charitable Trust.

Retired ministers: A resource?

Paul Loveday, St David's, Richmond, Nelson

What is it about the notion of having retired ministers in their church that gives a parish minister a sense of awkwardness or unease? Even before my ordination, I had heard of ministers not relishing the thought of having a retired minister in their church.

When I was undertaking my formal theological training at BCNZ in the early 1980s, my minister retired and it was sort of expected that he would not become a parish member of the church from which he had retired. He and his wife moved to a nearby suburb and retired graciously from any further involvement

at their last place of formal ministry. There were, however, two other retired ministers in that particular parish. Occasionally they filled the pulpit when the resident minister was on leave or away on other church business. For many years this was my experience of retired ministers enjoying their retirement years – a little bit of preaching when the pulpit needed to be filled, and, of course, getting on with other retirement activities.

However, I am thankful that what I saw in the early 80s is no longer my only experience. When I came to St David's in Richmond, Nelson, the call process had alerted me to the fact that there would be three retired ministers in the parish, including my predecessor, who had made the decision to live in Richmond. I was also informed that one of the other two ministers had actually served as vicar of Holy Trinity Cathedral, Karachi, Pakistan, where I had been an Associate Presbyterian in the mid 1990s. His term as vicar preceded my days there by at least 30 years, but knowing that there was a link back to a place where I served overseas gave an initial uneasiness as well as a sense of delight. To be really honest, I did have some thoughts of "what am I letting myself in for?" going through my mind during the call process.

But I believe it would be fair to say that having these three Godly couples (all being married) has been nothing but a positive experience. And, in fact, this is something that needs to be shared with others. I am sure that the personalities of these three ministers have had a key part to

play in this positive experience. However, there are some other factors that should be mentioned, as these have also been significant during my term of ministry at St David's. Some of the things I share will have bearing on the minister who has the charge, some things will have bearing on sessions or parish councils, and other things will relate more specifically to the retired minister. We hear so much more nowadays about gifts/talents/skills and areas

of interest for ministry involvement/experience, often couched in the terms "spiritual gifts" and "passion". This is a healthy development in churches, and will free not just ministers into the place of ser-

vice, but also the whole church family, including retired ministers.

St David's has been quite intentional about going down this track. What helped establish the implementation of gifts and areas of interest has been the prayerful formulation of the parish's mission and vision statements. These have provided the basis of key ministry areas to be identified and given appropriate emphasis in the parish. If you are wondering how all this relates to helping retired ministers to serve in their local parish, the answer is this: these men and women have God-given gifts, at least one area of service that still motivates them, and some measure of time that they can offer as their contribution to the mission of the church.

Sessions/parish councils have the responsibility of governance in parishes. But they also have the responsibility to ensure that parish life is helping the parish mission to take place. While it is desirable for a parish to ensure emerging leaders are identified when they in their 20s, 30s and 40s, not all churches have these age groupings as part of the congregation. St David's is one such parish, so to advance into mission it has been important to encourage our retired ministers to serve as they are able in parish life.

They bring into their areas of service prayerfulness, a heart to see people of all ages won to Jesus Christ and a trusted relationship with God. Retired ministers are them-

They bring into their areas of service prayerfulness, a heart to see people of all ages won to Jesus Christ and a trusted relationship with God

selves gifts, as is every member in the Body of Christ. It is therefore the responsibility of each church to see how these people can be released into service.

There are challenges in having retired ministers in a church, particularly if they are encouraged to participate in parish life. This is certainly so in relation to encouraging one's predecessor to get involved. Two areas of challenge come to mind. One is the pastoral bond between minister and parishioner. This is probably more evident in an older congregation, which is used to the minister visiting them from time to time. The other challenge is that of the unhelpfulness of parishioners comparing ministry style and personalities. Here at

St David's these have not been an apparent issue. During the call process it was made clear that the parish visiting would be the undertaking of the pastoral elders and visitation team, with the minister handling those more in the nature of crisis visits. My predecessor, realising that these areas of concern could emerge, kept a very low profile during the time of the vacancy, and then also for the first six months after my induction. This helped the bond between me and the parish as a whole get established.

One of the natural places in which a retired minister can be a real resource person involves giving clergy cover when the parish minister is on leave or out of the parish. There have been a number of occasions this has happened for me at St David's. One of the encouraging developments is that my predecessor is now leading one of the small groups that meet fortnightly. All the small groups in this parish have their own special focus, catering for the 50-plus committed group members. The group I am now referring to is one that has a special focus on overseas mission, in particular NZ Presbyterians serving in that capacity. The point I'm making here is that this group will lead a Sunday worship service while I'm on leave in July, and will probably take other services during the year. The value of what is taking place is that the group leader, rather than filling the pulpit as he would have the competency to do, is involving others in their Christian service.

As one could imagine, a parish that is mainly older people will have its fair share of funerals. St David's has had many since I arrived at the end of 2001. While serving in Karachi, my involvement with funerals was quite different to what usually takes place in New Zealand. In Pakistan, it was usual for a number of clergy to be involved.

While I am fully able to lead a funeral service on my own, I have been able to involve others in many of these services since being back in New Zealand. This has been a real blessing for the families of the deceased church member as it has brought so much more of a personal touch to what has been said or done.

One last area where I have been encouraged in regards to having a retired minister in my parish is the way my predecessor has become involved in a key area of ministry development. This area is that of reaching out to families. St

David's has a mothers of preschoolers support group, called MOPS. This group is normally run by the mums themselves, but our parish is not

If these men and women have time available, they can be a tremendous support

able to do this. This retired minister is there actively supporting this community-facing ministry every two weeks and also supports the family service on Sunday when he is in Richmond. His presence is ministry-oriented in both of these outreaches. He is fully behind the direction set by the parish vision and mission, and is a part of the ministries that are helping these happen.

Key points I would like to reiterate:

- The necessity of having a parish mission that is supported by ministry opportunities for the church family.
- The value of releasing the Body of Christ into ministry in the local church, including retired ministers.
- Nurturing a sense of collegiality with retired ministers. If these men and women have time available, they can be a tremendous support. This can be for more formal aspects such as congregation meetings, or the less formal, such as being a sounding board for matters relating to the Book of Order. Then there's also the possibility for the sharing of one's heart when pressures come on.

For those retired ministers who read this, let me encourage you to know you are not just resources in a parish, but wonderful gifts of God with gifts of the Spirit to make Jesus Christ known. And for those who are parish ministers and have a retired minister in your midst, there is much to be gained by releasing retired ministers into active service as they are able.

As I close this article I would like to mention by name my predecessor, the Rev Murray McCaskey, a colleague and real brother in Christ.

This is our Calling. Edited by Charles Richardson. (London: SPCK, 2004). Foreword by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury.

Reviewed by Jane Bloore, research assistant, Presbyterian Church Archives.

This book has been produced jointly by Affirming Catholicism and the Society of Catholic Priests, and is written for those exploring a sense of calling. The foreword is by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the introduction is by Charles Richardson, Editor. The ten contributors to the book, one of whom has since died, came to ministry from diverse backgrounds, but all experienced parish work, and many are now involved in vocational education and guidance within the Anglican Communion.

Each contributor discusses a different aspect of calling, from biblical perspectives (Creation, Jesus, the Disciples, Mary and Joseph, Hannah and Elizabeth, Baptism) to the Church in the world (Calling of the Church, Call to pray and work, Call to ministry, Call to continue). The chapters end with a series of questions for further study, and there is an excellent reading list at the end of the book.

The essays are thoughtful explorations of what it means, both for an individual, and communities, to respond to the call of God, and maintain that call in the face of a sometimes hostile world. Rowan Williams makes a pertinent point in his foreword when he states that “our ideas about ministry, including full-time paid ministry, are going into the melting-pot. We are less and less likely to see anything like a production line of ‘vicars’ emerging out of discussions of vocation. The new sorts of Christian community that are developing around us will require new styles of ministerial service”. This book is intended to be a robust contribution to the debate over forms and structures that is presently engaging the Anglican Church, but it has much to offer other denominations going through similar processes, including our own Presbyterian Church in New Zealand.

In thinking about the purpose of this book, and whom it would benefit, the Editor states that the publishers of the book wanted “to help those who had come to a crossroad, or even a breathing space, in their lives; who were considering their discipleship and their future”. In that I think that this work succeeds, and I would recommend it for both individual and small-group study.

A Short History of Myth by Karen Armstrong (Canongate)

Reviewed by Alan Goss

This modest-sized book traces the history of myth down through the ages from the Palaeolithic period (20,000-8000 BCE) to the modern era. It argues persuasively that because mythology has fallen into disrepute — a myth is now commonly understood as a falsehood — our sense of the sacred has become blunted and our very humanity threatened. In the final chapter, Armstrong suggests, perhaps somewhat tentatively, how this situation might be remedied.

Myths, according to another writer, “are maps by which cultures navigate through time”. They tell us, says Armstrong, how to behave. They are true, not because they are factual, but because they give us insight into the deeper meanings of life. They demand action. In the ancient world, myths were indispensable, they were therapeutic, and they still speak to our inmost fears and desires. Mythology also reflects the way we think about God and humanity. Armstrong shows how people change their ideas about God and the human condition whenever they move into a new historical era. For example, in today’s global world, where the technological geniuses have replaced the spiritual ones, the Creator God worshipped by Christians, Jews and Muslims has largely disappeared, especially in the West.

In a chapter on the Christian myth, Armstrong shows how Jesus and the first disciples were rooted in Jewish spirituality, as was St Paul. Paul painted Jesus as a timeless mythical hero who dies and is raised to life. The early Christians knew that this myth was true because they had experienced transformation. Unless, says Armstrong, an historical event is mythologised it cannot become a source of inspiration.

In the final chapter, Armstrong refers to the dramatic ways in which life has changed with the advent of modernity. As the scientific spirit took hold with its quest for efficiency (logos) the death of mythology has proved potentially disastrous. Human beings lost their sense of the sacred; World War I, Auschwitz, the Gulag and Bosnia spelled out what could happen when the sacred goes.

Armstrong concludes on a sobering note: “If professional religious leaders cannot instruct us in mythical lore, our artists and creative writers can perhaps step into this priestly role and bring fresh insight to our lost and damaged world”.

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Call to contemporary mission

So what is Mission ?

Sadly, in our history, mission has strong associations with colonisation. Also, the term was coined by Spanish priests during the Inquisition in Europe and was related to reconverting Protestants back to the Catholic faith.

A more helpful association arose in the light of Trinitarian doctrine and the understanding of mission as God's mission (missio Dei) after the International Missionary Conference at Willingen in 1952. Mission was seen as a movement from God to the world. This was later developed by Bosch who suggested, "mission is primarily and ultimately, the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world, a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate". He continues, "mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people".¹

For our purposes then, a contemporary understanding of the term is: mission is participating in the flow of God's love to the world. It is a gracious and trusting invitation to participate in God's new creation.

Global Mission? Historically, mission was done 'overseas' ie Global. The others, "heathen", were the object of mission. The "converted" risked being viewed as "mission trophies".² The rise of "home missions" in the early and mid 20th century increased the understanding of the need for local mission. Current understandings suggest that mission is global, national, regional, local and personal. The starting point is personal. It generally begins with a person having an authentic experience of the Christian story — of the love of God we know in Jesus Christ — then moving in thoughtful ways to share that love through their own giftedness.

In our context, global mission is local mission carried out globally.

Three Components

There are three components to a Call to Contemporary Mission:

A call to **Context**: This has to do with the quest for Believing. It is a question of Faith. Our response, our re-request in contemporary mission, is to see ourselves and others as God sees; to see the spark of heaven, the image of God in those yet to believe, and fan it into flame. It requires us to be clear about our own identity and faith in God, to live our believing.

A call to **Community**: This has to do with a quest for Belonging. It is a question of Hope. Our response, our re-request is to creative giftedness; to identify and accept ourselves and others as gifts and gift bearers; to belong to each other as unique valued members of the Body of Christ. This has bicultural and multicultural implications.

A call to **Companionship**: This has to do with a quest for Becoming. It is a question of Compassion, of Love. Our request here is an invitation to the lost art of friendship; to love one another as Christ loved us; to love God and to love others as we love ourselves. NB Companion comes from the latin com (with) and panis (bread). It is an image of giving of ourselves to energise others – an appropriate metaphor for Missional leadership. It is a relationship in which both are transformed – it is dialogical.

These three components together with the above understanding of mission, provide a framework to check that we are indeed Missional in our thinking and deciding, in our being church.

Are they present in meaningful measure in our resourcing, restructuring, revisioning...?

So what? The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, you and me

So what does this mean in practical terms?

Crisis, as it has in the past, offers challenge and opportunity. It invites action. Action with "imagination, creativity, innovation, and daring". It is not thoughtless reaction or undirected activity. We also considered that mission is God's, the church is an invited player engaging with the world and cultures by participating in the flow of God's love to the world. We are impelled and compelled to act, to "set the sails" as the wind of God's Spirit blows anew on Aotearoa.

Here in Aotearoa NZ, for our message to have validity, to be good news, it requires:

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- a reformulation of the Gospel particular to our time and place — not pertinent for all circumstances or times but specifically for us - the undertaking of contextual analysis and reflection. How much of this is available already and how can we better share it? Who are the people we need to entrust this to and engage with?
- identification and addressing the crises of its day. It will acknowledge the dangers/challenges and yet see and seize the opportunities – some paradigm shifting. What are the crises in our communities and our church? What opportunities do they provide in the light?
- transformation in the being and behaviour of the person(s) professing this faith – personal change into the image of the One we profess – your responsibility and mine. How might I be more like Christ? How is the gift I am and the gifts I have being used in responding to my own call to context, community and companionship?
- a consequent transformation in the relationships, systems, and organisations that the person is actively involved in — social and organisational change toward a community that reflects heaven on earth, the relationship of God the Trinity — courage to risk new ways of being the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. How well do our current structures address our call to context, community and companionship? What would our structures look like if they did?
- Requires our partnering with others in addressing the crises of our day — including, but not exclusively, the task of nationbuilding, healing our history, forging community, addressing the hurts and hopes of our people, raising the bar on what the Kiwi nation can look like and be — take leadership in confident yet humble service to our fellow human beings. Who are our partners? How may we collaborate with them? What is our vision for Aotearoa NZ? If this were our starting point, what would our own mission vision look like? How would this help in garnering resources at the local, regional and national levels?

In the New Beginning ...another question?

T.S. Eliot wrote:

We shall not cease from exploration
and the end of all our exploring
will be to arrive where we started
and know the place for the first time.³

Ours is an ongoing quest to remain faithful to the Gospel and engage with our cultures in a way that enables us individually and collectively to be and become more like Jesus Christ whom we follow. This will remain an unfinished task till the parousia. We are however an equipped and empowered people to meet the challenges, the crises, the questions of our day. God is with us as our constant companion. Today we build a “cultural handrail” that enables ourselves and others to connect the past we treasure, with the future we hope for, with the God who is Steadfast Love.

Nelson Mandela, speaking at Trafalgar at the beginning of last year said this: “every now and again it is given for a people to be great...”

This is the time, this is the place, we are the people.

Quo Vadis?

References

¹ David L. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 390-393.

² I owe Murray Rae for the coining of this phrase.

³ T.S. Eliot, ‘Little Gidding’, from *Four Quartets*, 1942.

Editors note:

You can comment on the issues raised in this paper as part of the feedback process before General Assembly 2006. See www.presbyterian.org.nz/ga06 for more information.

Eight reasons to leave ministry

From an Australian former pastor's anonymous letter posted on Rowland Croucher's John Mark Ministries website at <http://jmm.aaa.net.au>

1. I found that I was sick of running a small business. More and more of my time seemed to involve administration. I have been involved in such diverse admin duties as: developing an environmental impact study for a new development, creating a registered training authority, running a community development and training programme, developing a men's refuge from the ground up. All quite worthwhile but miles from where I was trained and from my real interests and love. And the number of meetings really began to take their toll.

2. I have a lot of non church friends and was a part of a men's group for many years in which I was the only "Christian". Non-church people are often more open to talk about spirituality than Christians. The cultural capital within which Christians are immersed seems to create an ethos which not only makes it almost impossible for non-church people to negotiate, but also difficult for Christians to step away from so that they are able to successfully relate to non-church people at a "spiritual level". Churches tend to espouse a "one size fits all" spirituality. At one and the same time churches talk about "personal faith in Christ" (individuation) but then go on to stream people into ways of thinking and acting which create a "normalised" population. Makes it very difficult for a culture that isn't into "off the peg" spirituality.

3. I am sick of building programmes and I found that I could no longer work in a context where we seemed to always be talking about giving – and each year the church budget kept fueling the machinery. After five ministries and five building programmes I have watched the senior minister leave each church with a big debt and nothing to show except a fancy new facility. I have found it difficult to work in a culture which asks people to make a sacrifice which seems to further fuel the consumer ethic. At the same time it became more and more frustrating looking at the "Big Picture" and seeing the gradual decline of the church over the last 20 years and watching massive resources being poured into attracting Christians from one church to another. I guess I feel that I do not have a voice. It is as though ministers (and Laity) on the one hand don't want to look at the "Big Picture" while on the other investigate the micro practices which just keep the system slowly rolling downhill.

4. There is too much emphasis on what Covey calls the "personality ethic". Churches seem to have poured lots of energy into becoming "the right kind of church" (short term fixes) without looking at the long term picture and

developing a "way of being" deeply embedded in the local culture.

5. Churches need to look carefully at their "micro practices". Not just the programmes, but the way things are done and the why. That means asking questions of everything from the ground up. Looking at how we do things and how they impact on people is more revealing than asking why. Foucault's technologies of self and technologies of domination are useful methodologies for investigating practice.

6. Are churches willing to look at the discursive practices operating both within and without? How is the church positioned? What practices are in operation that position both the individual and the institution? Can the church really divest itself of its Cultural Capital? According to Bourdieu this is almost impossible for most established institutions.

7. I have been deeply influenced in the past ten years by the work of Foster. Since reading *Spiritual Disciplines* I have consumed as many books as possible written by authors as diverse as 'a Kempis and Nouwen. Most mainline evangelical bookshops steer clear of these books or perhaps have a few in stock. However, most of my friends who do not attend church are fascinated by a spirituality that is not couched in the language of the church. I have learnt more about meditation from my Buddhist and Ananda Marga friends than I have from the mainstream Christianity. At the same time I am often concerned by Christians who try to go for an amalgum of faiths. I am a Christian, my Buddhist friend is a Buddhist and my Ananda Marhga friends likewise. There is a real place for Christianity that, in the words of Kung, "sees Christ as decisive" but which isn't afraid to talk about faith in the marketplace. I agree with Campbell and Dreitcer a clear focus on spiritual formation is a key element – and with Foster in regards to those elements he espouses. But they need to be explored in ways that are meaningful for all people.

8. I don't think that the church will survive in its current form, unless you are into Remnant Theology. Perhaps ministers will need to complete double degrees or do vocational training that spans at least two disciplines or trades or whatever. Maybe there is a place for more casual ministers and part timers. However, the church will need to respect the boundaries of the casual and part time minister. Its time to let go of the buildings and all the paraphernalia. If Aussies move on average every two to three years then perhaps the institution needs to follow suit. How the institutional hierarchy will respond is a different matter.