



GA18 News Friday 5 October

Archbishop Richardson seeks Church's forgiveness

In an address to Assembly today, Anglican Archbishop Most Reverend Philip Richardson expressed his remorse that his church had not been sufficiently active in reaching out to its fellow Christian churches in recent times.

“Ecumenical partnerships have been on the back burner for too long,” he said. “I ask the Presbyterian Church’s forgiveness for our failures as partners in faith.”

The archbishop spoke on behalf of the trinity of archbishops of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

“We are three in one and can’t make decisions without the agreement of all,” he explained, before going on to talk about his passion for partnership.

“Ecumenical formation and direction is in my DNA,” he said, describing his own formative years in Dunedin mingling with theological students from Knox and the Holy Cross Seminary.

He reiterated that the common ground of Christian churches in Aotearoa stems from a shared understanding and experience of being a Treaty-based and Gospel-driven people.

The archbishop’s words were greeted warmly by Assembly and his wish to see greater depth and commitment to partnership was received unconditionally by the Moderator Right Rev Fakaofa Kaio, who said they echoed what was in the Presbyterian Church’s hearts and prayers. On behalf of the Church, Right Rev Kaio in return humbly sought the forgiveness of the Anglican Church for “the lack of closeness” up to today between the two churches, before praying for both churches and the future relationship together. Watch the video:



Sharing wealth and streamlining release of funds

In presenting the the PressGo Board report, Rev Sharon Ross Ensor, acting PressGo chairperson, thanked Lisa Wells, PressGo Catalyst, for her ongoing work and noted that PressGo continues its focus on three strands: inspiring mission, capacity building and seed funding.

She noted that PressGo would launch a new mission programme in 2019 and said the Board hopes the Assembly will talk about the Church's collective wealth.

Dialogue group facilitators reported back on the PressGo recommendation that a task group examine the Church's collective wealth and establish a theology and practice of sharing property and money.

The Rev Hamish Galloway presented some of the themes that emerged from dialogue and the recommendation was agreed.

A second recommendation that the task group consider the Church's collective wealth and consult widely within the Church and make recommendations to the 2020 Assembly for a national strategy for sharing resources was amended before it was agreed to - with the word strategy changed to framework.

Rev Dr Kerry Enright said that dialogue group felt 'strategy' implied time lines and 'frame work' suggested congregations engaged in discussion and decisions that are not made alone.

A new motion emerged from Dialogue groups and was presented by the Rev Simon McLay: that the General Assembly instruct the task group to explore ways to both simplify and streamline the process of churches to access funds, especially supporting our ethnic churches.

The motion was inspired by a need to "streamline the process to release funds to support ethnic churches and make the process easier to access funds such as the PIF, PressGo, Presbyterian Foundation, local and regional funds. So churches can use these funds and don't have to know the particular words needed to apply," said Simon.

After several questions around the definition of "ethnic churches" the motion was amended and agreed with the reference to ethnic churches removed.

Very Rev Margaret Schrader Keynote address goes to heart of God

The Very Rev Margaret Schrader gave today's keynote speaker address. She is one of only four women to be have been elected Moderator of our Church (1995).

Described by Right Rev Fakaofu Kaio as a "prayerful warrior" and "God's taonga" Marg was invited to speak about God. She shared personal reflections on who God is for her as a living presence, and asked Assembly to reflect on how they might make space in their own lives to get in touch with the call of God to do something unexpected that resonates with their authentic self. Watch the video of her address:



National ministries share their love

Assembly business opened this morning with inspiring presentations from national ministry leaders.

Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership

KCML principal Rev Dr Steve Taylor described 2018 as a year of listening to the kinds of resources the Church needs as a learning organisation. In response to the feedback from 285 church leaders for resources to be available in flexible, accessible ways, the centre has developed a new Living Library.

The library portal at www.livinglibrary.org.nz offers recommended books and websites, videos and archival materials, short courses, webinar and coaching opportunities, human stories and more. The site is live for feedback during Assembly.

Presbyterian Research Centre

Presbyterian Research Centre director Jane Thomsen focused on the growing mana of its special collections and how the centre has been addressing the lack of women's voices in its collections.

The Archives now hold the taonga of Turakina Maori Girls College, which closed in 2016. Otago University Humanities interns have contributed welcome material on the role of Presbyterian women as medical missionaries in India and moderators of General Assembly.

Another intern is researching the role the Church played in bringing Chinese refugees to New Zealand in the 1940s and 1950s, and the centre expects to receive archives from several Chinese families with links to the Otago goldfields.

Presbyterian Youth Ministry

Presbyterian Youth Ministry manager Gordon Fitch and Presbyterian Youth Ministry director Matt Chamberlin introduced a video on their work, watch it below.



PressGo

In the past 10 years, PressGo has funded 65 projects worth \$2.9 million in grants. PressGo catalyst Lisa Wells delivered a series of challenges, in response to the many conversations she has up and down the country with Churches seeking funding for new projects.

“We tend to look at Church as a problem to be solved with ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions, but I suggest we start with the question of why,” she said. “What’s our mission?”

She challenged older members of congregations to resist becoming observers and ask instead they can do to lead, embrace and extend their gifts.

Lisa also highlighted the need for a model of generosity that would see parishes sharing wealth on a more equitable basis.

Global Mission

Global Mission coordinator Rev Phil King is away on leave. Assembly saw a video presentation of the work of Global Mission, watch below.



Kids Friendly

Kids Friendly has a new national coach. Robyn Humphries moved from the USA to New Zealand six months ago to take up the role and said she has found the 14-year-old ministry standing on solid foundations.

To the backdrop of her 18-month-old daughter mimicking Holy Communion, Robyn used the four-fold 'take, bless, break and give' actions to describe the ethos of the Kids Friendly approach and its natural outgrowth as a successful mission for the Church's youngest members. She exhorted commissioners to be generous in their ministry and to "give it away" to God as an expression of greater purpose.

Finance

Finance manager Sandra Kennerley concluded the presentation session with a wrap-up of the year for Financial Services, praising her team and the efficient work they do in preparing the annual report, helping parishes comply with ever-changing accounting requirements and undertaking administrative support.

Youth Commissioner profile



Feng Chen - GA youth commissioner, The Southern Presbytery

GA youth commissioner Feng Chen (or he says you can call him Ryan Feng) hails from Wakatipu Presbyterian Community Church in Queenstown.

"I am a 'newly converted' Presbyterian and becoming more thoroughly Presbyterian if I may say. My local church and the Southern Presbytery have provided me with excellent support and resources to explore NZ Presbyterianism and grow maturely in faith as a person and a 'younger' leader."

Feng Chen says he wanted to be a youth commissioner "because I want to explore more about Presbyterianism at the national level and be more familiarised in the spirituality, ethos and the governance of PCANZ. I believe this will help shape my understanding of the Church and ministry formation".

He says he sincerely believes youth commissioners at GA, and younger leaders in the Church in general, are essential for the healthy and sustainable development of the Church.

"We are like the 'Timothy(s)' that Paul talks about in 2 Tim 2:2, someone who received the pure Gospel from the last generation and is able to 'pass on the baton' to the next generation. In this process, the younger leaders bring in their indispensable energy, innovation, vision and courage to faithfully nurture and reform the Church according to the Scriptures."

Make the Church's voice heard

Presbyterian Women asked the Church to more fully engage with social justice issues.

They asked, and General Assembly agreed, to support and encourage presbyteries to institute an agile process to facilitate participation in civil democracy through submissions on public issues.

Participating in civil society means commenting on social issues says Ola Leasi, newly appointed president of Presbyterian Women.

Presbyterian Women has taken up this opportunity and made a submission on Child Poverty Reduction Bill, for example, says Ola. She noted that making a submission is a time-consuming process.

At their recent Annual General Meeting, Presbyterian Women decided that it would create position papers to provide a framework for public discussion on topics that are of interest to women and the wider community.

It is envisaged that one to two position papers would be produced each year, as time and resources allow, explained Ola.

There was broad support from commissioners for the proposals from Presbyterian Women. Some speakers raised the point that Presbyterian polity already allowed any group within the church the opportunity to comment on public issues and make submissions should they wish to do so.

Others commented that it might be more efficient to have a national framework rather than having each presbytery developing its own process.

“These are aspirational recommendations,” Ola told Assembly.

To improve the ability of women to participate in the life of presbytery and account for the changing structures of Presbyterian Women, Assembly agreed to change the Book of Order regulations on presbytery membership. New rules agreed by Assembly provide for “at least two representatives of Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand chosen by the executive of that organisation to represent them”.

Assembly backs work of Presbyterian Support

Assembly encouraged presbyteries and congregations to continue joint activities with Presbyterian Support.

General Assembly asked the Council of Assembly to consider continuing the Church’s annual financial contributions to the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) and PresCare in its next budget.

PresCare is the partnership between the Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian Support which is aimed at building safe, strong and connected families explained Anne Overton of Presbyterian Support.

Anne shared stories of the many activities that PresCare had been involved with since its inception six years ago including the Kids Friendly Love Reaches Out art and writing competition, Neighbours Day events, White Ribbon events and the Justice and action study booklet which has been used in parishes and Presbyterian schools.

“The Church can be satisfied its voice is being heard,” says Penny Taylor of Presbyterian Support. Rev Diane Gilliam-Weeks represents the Church on the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, and the Council is represented on the government’s Welfare Expert Advisory Group by our chief executive Trevor McGlinchy, says Penny. She also highlighted the twice-yearly meetings between the Prime Minister and heads of church.

At the end of their presentation, Moderator Rt Rev Fakaofu Kaio prayed for the work Presbyterian Support.

International guest address by Rev Tere Te Akaraanga-Marsters

Rev Tere Te Akaraanga-Marsters addressed Assembly today - [download his address](#).

Tere is an executive council member of the Cook Islands Christian Church (CICC). He was elected Principal of Takamoā Theological College in 2017. He is responsible for the academic studies and management of the College, where he served as a faculty member and lecturer since 2013. He was the Chair of the Takamoā Theological Board from 2014 to 2017.

He also served in 2017 as the minister of Titikaveka Cook Islands Christian Church in Rarotonga.

Tere says he was chosen to represent the Cook Islands Christian Church at GA18 “because of my position as Principal and Executive Council Member. This opportunity would allow me to broaden my perspective of the relationship between partner Churches and to meet key leaders within the Pacific region. Also, to look at the possibility of forging ongoing relationships with other theological colleges and institutions”.

Tere grew up in a close-knit Cook Islands community in Frankton, Hamilton. He has visited Christchurch once before, “in 1975 for five days...to watch the All Blacks play”.

Church supports Korean reunification

General Assembly today expressed its support for steps made towards peace between North and South Korea.

Assembly asked that a prayer for peace be written and distributed to all congregations so that New Zealand Presbyterians can pray together as one body of Christ for peace on the Korean peninsula.

Cheol Jeong of Northern Presbytery who presented the proposal to Assembly talked of positive signs toward peace in the last year, including three meetings between the North Korea Supreme Leader Kim Jong-Un and South Korea President Moon Jae-in. “Koreans living in New Zealand are happy to hear the progress toward dialogue and not confrontation,” said Cheol.

“There is still a long way to go, and we hope that the meetings and other actions will translate into action to turn Korea into a land of peace that is free of nuclear weapons,” said Cheol.

Korea has been divided into two separate countries for 70 years since the end of World War II – with the south supported by the United States, and the north supported by the Soviet Union. The Korean War from 1950-1953, sought to resolve the issue of sovereignty but ended in a stalemate.

“We need God’s grace, miracle and your prayer,” Cheol said.

Assembly affirmed that through our belief in God, we are called to be peacemakers, and can bring peace to the painfully persisting conflict on the Korean peninsula so as to enable reconciliation and restoration between two countries of one people.

Accra Confession commended to congregations

Today Assembly decided to send the Accra Confession to congregations and presbyteries for study.

The Accra Confession was adopted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (a predecessor body of the World Communion of Reformed Churches of which the Presbyterian Church is a member) in Accra, Ghana in 2004 to address issues of economic justice and the destruction of the earth.

“Even though it is 14 years old, it is still relevant today,” said Rev Dr Kerry Enright when he presented the proposal to Assembly.

“The Confession is a theological reflection on what is happening globally and what we are seeing locally. It is a resource from the wider church to animate thinking about how we can be church today here in Aotearoa New Zealand,” said Kerry.

In their report to Assembly, Southern Presbytery who bought the proposal on behalf of Knox Presbyterian Church Dunedin, said that the Confession provides a framework for how Christians can confess their faith in Aotearoa New Zealand in a context of extreme poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation and other social issues.

There was limited debate on the proposal, with a small number of commissioners speaking against the recommendation to commend the Accra Confession to congregations for study.

[Read the Accra Confession.](#)

Making the Church’s voice heard

Assembly agreed to several recommendations aimed at resourcing the Church to speak out on social issues.

General Assembly firstly affirmed its understanding of “social voice” to mean both words and actions.

Exercising a ‘social voice’ in today’s environment requires more than a committee that will issue statements on various issues, as we have tended to do in the past.

“In simple terms, what we do is the most effective way for us to say what we believe concerning social issues,” says Social Voice Work Group convenor Richard McLean, who presented the work group’s report to Assembly.

Assembly encouraged the Moderator to form close working relationships with the heads of other organisations with a social voice, and to be alert to the possibility of issuing joint or complementary statements on issues of the day.

General Assembly also encouraged presbyteries to engage with the Social Voice Work Group Report and to identify, initiate and support networking opportunities in their regions.

The work group’s report includes a list of resources that congregations can use to inform their activities, and also calls for the development of virtual and real networks to share ideas and develop understanding of what is being done by parishes around the country.

Some commissioners expressed disappointment that the report did not specify the many social justice issues they grapple with such as racism, prison reform and #me too. Citing the

Rainbow community as an example of young people ending up on the streets through lack of familial acceptance, Assembly was reminded that the Church needs to be asking itself how it contributes to some social ills.

Commissioners saw the report as a small step on the path of a longer journey, and hope to see a more robust and visionary report be presented at the next General Assembly.

[Read the Social Voice Work Group Report](#) to General Assembly.

Pacific Presbytery grows new parishes and leaders

The Pacific Presbytery (formerly The Pacific Islands Synod) report to General Assembly presented the strength in diversity of Pacific peoples in the Church.

Pacific peoples are predicted to reach 10 percent of the New Zealand's population by 2026. What unites these communities are shared values, says presbytery clerk Mr Leilua Timaloa.

"Family, community, relationship & connectedness and being faith-based are the four core values weaving this young presbytery together on 'one pandanus mat'."

The presbytery oversees 15 parishes including 4 new parishes created in the last two years. Ekalesia Kelisiano Niutao Tuvalu PIPC – one of the new parishes - is the first ever Tuvalu congregation established within the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

"The formation of the PI Synod gave these parishes extra motivation to take the leap of faith and apply for full membership as recognised parishes within the Church," Leilua reported.

The majority of Pacific islands' people in Aotearoa (55%) are under 25. Growing the next generation of leaders and ensuring the Church is relevant and connected to young people are key challenges and opportunities facing their ministry.

Another central issue is that, although spirituality is still deeply held, Pacific island churches are struggling to maintain the momentum of growth last seen in the 1980s and 1990s.

New Zealand born Pacific Islanders who grew up in the PIPC churches are now often attending worship in a different denomination other than a PIPC church.

Among the recommendations to come out of the Pacific Presbytery business committee planning session held in March this year, says Leilua, was building for the present and future Pacific generations to treasure and maintain their cultural roots but to also have the freedom to express their faith and worship in a way that will honour and serve God.

The Pacific Presbytery has also been focusing on increasing its pool of leadership and the session wrapped up with a series of images documenting the induction of lay preachers and new ministers inducted to serve at Glenfield PIPC and Ranui PIPC parishes in Auckland.

Rules to change for Cooperative Ventures

Assembly approved a request from the Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand to change the Procedures under which Cooperative Ventures operate.

Changes agreed to today make financial assessments compulsory, not voluntary as at present. The Partner Support Fund, in place since 1988, will be replaced with a new funding model.

The other major change is that the existing role of coordinating partner [denomination] will now be split into two roles: Convening Partner and Appointing Partner.

The Convening Partner will rotate among the Partner denominations every three years. The Convening Partner (national/diocesan) will be responsible for determining and collecting the assessment/quota for each cooperating venture parish. Regional levies will also be paid where appropriate.

The Appointing Partner is essentially responsible for supporting the minister, and this rotates with changes in the minister.

Of the 117 Cooperative Ventures in New Zealand, 107 include Presbyterian as one of the partner denominations.

Council of Assembly expressed reservations about endorsing the changes saying it had concerns about where risk management lies between the partner churches under the new model. Council was also uneasy about financial implications for the Presbyterian Church of the proposed change to funding model.

UCANZ representative Adrian Skelton provided context to the amendments, particularly the degree of consultation that has gone into producing them. He explained that although the suggested target for contributions to the current fund is a minimum of three percent of gross income, this level of contribution is not compulsory and hence the fund has fallen dramatically in recent years.

Many commissioners had procedural questions and contributed to the lengthy discussion about the relative merits of the changes.

Those in favour of the proposals – typically from Cooperative Venture congregations – said that it has been 21 years since the Partner Support Fund came into being and it was time for a more equitable system in which parishes pay proportionately to their income to each Partner in turn.

Among the dissenting voices, the amendments were described as “a suicide pill” - disruptive, premature and unnecessary.

The changes will take effect from 1 July 2019.