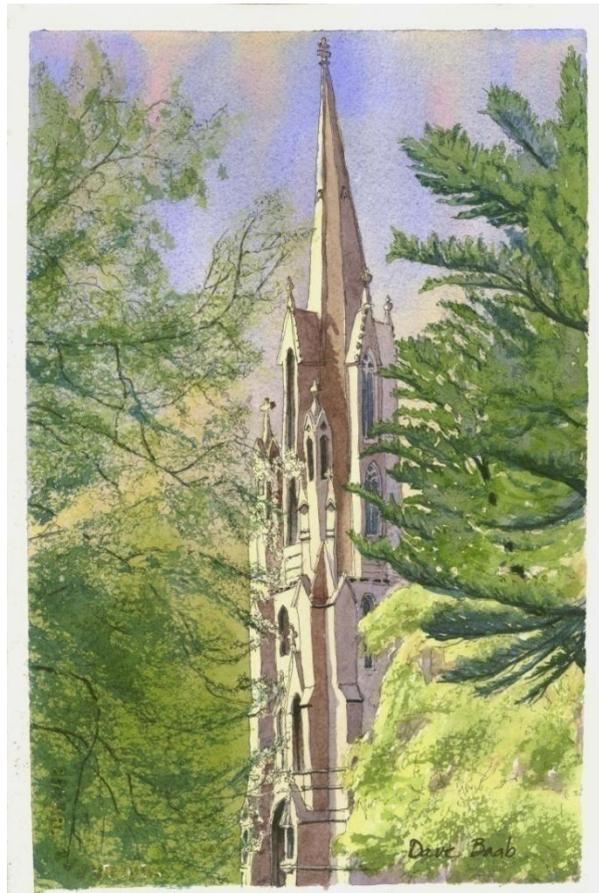


A Handbook for Elders



Graham Redding

March 2011

(With updated Code of Ethics and Policies as at June 2020)



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Introduction

Eldership is one of those concepts that have a rich pedigree in the Presbyterian Church, but as time passes and the Church changes so the old certainties are fading and people are asking all sorts of questions: What sort of leadership does the church require these days, and how does eldership fit into this? How does eldership relate to other forms of leadership? Why are elders (and ministers) ordained, and what is ordination anyway? Is the distinction between ruling and teaching elders relevant anymore? What are elders actually expected to do?

This Handbook will help you explore these and other questions. It is intended as a resource for parishes and presbyteries. It is a supplement to chapters 6 and 9 of the Presbyterian Church's *Book of Order* (2008), the relevant sections of which have been put together to form **Appendix One**. Probably the easiest way to use this Handbook as a training tool is to hold discussions around those sections which you deem to be most relevant to your situation. Questions are provided to prompt reflection and discussion.

Background Influences: This Handbook draws on a range of source material. In 1985, Lester Reid wrote *A Resource for Elders, Sessions and Parish Councils*. An excellent resource in its day, that book has since been overtaken by time. Parts of it have been rendered obsolete by changing practises and subsequent changes to the *Book of Order*. Significantly, in 2007, John Roxborough and Mary-Jane Konings began work on an Elders' Handbook. Still a work-in-progress when John concluded his teaching role at the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, it can be accessed online from John's personal web site: www.roxborough.com/elders. This Handbook builds on the good work undertaken by John and Mary-Jane and takes into account topics raised by elders in interviews conducted since 2007 by Dr Lynne Baab for the Synod of Otago and Southland. It should be read in conjunction with the *Parish Handbook*, which can be downloaded from the PCANZ web site: www.pcanz.org.nz.

A useful online resource: We draw the attention of the users of this Handbook to the Presbyterian Church of Canada's Elders Institute, which has a web site: www.eldersinstitute.ca. The web site includes a useful Elders' Toolbox, consisting of numerous downloadable one-page papers on a variety of topics, including pastoral care visiting, reaching consensus in committee meetings, and helping committees work as effective teams.

Clarification: When the term "church council" is used in this document it refers to sessions and parish councils in their various forms. The term "minister" is used to refer to ordained pastors.

Acknowledgements: Thanks are due to the following people for their feedback on an earlier draft of this document: Lynne Baab, Peter Bristow, Denzil Brown, David Coster, Ray Coster,

Sharon Ensor, Bruce Fraser, Diane Gilliam-Weeks, Richard Gray, Ian Guy, Brian Hardie, Caleb Hardie, Kevyn Harris, Warren Howes, Brett Johnstone, Tokerau Joseph, Steve Jourdain, Chong Woo Kim, Rose Luxford, Martin Macaulay, Heather McKenzie, Simon McLeay, Ron Mills, Geoff New, Andrew Norton, Brendan O'Hagan, Nathan Parry, John Roxborough and Stan Stewart.

Feedback: The ongoing revision of this document is essential if it is to be of continued use and relevance. To help with this task we would appreciate greatly your feedback. Does it cover the right subject areas? Is it accurate? Is it pitched at the right level? Are the discussion questions helpful? Please email your comments to: principal@knoxcentre.ac.nz

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March 2011

This document is intended as a resource for the Church. The information it contains is not prescriptive. The *Book of Order* and its subordinate standards contain the Church's official rules and directions. Any perceived conflict between the information contained in this resource and the Church's *Book of Order* and subordinate standards is entirely unintentional.

The History and Theology of Eldership

The word “presbyter”, from which the name “Presbyterian” is derived, is a New Testament word, often translated as “elder”. The Presbyterian Church is a church ruled or governed by elders. Our sixteenth-century Reformation forebears, who included among their number John Calvin and John Knox, believed this to be consistent with the early church, as testified to in the New Testament. Some key biblical passages in this regard are:

1. James 5:14, which describes the pastoral role of elders in terms of anointing and praying for the sick;
2. Acts 20:18ff., which describes elders as overseers and pastors maintaining the apostles’ legacy, following their example, and protecting the people against doctrinal error;
3. 1 Peter 5:1ff., which describes the office of eldership in terms of pastoral oversight and authority, and implies a stewardship function;
4. 1 Timothy 5:17, which alludes to a preaching and teaching role.

These and other such biblical references suggest that the notion of elder in the early church had a certain fluidity to it. We do not find in the Bible a universally applicable job description!

Just as eldership is described in a variety of ways in the New Testament, so too it was later conceived and developed along different lines in different Reformed Churches around the world. The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, reflecting its Scottish heritage, took its lead from the Scottish Church. For example, the notion that elders are not simply representatives of the congregation, but are holders of a permanent, spiritual office, comes from the Scottish Kirk’s *Second Book of Discipline*, produced in 1578. That same source provided an enduring rationale for the office of eldership. It said, “As the Pastors and Doctors should be diligent in teaching and sowing the Seed of the Word, so the Elders should be careful in seeking the Fruit of the same in the people.”

This suggests two things. Firstly, it suggests a distinct ministry of the eldership which is complementary to, but also closely related to, the ministry of the Word. In this regard, the oft-used distinction between “ruling elders” (elders on session) and “teaching elders” (ministers of Word and Sacrament) is both helpful and unhelpful. It is helpful in that it makes clear that while these are different roles within the leadership of the church both are needed for the governance of the church; it is unhelpful insofar as it reduces the multifaceted nature of both these ministries to just two functions: ruling and teaching.

Secondly, it suggests that just as ministers are responsible to nurture their own faith in God through Bible study, prayer and other spiritual practices in order to teach and sow the Word, so also elders must nurture their own faith if they are to be able to encourage others to grow in their faith.

Historically, the eldership's task of seeking the fruit of the Word in the people of God has tended to consist of three main elements: (1) pastoral care; (2) discipline; and (3) spiritual oversight. Let's deal briefly with each of these in turn and then continue on to consider other issues relevant to being an elder.

Pastoral Care

In the Presbyterian tradition the elders have often been at the frontline of pastoral care, with each elder being assigned a "pastoral district" consisting of a certain number of parishioners and their families. In many churches the number of elders on the session was determined by the number of pastoral districts. Elders would be expected to visit the folk in their district at least four times a year, the visits usually coinciding with the quarterly celebration of Holy Communion. It was the elders' job to get to know the folk in their district, pray for and with them, and encourage them in the daily disciplines of Christian faith and conduct, including regular attendance of worship and Holy Communion. In those churches where elders' visits are still the norm, it can be helpful before leaving for the elder to offer a short prayer for the person and/or family and the issues that may have been discussed. There needs to be confidence such prayer is welcome and the elder must feel comfortable offering such a ministry.

Nowadays, due to changed circumstances, few churches maintain such a formal system of visitation by the elders. Many churches prefer a small team of elders to the large sessions of old. While the church council still takes responsibility for ensuring pastoral care is carried out in the parish, individual elders may or may not be involved personally in the conduct of that care. Some churches appoint parish visitors and pastoral care workers (voluntary and/or paid) to visit people on a regular basis, especially the sick and the elderly. Increasingly, pastoral care has come to be regarded as a specialised ministry requiring a code of ethics, training and professional supervision. We are more conscious these days of the need to ensure that people entrusted to our care (as well as the caregivers) are kept "safe".

Unfortunately, the professionalization of pastoral care does come with attendant risks. As elders are relieved of the duty of pastoral care so, in many cases, there is a risk of them losing touch with the joys and struggles of ordinary Christians. The task of seeking the fruit of the Word in people's lives is rendered more difficult if you don't truly know people individually. Moreover, there is a danger of pastoral care being reduced to a form of social work with a consequent erosion of the spiritual dimension to the role (including the place of prayer). We should not forget that the office of eldership is a form of *spiritual* leadership, of which prayer should play a significant part. Prayer and pastoral care go hand in hand.

The Presbyterian Church's *Code of Ethics* is included in this document as **Appendix Two, Three and Four**. All those involved in pastoral visiting (including elders) should adhere to it.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. *How is pastoral care structured and coordinated in your church?*
2. *How is the spiritual dimension to pastoral care exercised?*
3. *Is there anything that could be done better?*
4. *What role do you see the elders having in the provision of pastoral care?*

Discipline

In John Calvin's day in Geneva, a group of elders called a Consistory (in effect a session) met weekly and ruled on matters of personal morality, business practice and public ethics. This proved to be the most controversial aspect of Calvin's reforms, but it did lead John Knox to observe that Geneva was the "most godly city ever established on earth." Discipline "rightly administered" came to be regarded as a mark of the Scottish Church, alongside preaching and celebration of the Lord's Supper. While the notion of elders exercising such discipline is unpalatable nowadays, it should be remembered that *discipline*, in a church context, is concerned with the formation of *disciples*, of people whose lives are ordered by the gospel. Nurture, encouragement, pastoral care and even correction, sensitively and prayerfully exercised, and determined always by love, might be deemed an appropriate means of strengthening faith and forming disciples within the Christian community. The eldership conceived in this way is potentially an instrument of God's transformative work, nurturing and encouraging the Church's participation in God's new creation.

People might find it more helpful these days to talk about mutual accountability rather than discipline. In the absence of any form of accountability there is a very real danger of "spiritual narcissism", whereby people simply do whatever is right in their own eyes. Some people have experienced great value in committing themselves to time-honoured Monastic Rules, adapted to fit today's context and consisting of daily habits of faith, including regulated prayer and Bible study.¹

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

5. *What are the means in your church by which people hold each other to account for the faith they profess?*
6. *What role, if any, do you see for the elders in this regard?*

¹ See Selwyn Yeoman's article "Living in the Rules" in the February 2011 issue of *Candour*, available from the

Spiritual Oversight

Historically, spiritual oversight was evident in the responsibility laid upon a session for:

1. pastoral care and discipline, as noted above;
2. determining the times of public worship, including the frequency of the public administration of Holy Communion;
3. assisting the minister in the conduct of worship (upon the request of the minister);
4. selecting and reviewing material used for the purposes of Christian Education, especially in relation to children, youth and home groups;
5. overseeing all teachers and leaders in the congregation (except the minister);
6. working closely with the Board of Managers (or equivalent body) in relation to the stewardship of resources;
7. developing and maintaining programmes of mission and outreach;
8. supervising the life of the congregation, including the election of elders, maintaining the congregational roll, overseeing all groups meeting under the auspices of the congregation, and being involved as needed in processes of Christian formation and baptismal instruction;
9. approving baptisms and ensuring ongoing pastoral care and spiritual nurture of the baptized.

In modern language, many of these responsibilities could be said to fall under the categories of leadership and governance. The phrase “ruling elder” describes very well this key role. However, we need to be clear that “ruling” does not and should not imply an authoritarian approach. Rather, it involves seeking the mind of Christ through consultation and prayerful deliberation. It involves listening for the voice of Christ through a multiplicity of channels and dealing with all people in a Christ-like manner. To rule is to rule wisely and to be, in all things, “an example to the believers in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). A few years ago, the Presbyterian Church coined the phrase “servant mission leader” to describe the kind of leadership required for today. It produced a brief paper on the subject. That is included here as **Appendix Five**.

In recent years, church councils have been more intentional about assuming a strategic planning role, determining the direction, vision and goals of the congregation. While this has been a natural development and is an important task, we should always remember that it fits within rather than supplants the task of providing spiritual oversight. The church council is not a Board of Governors. It is a body of spiritual leaders concerned for building up the body of Christ and advancing the mission of the Church. Strategic planning must serve this purpose.

Some people are understandably wary about churches engaging in strategic planning exercises. They point out that setting goals and measuring performances against desired

outcomes – accepted practices in the corporate world – do not translate well into the church context where one is dealing with volunteers and matters of a spiritual nature.

However, strategic plans can help churches articulate key directions and priorities, which can in turn inform discussions about the deployment of resources for mission. If the articulation of key directions and priorities is about “mission”, decisions about the deployment of resources are about “stewardship”. Mission and stewardship are two sides of the one coin.

There are many different ways of undertaking a strategic planning exercise. Whatever approach you take, make sure you keep it simple, seek to involve as many people as possible, do it prayerfully and carefully, and don’t become so preoccupied with the “what” and “how” questions that you fail to grapple with deeper biblical and theological issues. Remember, the real purpose of a strategic plan is not to advance the organisational goals of your church; it is to help you articulate what sort of community you believe God is calling you to be in Jesus Christ, and discern what kinds of things you can undertake to better enable you to become that sort of community.

See **Appendix Six** for an example of a strategic planning exercise.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

7. *Which of the nine tasks listed above does your church council take responsibility for? Who covers the rest?*
8. *Is there anything in that list which you would add, change or delete in relation to how your church council exercises spiritual oversight?*
9. *What strategic planning processes has your church council undertaken in recent years? Do you have a plan that serves you well? If not, what would be most helpful at this point in time?*

Ruling and Serving

The language of “servant mission leader” suggests that our understanding of “ruling” should be informed by a strong ethic of service and a humble disposition. Scottish theologian T.F. Torrance once observed that “the nature of the office elders hold and the kind of functions they perform bear a close resemblance to the office and functions of the *deacon* described in the Pastoral Epistles and Early Church documents.” Torrance argued for a renewal of the eldership based on the recognition that its fundamental character is diaconal. A diaconal ministry is a serving ministry. Torrance advocated for elders having “a more central ministry in the responses of God’s worshipping people, in leading their praise and thanksgiving, in guiding their intercession and witness, and in the translation of their love to God into a living liturgy of service in the depths of human need.” Interestingly, many Pacific Island churches refer to an elder as a “diakono” (Cook Islands).

Remember too, servant mission leadership is modelled after Jesus as a servant leader. That includes an emphasis on the nature of the interactions he had with people and an emphasis on his own prayer times to give direction for his ministry and to make sure he was serving God in what he did.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

10. How do you respond to Torrance's vision of eldership?

11. Is there anything in it that might inform your understanding of the role of elders?

Elders and Ministers

The relationship between the minister and elders is a dynamic one which will be affected by personalities, gifting, tradition and experience. As in any shared leadership, there needs to be some negotiation about roles and what is appropriate, based on respect and trust.

Ruling elders generally carry the vision for the parish in the long term. They are a part of the history and tradition of the parish and have a deep knowledge of and relationship with their congregation. The minister or ministerial team is called by the eldership to teach and preach, usually after specialist training for ministry. In some important ways, elders and ministers are similar – both are called, both are ordained. In other ways, there is a distinction – elders often have less training, and while experts in their congregation or parts of their congregation, do not always have an awareness of issues in the wider church.

As in all relationships, clear communication is essential between the ministerial team and the eldership. Relationships need to be built up over time, and probably require more than involvement in a session meeting once a month. Disagreements need to be faced clearly and resolved quickly, using external mediation if required. Elders and ministerial staff have experience and expertise in different areas, both of which are valued and these insights need to be listened to carefully.

Elders have a clear role in mediating disputes and will often be in the situation of hearing complaints, sometimes about the minister, sometimes about other elders, sometimes about other parishioners. Care must be taken not to inflame situations. Elders also need to be aware of their own responses – it can be difficult to remain even-handed when you agree with the complainant!

In talking about the partnership between eldership and the ministry of Word and Sacrament, it is important to delineate areas of responsibility and to stress the significance of a good working relationship between the minister and the church council. It is also important to clear up some misconceptions.

The first thing to note is that both the minister and the church council come under the authority and pastoral care of the presbytery or United District Council (UDC). Neither minister nor church council can lord it over the other. It is sometimes (wrongly) assumed

that the minister is an employee of the parish. Not so. Even though the parish pays the minister's stipend, the minister is called, ordained and inducted by the presbytery (or UDC), and it is to the presbytery (or UDC) that the minister is accountable.

This means there are certain things a church council cannot do. It cannot take it upon itself to "correct" the minister's sermons, instruct the minister to perform certain duties, or withhold payment of the minister's stipend and allowances. It cannot call a meeting to which the minister is excluded. And it cannot unilaterally decide to terminate the call of the minister. Conversely, the minister cannot dissolve the church council, or ignore or override decisions that are the prerogative of the church council to make. It is incumbent upon both minister and church council to respect one another's role and areas of authority (as spelt out in the *Book of Order*) and to make every effort to resolve disagreements amicably. In the case of a deteriorating relationship it is prudent to seek the assistance of the presbytery sooner rather than later. The presbytery has a number of pastoral and judicial options available to it. Ultimately, if it is "of the opinion that irreconcilable differences have arisen within a church council or between a church council and a congregation, the presbytery may dissolve the church council and appoint a temporary church council to act until the presbytery has arranged for a new council to be elected" (Section 7.25 of the *Book of Order*).

Hopefully, things will never get to that stage! There are certain things that can be done to maintain a relationship of trust and goodwill. Here are some suggestions:

1. Upholding one another in prayer is a good start.
2. Find ways to affirm and explore the implications of the complementarity of roles. How might the church council assist the minister in the task of teaching and sowing the Word? How might the minister assist the elders in the task of seeking the fruit of the same in the people of God? How might they encourage and assist one another in the shared task of servant mission leadership?
3. Even though the minister is accountable to the presbytery, not the church council, it is recommended that the minister present a regular report, preferably in writing, to the church council. The minister can use such a report to alert the church council to key issues, identify matters for prayer, and give some account of the use of his or her time, since otherwise the elders may have little idea of the demands on their minister. Church councils are more likely to be supportive of their ministers if they have a good understanding of their role, the unique and varied demands that are placed upon them, and the issues they are grappling with.
4. Even though the presbytery, not the church council, is ultimately responsible for exercising pastoral care in relation to ministers (and their spouses and families), it is recommended that church councils play a proactive role in this regard. A parish's obligations (financial and otherwise) towards its minister, as specified in the *Book of Order*, should be regarded as a *minimum* standard of care and responsibility.

Question for Reflection and Discussion:

12. *Is there anything that could be done to enhance the relationship between minister and church council in your church?*

Elders at worship

It is imperative elders attend worship regularly and set a good example in this. It is also important for them to be at worship so they receive spiritual food in order to be shaped into the image of Christ, indicate their submission to the mission of God, demonstrate and act on their desire to be connected with and provide support for the members of their congregation.

Historically, the elders have assisted in the serving of Holy Communion and been available to assist with other aspects of worship, including leading the congregation in prayer and delivering the Bible Readings. Nowadays ministers tend to draw on a wider range of people to assist them in the conduct of worship. Some churches maintain the practice of having a “Duty Elder” lead in prayer in the vestry prior to the service and carry the Bible in and out of the church. Worship should begin in a prayerful spirit. Those who conduct a service of worship, including and perhaps especially the minister, need the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of the prayer prior to the service is to seek these things, to commit the service to God, and to pray that those who are assembling for worship will be open to what the Spirit is saying and doing.

There is a well established “lay preaching” tradition in the Presbyterian Church.² Many of our lay preachers are elders. All lay preaching occurs under the oversight and authority of the minister or, in the case of a vacancy, the Interim Moderator. It is the minister (or Interim Moderator) who decides who may preach, not the church council. It is the minister’s responsibility to deal with any complaints that may arise in relation to a particular sermon delivered by a lay preacher.

Presbyterian and Reformed churches have since the Reformation continued the practise of the early church in ministers only presiding at the sacraments, but for almost twenty years now the Presbyterian Church has allowed what it calls “lay administration of the sacraments”. This is where certain elders may be authorised and trained by the presbytery (upon the request of the church council) to preside over the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. Such authorisation is usually for a set period of time and is subject to review. The provision is intended to cover those situations where a minister is unavailable, as is sometimes the case during a long vacancy and in small and isolated parishes that cannot afford a stipendiary ministry. These ministerial needs in difficult situations can now

² The title of “lay preacher” is unfortunate insofar as it perpetuates a distinction between “clergy” and “laity” that is both unbiblical and unhelpful. Properly understood, the New Testament word “laos” refers to the whole people of God, *including*, not apart from the clergy. Unfortunately, we haven’t yet come up with a better designation for those whom the church authorises to share in the task of preaching and administering the sacraments.

also be met by the subsequent Assembly provision for Locally Ordained Ministers (LOM) and Local Ministry Teams (LMT). These options offer provision for long term ministry and for the LOMs and LMTs to grow into the role and the trust of the parishes they serve.

Resources for the training of elders in the conduct of worship and the administration of the sacraments may be obtained from the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

13. *In what ways are elders in your church involved in the conduct of worship?*
14. *Does your church council have a clear understanding of what is its responsibility in relation to worship, and what is the minister's (or Interim Moderator's) responsibility?*

Gatekeepers or Permission-givers?

It is not uncommon for church councils to be perceived negatively as gatekeepers rather than permission-givers. While this perception can be unfair, for the task of discernment does not mean saying “yes” to everything, there are some things that church councils can do to make life easier for themselves:

1. No matter how outlandish a new proposal may seem, treat it (and the person making it) with respect. Do not reject it out of hand or make dismissive comments that prejudge an issue and discourage people from bringing forward ideas.
2. Decide first of all on the best process for dealing with the proposal. Can the proposal be dealt with there and then, or should there be a process of consultation and discussion? If so, with whom – just the church council, or the congregation too? Over what period of time? Fairness and transparency of process are key here.
3. In discussion, discourage people from using unsubstantiated generalisations to make a point. Examples: “Everybody knows that ...” “Young people today ...” “Such-and-such always ...” “History tells us ...” Such generalisations tend to discourage alternative points of view being voiced.
4. Communicate, communicate, communicate! Communicate fully and communicate on a timely basis with all relevant parties, including the congregation. Don't finish a discussion or a church council meeting without deciding what needs to be communicated to whom, by whom, and when. Nothing undermines the integrity and transparency of a process more than a lack of communication. Special care should be taken when communicating why a particular proposal has been turned down. Most people can handle disappointment if they feel they have been heard and they are confident in the integrity of the process. It's when they feel that the process was a sham and the decision a *fait accompli* that disillusionment sets in.
5. Arrange the Agenda in such a way that adequate time is given to the discussion of the proposal and that it isn't squeezed out by all the routine business. Many church councils have a small executive that meets a week before the meeting to plan the

Agenda. It also provides an option when difficult issues arise in discussion to request the executive to bring a report and proposals to the next meeting.

6. From time to time, take time out to talk about the “culture” of your church council. Is it an encouraging environment? Are new ideas welcomed or are they received as a threat? Is the first reaction usually one of why something *can't* be done rather than why this is worth considering? To what extent is the culture determined by the composition of session – is it time for some new blood, some fresh perspectives, some younger voices, to be represented around the table? What underlying dynamics and tensions are there which may need resolving in order to restore the trust and goodwill necessary for effective decision-making?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

15. *How do you think your church council is perceived? How would you describe its “culture”?*
16. *Where might there be areas for improvement?*

Church Councils, Presbyteries and the General Assembly

Two key words can be used to describe the Presbyterian form of government: “conciliar” and “connectional”.

The word “conciliar” refers to an ordered structure of church councils. The highest of these is the national council known as the General Assembly; then there is the regional council or presbytery; and finally there is the local council, which is the church council. The church council is directly accountable to the presbytery and contributes towards its work. The most visible form of this participation in the work of presbytery is the appointment of a “presbytery elder” who not only represents the church council on presbytery but also reports back to the church council. Both presbytery and the General Assembly consist of an even number (approximately) of elders and ministers.

The word “connectional” refers to the reality of congregations being in connection with each other through presbyteries and the General Assembly. Although each congregation is given a lot of latitude to organise its own life and mission, no congregation stands alone, and no congregation has complete autonomy. Although the Presbyterian Church says that the local congregation is the primary locus of mission, it is not a Congregationalist church³ like the Baptist Church and Assemblies of God; nor is it an Episcopal church⁴ like the Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

³ A Congregational church is one in which the local church has a high degree of autonomy. Even though such churches might belong to a federation or network of other churches that bear the same name, it tends to be more of a voluntary association. The links with that federation or network are not as binding as in the Presbyterian and other “connectional” churches. The local congregation has the authority of our Presbyteries and Assembly. Their regional and national gatherings are consultative rather than regulatory.

⁴ An Episcopal Church is one ruled or governed by Bishops and synods, and often has a clerical hierarchy.

The lines of connection are evident in many ways, including the following:

1. When a minister is being sought, the presbytery appoints the Settlement Board after consultation with the church council, and appoints its chair;
2. It is the presbytery which calls, ordains and inducts ministers, not the local congregation;
3. Both minister and church council are accountable to presbytery and come under the authority and pastoral care of the presbytery;
4. Elders and ministers attend Presbytery Resource Groups (along with other interested church members) for mutual encouragement and support, sharing resources for mission and exploring new models and opportunities for mission and growth in their location.
5. The forms and procedures in the Presbyterian *Book of Order* are binding on each and every congregation;
6. Each congregation is obliged to pay Assembly and presbytery levies to help fund the mission and work of the Presbyterian Church at national and regional levels.
7. Congregational representation at presbytery and General Assembly.

Because of its conciliar structure the Presbyterian Church is often said to be a democratic Church. But this is true only in part. Yes, it involves many people in its decision-making processes (a real strength of Presbyterianism), and congregational meetings are held for some things (e.g., to consider calling a minister), but for most operational matters the congregation trusts its elders to “rule” wisely and prayerfully. The mind of the elders may reflect the mind of the congregation, but not necessarily so, for their task is to seek the mind of Christ. That is why attendees at the General Assembly are called commissioners, not delegates. The role of the commissioner is to discern what the Spirit is saying, not merely represent a particular constituency or view point. For the same reason, proxy and absentee votes are not allowed in any of the church councils, including congregational meetings. Discernment involves listening to what the Spirit is saying through discussion and debate. How can you do that if you've already decided what your vote will be?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

17. *How strong is your church council's sense of connection to the wider church? How is this evident?*
18. *How might it be strengthened?*
19. *What do you perceive to be the strengths and challenges of the connective nature of the Presbyterian Church?*

How big should a church council be?

There is no optimum size. Those churches that maintain a traditional structure of elders' pastoral districts tend to have reasonably large church councils; churches that have shed that expectation and organised their pastoral care differently tend to have small church

councils. Each has advantages and disadvantages. A large church council tends to have a good cross-section of the congregation represented around the table, but can be rather unwieldy to manage; a small church council can be more flexible and dynamic, but can also suffer from a narrow range of perspectives and also suffer from fewer people to share the work load.

Interestingly, congregations in the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America are obliged to have a session of twelve elders no matter how big the church. Ordained for life, but serving for only three years at a time, they must stand down a year before being eligible to be on session again. During that “sabbatical” year, elders generally do other tasks, and often come back reinvigorated from their experience at the coal face of congregational life. Elders are elected annually in three “classes” of four so that session does not lose continuity of experience. The visiting work is done by deacons, who also attend to the needs of the poor, including vagrants, and relieve the minister of any such demands.

Some church councils here have adopted a similar model.

Question for Reflection and Discussion:

20. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the size of your church council?

Sessions, Parish Councils and Church Councils

Sessions are a peculiarly Presbyterian phenomenon; union and cooperating parishes tend to have parish councils. Presbyterian churches can opt for a parish council if they wish. Many have taken up this option over the years.

Whereas in the traditional Presbyterian structure there is a session and a board of managers (or deacons court), with the former focusing on spiritual leadership and the latter focusing on the management of resources (property and finance), the parish council combines these functions. In modern language, it combines governance and management. A session may assume the functions of a board of managers, and may retain the name “session” or be called a parish council. The term “church council” is the generic term for a session or parish council in its various forms.

Whereas the traditional session is made up of elders, other types of church councils may comprise a mixture of elders and non-elders, but only elders can be commissioners to Presbytery or the General Assembly.

The fact that elders are ordained for life does not mean that they are obliged to serve on the church council for life. Some church councils set a retirement age, but the setting of that age can be a rather arbitrary exercise, and it cannot be applied retrospectively. Other church councils fix a period of service for their elders (usually 3 to 5 years), but unless such a timeframe is stipulated when elders are inducted then the church council cannot subsequently stop them serving on the council on the grounds that they have exceeded their time. Still other councils opt for an open-ended period of service, but keep the need for “regeneration” of the eldership before the church council and offer an “emeritus” status to elders who choose to retire. Such elders can still be called upon to assist in the conduct of worship and other forms of service in the church and, although they no longer serve on the church council, they can still attend council meetings and contribute towards discussions (but they cannot vote).

If an elder moves to another parish he/she has no automatic right to serve on the church council. The elder must be invited by the church council to do so.

Each structure (session or parish council) has advantages and disadvantages. Some parishes prefer a session because of the priority it is able to give to pastoral care and spiritual oversight without being burdened by a myriad of operational matters; others prefer a parish council because of the efficiencies that come with all the committees of the church being represented around the one table. As churches decline, more and more are finding it difficult to sustain both a session and board of managers and are inclining towards the parish council model.

Each structure requires work and goodwill. Under the session model it is imperative that there be a good working relationship with the board of managers (or deacons court), and

that each court understands its role in relation to the other. It is very easy for tensions to arise here, for the board of managers to view the session as being out of touch with the operational realities of running the parish, and for the session to view the board of managers as being unnecessarily obstructive and pedantic. Good communication and trust are essential.

Under the parish council model it is imperative that the sheer pragmatics of running the church and receiving reports from all the committees do not crowd out the vital task of exercising spiritual leadership.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

21. *What do you think are the strengths of your own church council?*
22. *What are the weaknesses or dangers, and how might these be addressed?*

Discernment and Consensus

Integral to the task of spiritual leadership is the aim of discerning what the Spirit is saying in the midst of all the business that has to be discussed. There are some good resources on this subject. Here are two such books, recommended by Lynne Baab, who has herself written and spoken on this subject:

1. Morris, D.E. & Olsen, C.M., *Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church*, Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997.
This is a practical book with many concrete steps that make congregational discernment seem possible.
2. Fendall, L., Wood, J. & Bishop, B., *Practicing Discernment Together: Finding God's Way Forward in Decision Making*, Newberg, Oregon: Barclay Press, 2007.
Three Quaker authors describe the process of listening carefully to group members and also to the Holy Spirit working through them.

The incorporation of communal spiritual practices (e.g., worship, singing, silence, prayer and Bible study) into church meetings can go a long way towards facilitating discernment and building consensus. So can the cultivation of listening skills and the sensitive and skilled use of meeting procedures. What we are really talking about here is church councils seeing themselves first and foremost as communities of spiritual leaders, not as business committees.

Another book worth reading in this regard is: Olsen, C.M., *Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders*, Alban Institute, 1995. Both this and the books referred to above are available for loan from the Hewitson Library at Knox College.

When discernment and consensus have been achieved, people are far more likely to leave meetings feeling energised and inspired, rather than discouraged and exhausted, and they will have a renewed sense of who and what the church is called to be.

Question for Reflection and Discussion:

23. *How might your church council better serve the goals of discernment and consensus?*

The importance of a well-run meeting

Few things kill enthusiasm more effectively than turning up for meetings that are badly organised, poorly moderated (convened), and routinely go on for far too long. At the same time, as we noted above, we do well to remember that the primary purpose of a church meeting is to discern what the Spirit is saying, not simply attend to certain items of business. If we view the task of Christian leadership as a process of discerning God's will for our congregation's ministry, how can we hear the voice of God if we are not spending time in Scripture and prayer together? This should be a priority, not an optional extra.

As a general rule of thumb, few committee meetings or church council meetings should require more than two hours. Here are some tips about how to keep within that timeframe:

1. **Agenda:** Plan the Agenda carefully – decide what needs to be included and the order in which things should be dealt with. Give a time allocation to each item on the Agenda, allocating the most time to the most important items of business. Always allow some time for personal sharing and prayer support.
2. **Distribution of papers:** Ensure all relevant papers and reports have been distributed in advance of the meeting, and create an expectation that elders will read their papers before they come. Undistributed papers can be tabled at the meeting, but may not be discussed, and any recommendations which they contain may not be voted upon.
3. **Speaking protocols:** To avoid more vocal people dominating discussion, each person can speak once to each item of business. They can only speak twice if the Moderator is satisfied that everyone else has had an opportunity to speak.
4. **Keeping a tight rein on General Business:** All items of General Business should be brought to the attention of the Moderator prior to the start of the meeting, and preferably in time to be included on the Agenda. The Moderator should discuss with the person raising the item of General Business the best way of dealing with it – is this the right forum for the item to be dealt with; how urgent is it; does it need a paper to be written and circulated in time for the next meeting? etc.

For more advice on how to run a good meeting, and information about meeting procedures, see **Appendix Seven**. See also page 6 of the *Parish Handbook* on the PCANZ web site.

Remember, good meeting procedures are not an end in themselves; they are a means to an end. They should serve, not detract from, the higher goals of discernment and consensus.

Question for Reflection and Discussion:

24. *Where might there be room for improving the way your church council meetings are run?*

Eldership, Ordination and Leadership

In recent years congregations have been financing the appointment of youth leaders, children and family workers, pastoral care workers and other specialist ministry positions, many of which have a leadership component to their role. Since these are significant positions filled by very committed people it is often asked, why not ordain them to their ministry? While there is much to be said for commissioning such folk in the setting of public worship, ordination to eldership has two distinctive features that mark it out from those appointed from time to time to serve the church in other capacities.

On the one hand, elders are elected by the people to represent them in the governance of the church. On the other hand, elders are set apart for life to their role of sharing with the ministers in the task of providing guidance, focus and unity to the multiplicity of gifts, ministries that build up the body of the church.

By accepting this role elders are not granted more status than other people in the congregation. They are church members who have accepted election by their fellow church members to represent them in the oversight of the church. It is because they remain church members that they can fulfil the role of representatives of the people in the governance of the church, while accepting the role of being encouragers of the people – and their minister – in their roles.

When this opportunity to serve one another is understood we can see what distinguishes elders and ministers is the function they have in the church, not prestige or rank. Those appointed to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, through their calling, remind the Church of its identity as Christ's servant and call the Church to be true to its nature. Those appointed to the office of eldership, through their calling, lead and guide the community's response of faith, build communion, encourage and exemplify a spirit of service. The offices of minister and elder, therefore, though different, lead the church's life and service in complementary ways.

Tensions can emerge between church councils and ministry staff, employed or appointed to exercise particular ministries, many of which have a significant leadership component. Many church councils are ill-equipped to administer the myriad of requirements that are enshrined in employment legislation; some expect the minister to handle this on their behalf, but the minister may or may not be trained or skilled in this area. The Presbyterian Church's Assembly Office is available to offer advice here. It is very important that church councils act as good employers.

In thinking about the relationship between a church council and ministry staff (excluding the minister of Word and Sacrament), here are some things to be aware of:

1. Thought needs to be given not just to the ability of ministry staff to do specified jobs, but also to how well they “fit” and respect the “culture” of the congregation. This is especially so when a person is appointed from outside the congregation (and indeed the Presbyterian Church) and may not identify with its life and mission in any way other than a formal employment relationship. In some situations it might be helpful to offer to new staff some form of orientation.
2. When an employment position is filled from within the congregation, the potential for blurring the lines between employment obligations and pastoral care increases substantially. This risk is especially evident if the employment relationship begins to deteriorate.
3. Care needs to be taken by elders not to meddle in employment related matters. Ensure that proper lines of employee management are defined clearly and followed strictly.
4. The church council should respect the expertise that ministry staff bring to their positions. At the same time, ministry staff should respect the oversight role that the church council exercises and the continuity that it provides. After all, ministry staff come and go, whereas it is the church council that articulates the missional vision of the congregation and holds the institutional memory.
5. With the advent of ministry staff teams consisting mainly, if not exclusively, of paid personnel, there is a risk of a new professionalism in ministry undermining the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers. The move towards the specialisation and professionalisation of ministry can give rise to a perception that real ministry is done by the paid professionals, and that everyone else is there merely to support the professionals in their work. It can also give rise to a perception that ministry is what happens inside the church, while the Reformed emphasis on the priesthood of all believers being worked out in the community and in secular vocations is eroded.

Remember, there are many forms of ministry and leadership in the church, but only elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament are ordained. Following the example of the Apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, ordination is by prayer and the laying on of hands. At the same time, ministers and elders are asked to confess their faith in God, to express their belief in “the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the standards of this Church”, and to promise to seek the unity and peace of the Presbyterian Church, to uphold the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline thereof, and to take their due part in the administration of its affairs. They then sign a “Formula” to that effect.

These ordination vows need to be taken seriously. When elders and ministers in our church are ordained, they promise to seek the unity and peace of the church and to submit to the governance structures of the church. At times each of us will disagree with certain decisions. Seeking the peace and unity of the church does not mean suppressing disagreement, but it does mean respecting the processes that the church has for making decisions and hearing

appeals as we collectively seek the mind of Christ. It means listening with respect to those with whom we disagree. Making rash allegations, threatening legal action and using the media to scandalise the church does not serve the unity and peace of the church. It simply creates a climate of distrust and anxiety, and fragments our Christian witness. All of us would do well to remember our ordination vows the next time we are tempted to lash out in anger at our colleagues or at the church at large.

The ordination ceremony is indicative of the seriousness with which the Presbyterian Church takes ordination. It should be noted that what we believe about ordination is generally consistent with other major churches and denominations around the world. We don't just make things up as we go along!

See **Appendix Eight** for an Order of Service for the ordination and induction of elders.

A word of clarification about ordination and induction: You are ordained into an office; you are inducted into, or appointed to a position of service. An elder is therefore ordained into the office of elder and inducted into, or appointed to serve on a church council. The former is for life; the latter is for the period of one's service on a church council.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

25. *What misunderstandings about ordination do you think exist, and how might they be addressed?*
26. *Does your church have paid ministry staff? If so, how would you describe the relationships between those staff and the church council? Are there any issues that need to be addressed?*

The Calling, Training and Formation of Elders

There are various ways of calling and appointing elders, but remember that it is the congregation which elects elders, not the church council. One way is to invite nominations from the congregation and to hold a congregational meeting to vote on them. Another way is for the church council to assume a more hands-on role and put names before the congregation. This process might consist of the following steps:

1. Have a discussion in the church council about: (a) the personal qualities and skills desired in an elder; and (b) the desired mix of elders in the church council (e.g., gender, age, culture).
2. Invite the church council to prayerfully consider possible names, bearing in mind the criteria determined in step (1) above. Give a date by which those names can be submitted to the Moderator or Clerk of the church council.
3. Circulate in time for the next meeting of the church council a list of nominations, together with brief bio details on each nominee.
4. Pray, discuss, vote. Voting can be by secret ballot. If, for example, the church council has said it needs three elders and there are six nominations, ask each council

member to write on their piece of paper their top three preferences. Appoint a couple of scrutineers to count the votes and determine the top three candidates.

5. Do the preferred nominees reflect the desired mix, talked about in step (1) of this process? Do more names need to be added?
6. Approach those who have made the final list to ask if they will allow their names to go forward to the congregation to be voted upon.
7. Set up a congregational meeting to vote on the final nominations. The bio details of each candidate should be circulated in advance of the meeting. Encourage anyone who has any reservations or concerns about the suitability of any of the nominees to talk in confidence to the minister by a certain date.
8. Hold a training session for the new elders. The church council needs to be satisfied that the elder-elect is suitably trained and able before proceeding to ordination.
9. Set a date for the service of ordination and induction of the new elders.

It is not uncommon for those who are approached to become elders to express feelings of inadequacy in relation to the task. They often have in their mind an image of an elder being a “super-spiritual” and “ultra-wise” person. “Why me?” they ask.

There are some useful texts about leadership and eldership in the Bible, but some people can feel the list of attributes described therein to be rather daunting, adding to their feelings of inadequacy. One session I know of tried to simplify the list. They said that a prospective elder should:

- a) be a member of the church and a regular worshipper;
- b) possess good pastoral skills, including the ability to listen, and to lead in prayer where appropriate;
- c) be of sound Christian character, have a maturity of Christian faith, and be a respected person within the congregation;
- d) be able to relate well to a wide range of people;
- e) be a “team player” who in his or her contribution to discussions will always seek the peace and unity of the church and will listen to other points of view; and,
- f) be called because he or she has the right gifts, not as a reward for length of membership or service in the church.

Church councils need to be intentional about the training and formation of elders and council members. The requisite skills can be taught in occasional workshops and/or in regular short training slots in church council meetings. Equally important, however, is the task of personal and spiritual formation. Eldership is not just about what you do; it’s about who you are. Personal mentoring, theological education and spiritual supervision can play an important role in this regard. So can the attendance of elders’ retreats, spiritual retreats and the supervised cultivation of daily habits of faith, including prayer and Bible study.

These sorts of practices are necessary in order for elders to play an active part in the task of discernment. They need to engage in spiritual practices in order to assure they are growing

more into Christ's likeness and are striving to listen to God's voice through the Bible and by the Holy Spirit. This is significant both for them as individuals in leadership, but also significant for them as they work together with other members of the church council to strive to discern God's leading for the congregation.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

- 27. The criteria for eldership noted above suited one particular context. What criteria for eldership do you think should apply in your situation?*
- 28. What training and formation do you think you and other elders in your church would find helpful?*

Appendix One: What the Book of Order says about Eldership

The following excerpts from the 2008 Book of Order have been downloaded from the PCANZ web site: www.presbyterian.org.nz

6.9 Nature of office of elder

1. An elder
 - a. exercises a spiritual office in the Church,
 - b. exercises leadership in mission,
 - c. participates in the spiritual rule and pastoral oversight of a congregation, and
 - d. participates in the government of the Church through its courts.

The congregation of a co-operative venture may elect to its church council a person who is not an elder.

For the purposes of representation at presbytery and the General Assembly, a person who is not an elder but is a member of the church council of a co-operative venture is treated as an elder.

Nothing in subsections (2) and (3) prevents the congregation of a co-operative venture from electing an elder to its church council.

6.10 Functions of an elder

1. The calling of an elder includes
 - a. leadership in worship,
 - b. leadership in mission,
 - c. pastoral care and oversight of the congregation, and
 - d. spiritual nurture.

An elder exercises his or her calling only after

- a. being ordained and inducted in accordance with section 42 of chapter 9, and
- b. being elected to office by the congregation.

6.11 Leadership in worship

An elder exercises leadership in worship when he or she

1. preaches the Word according to his or her gifts under the authority of the minister,
2. assists in the celebration of the sacraments under the authority of the minister,
3. presides at the celebration of communion if he or she is authorised to administer the sacraments,
4. baptizes if he or she is authorised to administer the sacraments.

6.12 Leadership in mission

An elder exercises leadership in mission when he or she

1. exercises leadership within the congregation,
2. observes the discipline and government of the Church, and
3. participates in the courts of the Church as required.

6.13 Pastoral care and oversight of the congregation

An elder provides spiritual nurture, pastoral care and oversight of the congregation when he or she

1. provides pastoral care,
2. makes arrangements for baptism and membership.

6.14 Spiritual nurture

If suitably qualified and under the direction of the minister, an elder may provide spiritual guidance including the nurture of applicants for baptism and membership.

6.15 Responsibilities of elders

1. An elder is responsible to the church council for the performance of his or her duties.
2. An elder is responsible for nurturing and practising his or her own spiritual life and for undertaking such eldership formation as may be encouraged by the minister or church council.

9.3 Ordination of elders and deacons

1. A person is eligible for ordination as an elder who
 - a. is a member of a congregation, and
 - b. offers him or herself for that service, and
 - c. displays the appropriate character, qualities and gifts, and
 - d. holds to the fundamentals of faith as defined by the Assembly, and
 - e. has completed the training for the office prescribed by the church council, and
 - f. is elected by the congregation.

9.41 Preparation for ordination of elders

1. If a church council recognises one or more members of the congregation as having the appropriate qualities for the ministry of an elder, it may
 - a. subject to their consent, nominate those members for election as elders at a meeting of the congregation, and
 - b. provide training for elders prior to their ordination.

A congregation may, subject to their consent, nominate members for election as elders.

9.42 Ordination and Induction of elders

1. When a church council is satisfied that
 - a. a member of a congregation has the ability, the appropriate qualities, and the required training for the ministry of an elder, and
 - b. the congregation has elected the member as an elder,A person elected as an elder who has been ordained in another congregation is inducted in accordance with the supplementary provisions.

9.43 Authorisation of elders to administer the sacraments

1. Where a congregation considers it desirable and appropriate that an elder who is a member of the congregation or a member of a co-operative venture should be authorised to celebrate the sacraments in that congregation and the church council is satisfied that the elder has
 - a. the appropriate qualities, skills and gifts, and
 - b. agreed to being so authorised,

the church council may request presbytery to authorise the elder accordingly.

If presbytery agrees to authorise the elder to celebrate the sacraments, presbytery may hold a service of worship or other appropriate recognition at which it presents the person with a certificate of authorisation.

The authorisation of an elder to celebrate the sacraments remains effective to the extent provided in the supplementary provisions.

Appendix Two: Code of Ethics

Code of Ethics

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION

TO THE BOOK OF ORDER *Issued*

by the Council of Assembly

17 March 2018

1. The PCANZ, as a part of the church of Jesus Christ, is committed to conducting itself in accordance with the Gospel so that all people are treated with honesty, transparency, dignity, and respect.
2. People representing or working for the PCANZ (“*the Church*”) are required to abide by this *Code of Ethics*. This includes *ministers, employees, and volunteers*.¹
3. This Code is to be read in the context of, and along with, the *Book of Order* and the Church’s *Conditions of Service Manual*. It reflects the standards of conduct expected because of the special relationships of pastoral care and ministry in which the Church is engaged. It is supported by subordinate documents that address particular areas of practice within the church.
4. People representing or working for the Church will:

4.1 Demonstrate high ethical standards of behaviour at all times.

This recognises obligations of truthfulness and confidentiality towards people the Church deals with, together with an acknowledgement that it is unacceptable to subject people to exploitation, harassment, or abuse, whether financial, sexual, physical, psychological, spiritual, cultural or otherwise in any discriminatory way, nor to take advantage of any vulnerability of others. All dealings with others will be characterised by compassion and natural justice.

4.2 Demonstrate appropriate levels of competence commensurate with the role and task undertaken.

This recognises obligations of using appropriate supervision; regular opportunities for spiritual growth; stewardship of time and talents; personal upskilling and recreation; awareness of strengths and

¹ These terms are defined in the PCANZ Conditions of Service Manual.

limitations; collegiality and respect for others within the Church; recognition and respect for boundaries; and the need to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of those with whom the Church interacts is protected and enhanced.

4.3 Comply with the laws and usages of the Church and the laws of the communities in which the Church operate.

Appendix Three

Child Protection Policy

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION TO THE BOOK OF ORDER

Issued by the Council of Assembly 11 December 2018

Amended 23 November 2019

Key changes in this document from the December 2018 version:

- The office title “Safety Officer” has been changed to “Child Protection Officer
- The Ara Taiohi Youth Workers Code of Ethics has been reworked as the Children’s and Youth Ministry Code of Ethics
- Appendix 5 section b regarding Recording, Reporting and Responding to Suspected Abuse has been updated

For those working with children and young people

1. Purpose

This Supplementary Provisionⁱ outlines the policy and practices determined by the Council of Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (“the Church”) to be applied by all parts of the Church in relation to child protection. The Church believes it is critical to have competent and committed governance and leadership which develops and maintains a child safe culture. For the policy to be effective it requires awareness and knowledge in all parts of the Church. It requires a commitment to shared personal responsibility to ensure children are protected.

¹ *Book of Order: Section 3.3 Delegation to the Council of Assembly*

2. What we believe

The Church believes that all people, including children, are made in the image of God and thereby have an inherent value and dignity. It is committed to providing safe environments for all people, including children, so that they may live life in all its fullness. It is committed to protecting children from physical or mental harm and neglect, including sexual abuse and exploitation.

Children are gifts of God to be received, welcomed and to be cared for responsibly and justly. The Gospel also directs us to listen to and learn from children.

The Code of Ethics of the Church commits it “to conducting itself in accordance with the Gospel so that all people are treated with honesty, transparency, dignity and respect.” This policy outlines what is expected of all parts of the Church including voluntary or paid workers who work with or have responsibility for work with children or young people.

All children who are involved in the Church’s activities, services, events or programmes have a right to feel and be safe. The Church is committed to provide safe environments where children are cared for, respected and nurtured.

We recognize that abuse may take many forms where inadequate or improper care of children and young people for whom we are responsible results in serious harm.

As abuse thrives on secrecy, the Church is committed to developing and maintaining an open and aware culture.

The Church commits itself to the creation and maintenance of a child safe culture to ensure the care, protection and safety of all children engaging with the Church in any of its entities.

The Church will do all in its power to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and will uphold the law including the requirement to report abuse.

3. Safety and Protection Mission Statement:

We will do all in our power to ensure that children and young people in our care will be nurtured and cared for in a safe environment and be protected from harm.

4. Commitment of the Church

This Child Protection Policy confirms the commitment of the Church to the protection of children and proceeds to:

- Outline the role, standards, and principles by which the Church will abide;
- Outline expectations regarding safe working practices, recruitment, and training;
- Define child abuse;
- Outline the actions to be taken where any form of abuse or ill-treatment of any child or young person is suspected or identified;
- Establish what action is required when allegations of abuse are made against the Church.

5. Related Legislation

This child protection policy has been written with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in mind and in accordance with the following Acts:

- Crimes Act 1961
- Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994
- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
- Privacy Act 1993
- Human Rights Act 1993
- Education Act 1989/1998
- Domestic Violence Act 1995
- Care of Children Act 2004
- Employment Relations Act 2000
- Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights
- Children's Act 2014

6. Scope of this Policy

This Policy applies to every part of the Church including, but not limited to, ministers, lay workers, church councils, presbyteries, Presbyterian campsites, the Assembly, synods, trusts and other bodies that oversee, work with and/or care for people under the age of 18. This Policy must be applied when people in the Church have responsibility for children and young people.

For the purposes of this policy:

Children refers to those 14 years or less

Young people refers to those over 14 and under 18 years

7. Roles and Responsibilities:

The Church has a full and active part to play in protecting children and young people from harm. It is the responsibility of the Church to be vigilant, have knowledge and awareness of the indicators of neglect and abuse, whether actual or potential, and to report any concerns, suspicions or allegations immediately. The Church has a responsibility to take seriously any concern, suspicion or allegation raised.

a) All People working with children and young people

All people (paid or voluntary) working with children or young people must have a clear understanding of the Church's Child Protection Policy.

b) Congregation Child Protection Officers

Each church council must appoint a Child Protection Officer who is responsible to ensure that the Church's Child Protection Policy is implemented within the congregation.

The Child Protection Officer is a person within the church council who is responsible for the safeguarding of children. This person is responsible for ensuring that child

protection is a key focus within the Church, both at a strategic level and on a day to day basis.

Responsibilities include:

- i. Ensuring safe recruitment (including police vetting)
- ii. Ensuring all volunteers and employees who work with children or young people are trained in the PCANZ Safety Warrant of Fitness
- iii. Ensuring all volunteers and employees who work with children or young people are following safe working practices
- iv. Ensuring any suspected child abuse is reported appropriately

c) Presbytery Child Protection Officers

Each presbytery must appoint a Child Protection Officer who is responsible to ensure that the Church's Child Protection Policy is implemented within all congregations and bodies in the presbytery and to support the congregation Child Protection Officers

8. Safe Recruitment:

Before making any appointment (paid or voluntary), where the person might be expected to work with children or young people, the Church will complete a robust safety checking process to ascertain the suitability and safety of the potential employee or volunteer to work with children and young people. All appointments made by the Church, including volunteers, will follow the requirements of the Church's Conditions of Service Manual (section 3), and elaborated in Appendix 1 of this Policy (which includes a flow chart).

All aspects of the Safe Recruitment procedures must be completed before any person commences working with children or young people.

All employees and volunteers working with children or young people must go through the police vetting process every three years.

9. Safe Working Practices:

This is a "First Do No Harm" policy and should be applied in conjunction with the Church's Health & Safety policy to be found in the Conditions of Service Manual, Section 3.10.

- a. All employees and volunteers working with children and young people must have a thorough understanding and agree to apply:
 - i. The Church's Code of Ethics (Appendix 2)
 - ii. The Church's Code of Conduct for those Working with Young people (Appendix 3)
- b. All volunteers and employees who work with children or young people have an understanding of the Children's and Youth Ministry Code of Ethics (Appendix 4)
- c. Programme leaders will ensure that for each programme and event involving children or young people there is a safety strategy which includes:

- i. Risk management plan
- ii. Hazard inspection
- iii. Reporting of accidents and incidents
- iv. Access to first aid

10. Training:

The councils of the Church, namely the Assembly, presbytery and/or church council, will ensure that everyone in the part of the church for which the relevant council has responsibility has adequate and appropriate information and training about child abuse in order to protect children and to recognise and respond when children are at risk. Anyone who is to have contact in the course of their work with children and young people will be given appropriate training covering basic awareness of child protection. This will include an overview of the signs and indicators of abuse, as well as the procedure for responding to actual or suspected abuse.

All employees and volunteers who work with children or young people, including congregational and presbytery Child Protection Officers, are required to undertake the following training:

- a) the Church's Safety Warrant of Fitness training day, within the first 12 months of appointment and every three years thereafter;
- b) an annual refresher course of the Church's Child Protection Policy and local church health and safety policies for the relevant employees and volunteers in congregations

Those taking on positions as local congregation and presbytery Child Protection Officers will require specific training for their roles, in addition to the above.

11. Dealing with abuse:

Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 defines child abuse as "...the harming (whether physically, emotionally, sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation of any child or young person".

Where child abuse is known or suspected, everything must be done to ensure the ongoing safety of the child concerned, along with the ongoing safety of any other child who is in close connection to the alleged offender. The child is the primary concern and all other concerns (including the guilt or innocence of the alleged offender) must be secondary. This does not mean that the alleged offender is to be considered guilty without due investigation, but that the child's concerns and safety come first. In no way must any child be left in a harmful, or potentially harmful, situation.

Appendix 5 to this policy contains detailed information about:

- a) Recognising abuse and neglect
- b) Dealing with disclosures of abuse
- c) Recording, reporting and responding to suspected abuse

- d) Procedures for responding to suspected child abuse or neglect
- e) Allegations against church leaders
- f) Keeping the family informed

12. Definitions of Abuse:

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is a non-accidental act on a child that results in physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, bullying, beating, hitting, shaking, burning, drowning, suffocating, biting, poisoning or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse also involves the fabrication or inducing of illness.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effect on the child's emotional development. This can include a pattern of rejecting, degrading, ignoring, isolating, corrupting, exploiting or terrorising a child. It may also include age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It also includes seeing or hearing about the ill treatment of others. It may also in discrimination on the grounds of cultural practices, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative, for example, rape, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such as involving children in the looking at or production of pornography such as sexual images, sexual activities and sexual behaviours.

Those in the Church (voluntary and paid) with responsibility for children and young people should be aware of their 'duty of care' which precludes developing a sexual relationship with or grooming of a child. A sexual relationship between a leader and a child will always be wrong, unequal and unacceptable.

Ne

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing long term serious harm to the child's health or development. It may also include neglect of a child's basic or emotional needs. Neglect is a lack of action, emotion or basic needs.

Famil

Family Violence can take many forms and includes not only acts of physical violence, but also intimidating behaviour such as threatening to harm people, pets or property. Children are always affected either emotionally or physically where there is family violence even if they are not personally injured or physically present.

13. Confidentiality and Requests for Information:

Information regarding any abuse is highly sensitive and must be handled with appropriate confidentiality. In dealing with such information, the Church will comply with the Privacy Act, in particular referring to the *Principles* Section 2: 1-12.

As a brief guide,

Principle 1, **Principle 2**, **Principle 3** and **Principle 4** govern the collection of personal information. This includes the reasons why personal information may be collected, where it may be collected from, and how it is collected.

Principle 5 governs the way personal information is stored. It is designed to protect personal information from unauthorised use or disclosure.

Principle 6 gives individuals the right to access information about themselves.

Principle 7 gives individuals the right to correct information about themselves.

Principle 8, **Principle 9**, **Principle 10** and **Principle 11** place restrictions on how people and organisations can use or disclose personal information. These include ensuring information is accurate and up-to-date, and that it isn't improperly disclosed.

Principle 12 governs how "unique identifiers" - such as IRD numbers, bank client numbers, driver's licence and passport numbers - can be used.

Should the Church be contacted with a request for information or access to interview a child then as well as noting the privacy requirements above, consider such things as:

- confirming the identity and credentials of person requesting information
- notifying the Child Protection Officer
- identifying the specific information required and the purpose
- checking that the Church holds the information requested
- the reason for the request, and potential risk to children, as judged case by case,
- informing the family/whānau that information has been requested, by whom and seek permission. If this is a child protection issue, permission from the family/whānau is not required
- documenting all steps in the process

14. Contacts:

Church councils must make this policy readily available to all who work with children and young people and to those in leadership positions. The following contact details should be publicized:

- Congregation: Congregation Child Protection Officer
(name:.....phone.....)
- Presbytery: Presbytery Child Protection Officer
(name:.....phone.....)

If it is suspected that a child is in immediate danger, the police must be contacted on 111.

All suspected abuse or neglect will be reported to Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children); Telephone: 0508 FAMILY or 0508 326 459 (lines open 24/7), Email: contact@ot.govt.nz

For further information about police vetting, check out the [Presbyterian website](#) or contact the Assembly Office, phone (04) 801 6000.

15. Relationships with external agencies:

The Church will maintain a good working relationship with Oranga Tamariki and with Police, and implement the laws that serve to protect children from abuse (noted in Procedures). Relevant assembly and presbytery staff (including presbytery Child Protection Officers) will consult with Oranga Tamariki, the Police, and with other appropriate agencies that have specialist knowledge to help protect children from abuse.

16. Policy review:

This Policy will be reviewed annually and updated regularly, to ensure it is kept up to date with changes that may have been made to legislation, related policies and procedures, and in light of operational experience.

The overall responsibility for review of this policy rests with the Assembly Executive Secretary.

Appendix A

Safe Recruitment

The Church will follow the safe recruitment procedures listed below for employees and volunteers who are working with children and young people.

All aspects of the Safety Recruitment must be completed before any person commences.

a) Identify Verification

In order to confirm the identity of the applicant, two forms of ID as approved by the Police Vetting Service must be sighted.

Appointees must provide personal contact details.

b) Police Vetting

Employees and volunteers will be vetted using the New Zealand Police Vetting service provided through the Assembly Office once every three years.

- i. It is important to note that police vetting of a potential worker by the Church will only render information relevant to offences relating to family violence, abuse and other violations of human dignity irrespective of the time of occurrence. Minor convictions

such as theft, parking or speeding violations are only flagged in the vetting process for seven years after the offence. Offences that make one unsuitable for working with children and young people are listed in (Appendix 6).

- ii. For more details on what information Police may release go to:<http://www.police.govt.nz/advice/businesses-and-organisations/vetting/information-about-vetting>
- iii. On receipt of an adverse police vetting report the church council must take immediate action. The person should be stood down immediately from working with children and young people.
- iv. An adverse vetting report does not necessarily exclude the applicant from serving in other areas of the Church in which they will not be working with children and young people and certainly does not exclude them from church membership.

For the latest guidelines on how to use the New Zealand Police Vetting service through the Assembly office:

<https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/for-parishes/employing-and-managing-staff/police-checks>

c) Interview

In an interview, questions will be asked to provide answers to help assess suitability for a position.

- i. Views and attitudes on disciplining children and keeping safe around children.
- ii. Experiences and relationships in working with children.
- iii. Whether the person has ever committed or been accused of any acts of child molestation or abuse.

d) Reference Check

All potential employees will give a minimum of 3 referees, at least one of whom is not related to the applicant. Referees should be able to vouch for the applicant's skills, attitudes, values, past behaviours and relationships.

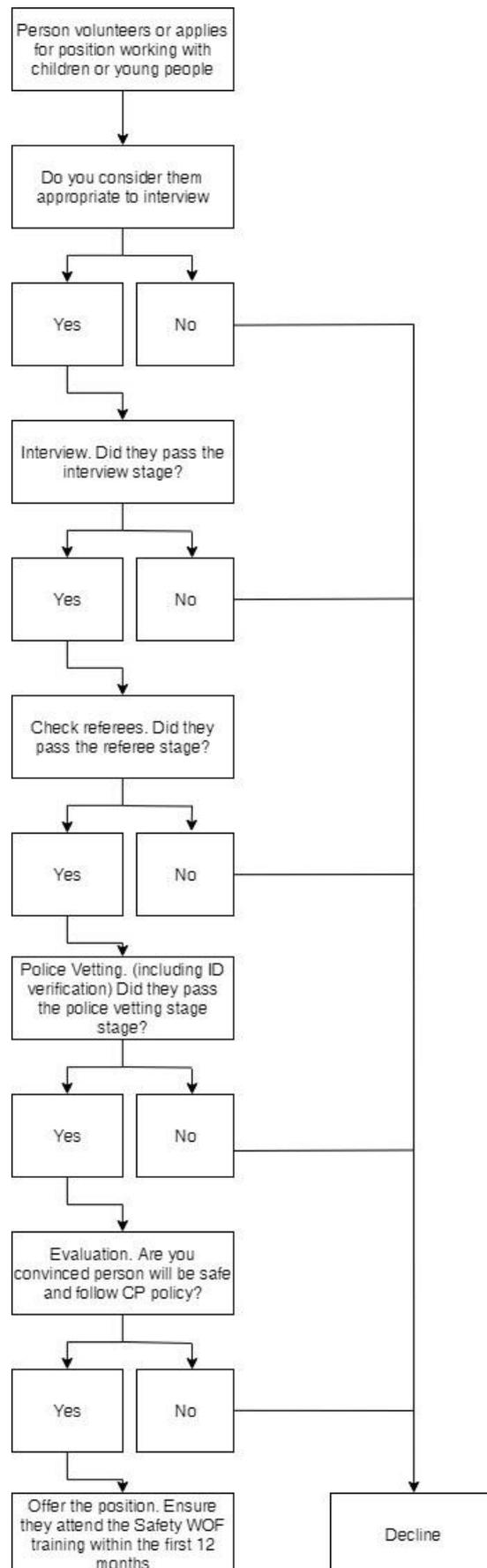
If the potential volunteer is not already well known to the church council they also will be required to provide referees.

e) Evaluation and Risk Assessment

The Church Council must be convinced the person will:

- i. Be a safe person to work with children and young people.
- ii. Actively contribute to a culture of child protection.
- iii. Support and adhere to the child protection policy.
- iv. Be prepared to make the safety of children a priority.

Safety Recruitment Flow Chart:



Appendix B

The Children's and Youth Ministry Code of Ethics

The Children's and Youth Ministry Code of Ethics provides an agreed set of guidelines specifically created for children's and youth ministry in Aotearoa to ensure that ministry is carried out in a safe, skilled, ethical manner. This document is based on the *Ara Taiohi Code of Ethics for Youth Work in Aotearoa New Zealand – Second Edition*. In discussion with Ara Taiohi, PYM and Children and Family Ministry have sought permission to modify the original document to better fit our children's and youth ministry context. To view this document please use the following link:

<http://safetywof.org.nz/coe>

Appendix C

(a) **Recognising Abuse and Neglect**

Indicators of abuse

The indicators for child abuse and neglect fall into three general categories:

- **Physical indicators:** Injuries to a child that are severe, occur in a pattern or occur frequently. These injuries range from bruises to broken bones to burns or unusual lacerations and are often unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given
- **Behavioural indicators:** The child's actions, attitudes, and emotions can indicate the possibility of abuse or neglect. Behavioural indicators alone are much less reliable than physical indicators, as a child's behaviour may be the result of a variety of other problems or conditions. When observing changes in behaviour, look for the frequency and pattern of the new behaviour, as well as a child's age and stage of development. For example, it is normal for younger children to be wary of adults, as they may have been taught not to talk to strangers. Look for a combination of physical and behavioural indicators.
- **Caregiver indicators:** Caregivers who abuse, neglect or exploit children are either unable or unwilling to provide care and protection in an appropriate way. Those who are unable to provide care and protection may be physically unable due to their own medical or health condition. They may be overly stressed, tired, or working under the influence of drugs or alcohol which limits their abilities. Caregivers who are unwilling to provide children with the appropriate level of care and protection are more aware that what they are doing is wrong but continue to act in that way. These caregivers may not view the child as someone who has feelings and emotions and often have the need to control others or have displaced aggression towards weaker persons.

The indicators alone do not prove child abuse or neglect. Likewise, the absence of indicators does not exclude the possibility that abuse is occurring. If you have any concerns about the wellbeing of a child, seek advice from your Child Protection Officer, Team Leader or Oranga Tamariki.

Emotional abuse indicators

- Physical Indicators
 - Bed wetting or bed soiling with no medical cause
 - Frequent psychosomatic complaints (e.g. headaches, nausea, abdominal pains)
 - Non-organic failure to thrive
 - Pale, emaciated
 - Prolonged vomiting and/or diarrhoea
 - Malnutrition
 - Dressed differently to other children in the family
- Behavioural Indicators:
 - Severe developmental lags with obvious physical cause
 - Depression, anxiety, withdrawal or aggression
 - Self-destructive behaviour. This can include self-harm, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse
 - Overly compliant
 - Extreme attention seeking behaviours or extreme inhibition
 - Running away from home, avoiding attending at school
 - Nightmares, poor sleeping patterns
 - Anti-social behaviours
 - Lack of self esteem
 - Obsessive behaviours
 - Eating disorders
- Caregiver Indicators:
 - Labels the child as inferior or publicly humiliates the child (e.g. name calling)
 - Treats the child differently from siblings or peers in ways that suggest dislike for the child
 - Actively refuses to help the child
 - Constantly threatens the child with physical harm or death
 - Locks the child in a closet or room for extended periods of time
 - Teaches or reinforces criminal behaviour
 - Withholds physical and verbal affection
 - Keeps the child at home in role of servant or surrogate parent
 - Has unrealistic expectations of the child
 - Involves the child in adult issues such as separation or disputes over the child's care

- Exposes the child to situations of arguing and violence in the home

Neglect Indicators

- Physical Indicators:
 - Dressed inappropriately for the season or the weather
 - Often extremely dirty and unwashed
 - Severe nappy rash or other persistent skin disorders
 - Inadequately supervised or left unattended frequently or for long periods
 - May be left in the care of an inappropriate adult
 - Does not receive adequate medical or dental care
 - Malnourished - this can be both underweight and overweight
 - Lacks adequate shelter
 - Non-organic failure to thrive
- Behavioural Indicators:
 - Severe developmental lags without an obvious physical cause
 - Lack of attachment to parents/caregivers
 - Indiscriminate attachment to other adults
 - Poor school attendance and performance
 - Demanding of affection and attention
 - Engages in risk taking behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse
 - May steal food
 - Poor social skills
 - No understanding of basic hygiene
- Caregiver Indicators:
 - Puts own needs ahead of those of the child
 - Fails to provide for the child's basic needs
 - Demonstrates little or no interest in the child's life - does not attend school activities, social events
 - Leaves the child alone or inappropriately supervised
 - Drug and alcohol use
 - Depression

Physical Abuse Indicators

- Physical Indicators:
 - Bruises, welts, cuts and abrasions

- Burns - small circular burns, immersion burns, rope burns etc.
 - Fractures and dislocations - skull, facial bones, spinal fractures etc.
 - Multiple fractures at different stages of healing
 - Fractures in very young children
- Behavioural Indicators:
 - Inconsistent or vague explanations regarding injuries
 - Wary of adults or a particular person
 - Vacant stare or frozen watchfulness
 - Cringing or flinching if touched unexpectedly
 - May be extremely compliant and eager to please
 - Dresses inappropriately to hide bruising or injuries
 - Runs away from home or is afraid to go home
 - May regress (e.g. bedwetting)
 - May indicate general sadness
 - Could have vision or hearing delay
 - Is violent to other children, or to animals
- Caregiver Indicators:
 - Inconsistent or vague explanations regarding injuries
 - May appear unconcerned about the child's wellbeing
 - May state the child is prone to injuries or lies about how they occur
 - Delays in seeking medical attention
 - May take the child to multiple medical appointments and seek medical treatment without an obvious need

Sexual Abuse Indicators

- Physical Indicators:
 - Unusual or excessive itching or pain in the genital or anal area
 - Torn, stained or bloody underclothing
 - Bruises, lacerations, redness, swelling or bleeding in genital, vaginal or anal area
 - Blood in urine or stools
 - Sexually transmitted infections
 - Pregnancy
 - Discomfort in sitting or fidgeting as unable to sit comfortably
- Behavioural Indicators:
 - Age-inappropriate sexual play or language
 - Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge

- Refuses to go home, or to a specific person's home, for no apparent reason
 - Fear of a certain person
 - Depression, anxiety, withdrawal or aggression
 - Self-destructive behaviour. This can include self-harm, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse
 - Overly compliant
 - Extreme attention seeking behaviours or extreme inhibition
 - Dresses inappropriately to hide bruising or injuries
 - Eating disorders
 - Compulsive behaviours
- Caregiver Indicators:
 - May be unusually over-protective of the child
 - Accuses the child of being sexually provocative
 - Misuses alcohol or drugs
 - Invades the child's privacy (e.g. during dressing, in the bathroom)
 - May favour the victim over other children

Family Violence Indicators

- Indicators in the tamariki or rangatahi:
 - Physical injuries consistent with the indicators of Physical Abuse
 - Absenteeism from school
 - Bullying or aggressive behaviour
 - Complaints of headaches or stomach aches with no apparent medical reason
 - Talking or describing violent behaviours
- Indicators in the Victim:
 - Physical Injuries including: bruising to chest and abdomen, injuries during pregnancy
 - Depression and/or anxiety
 - Inconsistent explanations for injuries
 - Fearful
 - Submissive
- Indicators in the Offender:
 - Isolates and controls partner and children
 - Threatens, criticises, intimidates, uses aggressive and physical abuse towards partner and children
 - Minimises and denies own behaviour, or blames victim for the perpetrators own behaviour

(b) Recording, Reporting and Responding to Suspected Abuse

Children do not generally have the power to stop abuse. They rely on others to help them. We must act in their best interests and take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety. Our legal obligations vary according to differing legislation, but our moral responsibility is to report suspected or disclosed child abuse.

The Church and all individuals must report concerns or allegations of child abuse to the Child Protection Officer at the first possible opportunity to best ensure the safety of the child. If the Child Protection Officer is unavailable, then consultation should occur with the team leader or minister. Through consultation a decision will be made as to whether to notify Oranga Tamariki or the Police. If an immediate response is required to ensure the child's safety, contact should be made with Oranga Tamariki and/or the NZ Police directly".

Child abuse can involve ongoing, repeated or persistent abuse, or it may arise from a single incident.

Child abuse can occur in many different settings and forms and may come to light in a variety of different ways. These can include, but are not limited to:

- Direct or indirect disclosure by the child or someone known to the child;
- Suspicions of abuse by those involved with the child;
- Allegations and/or direct observations or signs displayed in the child's physical or emotional behaviour;
- Direct witnessing of abuse.

When disclosures of abuse come directly from a child, it is important that you take what the child says seriously. This applies irrespective of the setting, or your own opinion on what is being said. When a child tells you what has been happening to them, or when you witness or suspect child abuse, it is important that you, as the adult, remain **calm** and **confident**. It is also possible that an adult may disclose their concerns about abuse happening to a child they know. The steps below will help you respond to any disclosure that a child or adult makes to you, or any concerns that you have for a child's safety.

RESPOND: Respond to the person (adult or child) –Accept without judgement what they tell you and/or what you see. You must:

- stay calm
- listen and hear
- give time to the child or adult to say what they want
- reassure them that they were right to tell
- tell the child or adult that they are being taken seriously and that they are not to blame
- explain that you may have to pass on what the child or adult has told you as soon as you are aware that the child is making a disclosure
- give an age appropriate explanation to a child of what the child can expect to happen next

- Record in writing what was said as soon as possible, using the child's own words where possible.
- Report the concern to the appropriate statutory agency, in consultation with the Child Protection Officer.

You must not:

- make the child repeat the story unnecessarily
- promise to keep secrets
- enquire in to the details of the alleged abuse, this is a specialised job for the Police or Oranga Tamariki
- ask leading questions

SAFETY: Ensure the safety of the child. Always take action in the short term to ensure the immediate safety of the child. This will mean contacting Oranga Tamariki **(0508 326 459)** or the Police **(111)** if you think there is an immediate risk to the child.

RECORD: Record immediately all initial statements, observations and concerns to avoid misinterpretations or confusion at a later date.

CONSULT: Where possible do not make decisions alone unless someone is in immediate danger. Consult with your Child Protection Policy and your Child Protection Officer. If your Child Protection Officer is unavailable, consultation is to occur with a Minister. Oranga Tamariki is always available to give advice. You can also email Oranga Tamariki on contact@ot.govt.nz and they will contact back when one of their staff are able.

REPORT: If you have any concerns, report these immediately to Oranga Tamariki (0508 326 459) or the Police (111). Inform the Child Protection Officer as soon as possible. Oranga Tamariki are going to want to know the child's name and address, and any details about the abuser.

Note: Oranga Tamariki take your safety seriously too. When you report a concern they will ensure that you are not mentioned in any communication with the family being investigated.

RECORD: Record in writing all conversations and actions taken and keep these records securely in the Child Protection Register, this is a confidential paper and or electronic file that only key staff, leaders and your churches Child Protection Officer can have access to. All decisions, including if the concern does not require notifying Oranga Tamariki or the Police, must be recorded in writing and kept securely in the Child Protection Register with the reasons clearly identified and explained. Effective documentation, including referrals and notifications, must include the following:

- A record of facts, including observations, with time and date
- What was said and by whom, using the person's words
- What action has been taken, by whom and when

FOLLOW UP: If you have told the person you believe is responsible for taking action and they do not act, take further action yourself. This includes following up with Oranga Tamariki to ensure appropriate actions are being carried out.

SUPPORT: Seek support for yourself. Responding to a child protection issue can be stressful.

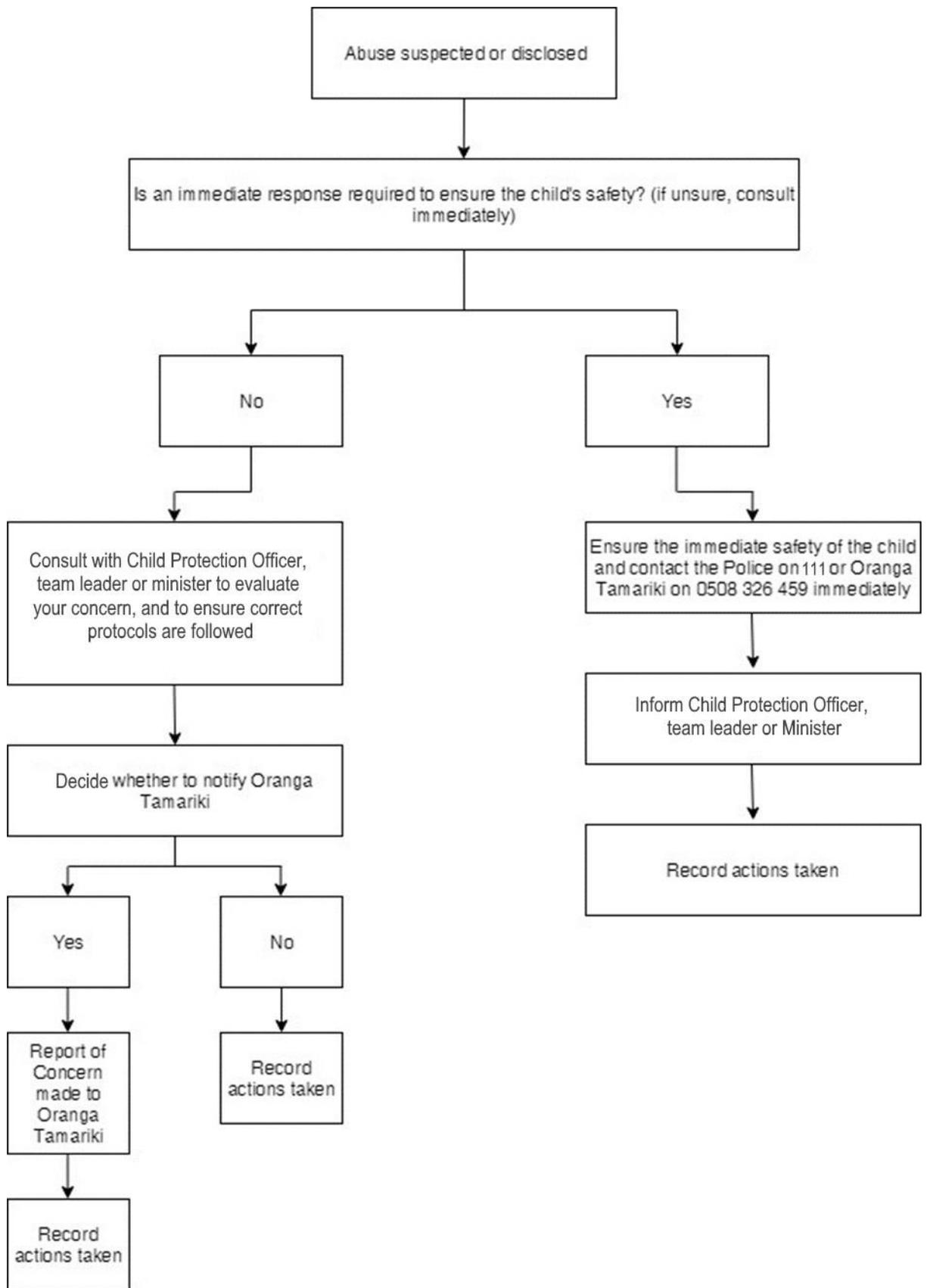
Think “what if I’m right?” Not “what if I’m wrong?”

It's not our job as volunteers, staff, team leaders or as church child protection officers to investigate to decide if abuse really is happening. Our job is simply to report any concerns we have.

It is the job of the Police and Oranga Tamariki to investigate and decide on any appropriate support or actions.

*All concerns or allegations of abuse **must** be reported to Oranga Tamariki and /or the NZ Police.*

Child Protection Procedures Flowchart:



(c) Allegations against Church Leaders

All allegations of abuse against children and young persons must be reported to the Police/Oranga Tamariki. Chapter are. The Church process may need to be initiated if there is a need to ensure the immediate safety of people through the suspension of a minister or leader pursuant to 15.12, however this needs to be undertaken carefully so as not to compromise the Police or Oranga Tamariki process. Other than if immediate action is needed as envisaged in 15.12, internal investigation or collection of evidence should not occur until the police or Oranga Tamariki has concluded their investigation.

(d) Keeping the Family Informed

Although the parent or caregiver of the child will usually be informed of concerns, there may be times when those with parental responsibility may not be initially informed. This may happen in circumstances when:

- the parent or caregiver is the alleged perpetrator
- it is possible that the child may be intimidated into silence
- there is a strong likelihood that evidence will be destroyed
- the child does not want their parent or caregiver involved and they are of an age when they are competent to make that decision”

The PCANZ wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Child Matters in the drafting of material for Appendix C. www.childmatters.org.nz

Appendix D

Offences that make one unsuitable for ministry to young people,
Vulnerable Children Act 2014

1 An offence against any of the following sections of the Crimes Act 1961 is a specified offence for the purpose of Part 3:

- (1) section 98 (dealing in slaves)
- (2) section 98AA (dealing in people under 18 for sexual exploitation)
- (2A) section 124A (indecent communication with young person under 16)
- (3) section 128B (sexual violation)
- (4) section 129 (attempted sexual violation and assault with intent to commit sexual violation)
- (5) section 129A (sexual conduct with consent induced by certain threats)
- (6) section 130 (incest)
- (7) section 131 (sexual conduct with dependent family member)
- (8) section 131B (meeting young person following sexual grooming, etc)
- (9) section 132 (sexual conduct with child under 12)
- (10) section 133 (indecentcy with girl under 12)
- (11) section 134 (sexual conduct with young person under 16)
- (12) section 135 (indecent assault)
- (13) section 138 (sexual exploitation of person with significant impairment)
- (14) section 139 (indecent act between woman and girl)

- (15) section 140 (indecenty with boy under 12)
- (16) section 140A (indecenty with boy between 12 and 16)
- (17) section 141 (indecent assault on man or boy)
- (18) section 142A (compelling indecent act with animal)
- (19) section 143 (bestiality)
- (20) section 144A (sexual conduct with children and young people outside New Zealand)
- (21) section 144C (organising or promoting child sex tours)
- (22) section 154 (abandoning child under 6)
- (23) section 172 (punishment of murder) (24)
- section 173 (attempt to murder)
- (25) section 177 (punishment of manslaughter)
- (26) section 178 (infanticide)
- (27) section 182 (killing of unborn child)
- (28) section 188 (wounding with intent)
- (29) section 189(1) (injuring with intent to cause grievous bodily harm)
- (30) section 191 (aggravated wounding or injury)
- (31) section 194(a) (assault on child)
- (32) section 195 (ill-treatment or neglect of child or vulnerable adult)
- (33) section 195A (failure to protect child or vulnerable adult)
- (34) section 198 (discharging firearm or doing dangerous act with intent)
- (35) section 204A (female genital mutilation)
- (36) section 204B (further offences relating to female genital mutilation)
- (37) section 208 (abduction for purposes of marriage or sexual connection)
- (38) section 209 (kidnapping)
- (39) section 210 (abduction of young person under 16)

Appendix 4

Children's and Youth Ministry Code of Ethics

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION TO THE BOOK OF ORDER

Issued by the Council of Assembly
23 November 2019

*Adapted with permission from the Ara Taiohi Youth Workers Code of Ethics.
Key changes are indicated in italics*

RELATIONSHIP - QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS – WHANAUNGATANGA
"HOW CAN WE STRENGTHEN THE RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE WITH THIS CHILD OR
YOUNG PERSON, AND BUILD GREATER TRUST WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY?"

1. Te Kawenga - Your Primary Relationship

- 1.1 In the children's and youth ministry context, taking into account the youth leader's legal obligations, cultural considerations, obligations to the whānau/family and despite the many competing demands on them, the leader's primary relationship is with the children and young person they engage with.
- 1.2 The ministry relationship begins when the leader engages with the child or young person as a leader, and ceases by necessity or by agreement (expressed or implied). The seamless nature of ministry is acknowledged and leaders will manage transitioning between different forms of relationship with care.
- 1.3 Where a conflict of interest exists between more than one child or young person, it will be resolved in ways which minimise harm to all parties, but with particular consideration to those least advantaged by the outcome.

2. Wehenga Tūmanako - Behaviour

- 2.1 Leaders will be positive role models. This Code covers any behaviour, whether connected to their work or personal time, when it relates to or affects a leader's practice.

3. Ārahitanga - Your Conduct

- 3.1 Leaders will perform their work honestly and impartially, and avoid situations which might compromise their integrity.
- 3.2 Leaders will carry out their work in an efficient and competent manner.

- 3.3 Leaders will avoid words and actions (e.g. dress, flirting, offensive language, put-downs, body language, and unnecessary or inappropriate touch) that could be misunderstood or cause offence.
- 3.4 Leaders should avoid activities which would bring children, young people, fellow leaders, their organisation, or ministry into disrepute.
- 3.5 Should a leader be in a situation that may be considered unethical, they will notify the people they are accountable to, look at ways to minimise any negative consequences, and put in place strategies to avoid similar situations in the future.

4. Puatatanga - Being Transparent

- 4.1 Leaders will be open, honest and accountable to children and young people.
- 4.2 Where a programme and/or organisation operates from a particular value basis, this will be clearly stated.
- 4.3 Leaders recognise they may be in situations with children or young people which could leave either party vulnerable. Leaders will be open and honest with their supervisor, their organisation, colleagues and appropriate others about these situations and work to generate preferable alternatives.

5. Whakaae Tika - Obtaining Informed Consent

- 5.1 Leaders will fully inform children and young people (and their whānau, school or employer where appropriate) of the ministry they are offering and the nature of any proposed involvement, including any significant risk(s).
- 5.2 It is important to obtain informed consent from the appropriate person to participate or cease their involvement in children's or youth ministry and this may need to be written. For specialised activities, with moderate to high risk, written informed consent must be obtained.
- 5.3 Leaders will fully inform children, young people and guardians of their rights regarding complaints processes.

6. Noho Matatapu - Confidentiality

- 6.1 The child or young person's ability to trust the leader to hold information in confidence is fundamental to the relationship.
- 6.2 When it is clear that confidences might be shared, the leader will explain the boundaries of confidentiality. These boundaries will take into account the requirements of their organisation, the child or young person's culture, understanding, and the setting the ministry is carried out in (such as rural and specific cultural communities).
- 6.3 Limits to confidentiality, which may lead to disclosure, apply when:
- The child, young person or someone else is in danger
 - There is an emergency situation
 - It is required by legislation or the courts
 - The child or young person is incapable of consenting.

- 6.4 When information is disclosed, the leader will endeavour to obtain the child or young person's permission, ideally working with the child or young person to do so. Where this is not possible leaders will inform the child or young person of any disclosure.
- 6.5 Where information is disclosed, only the minimum required for the purpose should be given.
- 6.6 Leaders will comply with the Privacy Act 1993, and in particular will ensure collection, storage, access, correction, use and disclosure of information is dealt with in accordance with this Act.

7. Āhua Tika - Boundaries

- 7.1 Leaders will create and maintain culturally and age-appropriate physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual boundaries. Leaders have an ethical responsibility to hold each other accountable in this regard.
- 7.2 The purpose of this is to:
- Ensure a safe space for all
 - Build confidence in their role as a leader
 - Avoid unhealthy, dependent relationships.
- 7.3 Leaders will endeavour to ensure that young people understand the limits and boundaries of the relationship.
- 7.4 Leaders have a personal responsibility to process boundary issues with their support network, including within supervision.

8. Manatū Tangata - Sexual Boundaries

- 8.1 Sexuality is an integral part of human development. Leaders need to promote positive attitudes to sexuality and relationships, respecting the child and young person's needs, values and beliefs, with consideration to the child or young person's whānau and cultural environment.
- 8.2 The relational nature of ministry makes it a high-risk practice. The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, both in the ministry environment and relationship.
- 8.3 Leaders will be aware of compromising thoughts or situations and ensure that strategies are in place to help them deal safely with these situations.
- 8.4 Sexual acts between leaders and children and young people they connect with in their capacity as a leader are never acceptable.
- 8.5 Leaders will not enter into a romantic relationship with a child or young person during the time they are working together.
- 8.6 In the youth work setting, once the youth work relationship has finished, youth leaders will not enter into a romantic and/or sexual relationship until the power relationship is determined to no longer influence personal decision making. This decision will be made in consultation with their support network, including supervision.
- 8.7 Sexual acts are never a valid form of therapy, education or assistance.

- 8.8 Leaders will not engage in sexual harassment; nor will they tolerate sexual harassment of others (sexual harassment as defined in the Human Rights Act 1993 is acknowledged).

9. Noatanga - Knowing Your Limits

- 9.1 The leader's relationship has limitations.
- 9.2 Leaders have a responsibility to be conscious of the limits of their role, skills and competencies, and must carefully consider whether they can take on a particular role or task.
- 9.3 In situations beyond their role and/or skill-base, leaders will refer to and/or seek assistance from networks available in the wider community. They also have a responsibility to follow up a referral a short time after it is made.

10. Utu Painga - Personal Agendas

- 10.1 Leaders will not abuse their ministry relationships for personal, professional, political or financial gain.
- 10.2 While leaders may agree or disagree with other's beliefs, values, priorities and behaviour, they will treat all people with respect and dignity.
- 10.3 Leaders will not abuse their position to manipulate children or young people to their political, religious, ethnic or cultural beliefs, or to specific communities.
- 10.4 *Religious instruction must be carried out in a manner that is appropriate to the context and setting.*

11. Ahua Korero, Ahua Taonga - Exchanges between Children or Young People and Leaders

- 11.1 Any exchanges between children and young people and leaders will be transparent and handled with sensitivity (acknowledging gifts/koha usually have emotional and/or cultural significance).
- 11.2 Giving and receiving of cash should be approached with caution.
- 11.3 Leaders will be aware of issues of dependency, favouritism, corruption and rescuing in this context.

12. Ahua me te Oranga - Diversity and Cultural Safety

- 12.1 The ministry relationship is one of mutual respect.
- 12.2 Leaders will understand that all aspects of children and young people's lives are influenced by the values of the cultural contexts they belong to. A child or young person's cultural context can be centred around:
- Geographical community (e.g. their home, neighbourhood, place of study, work place, marae or church)
 - Identity-/whakapapa-based community (e.g. culture, ethnicity, marae, iwi, hapū, whānau, spirituality or faith, their gender or gender identity, sexuality, or people of mixed abilities)
 - Community of interest (e.g. various youth subcultures, children and youth organisations).

- 12.3 Leaders are encouraged to reflect on and seek to understand their own cultural contexts and those of the children and young people they work with, and to be aware of how these relate to each other.
- 12.4 When conflict exists between the cultures of the leader and the child or young person, the leader will do everything in their power to ensure the most appropriate people and/or organisations are involved. Leaders will ensure their practice remains equitable and effective.
- 12.5 When working with children or young people leaders will respect the child and youth development practices of the child or young person's culture.
- 12.6 Leaders will allow children and young people to express their identity freely and safely with consideration to family, whānau and their social environment.
- 12.7 Leaders acknowledge and will challenge the attitudes, beliefs, policies and practices that act as barriers to safe ministry and undermine children and young people and their culture.

ENVIRONMENT - THE WORLD OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - TE AO RANGATAHI

"How does our and this person's environment; beliefs, values, socio-economic and political contexts etc. influence and inform the way we do the ministry that we do?"

13. Ōu Tikanga Rights and Responsibilities

1

- 3.1 Leaders acknowledge the provisions of:
 - Te Tiriti o Waitangi
 - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
 - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
 - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Human Rights Act 1993
 - New Zealand Bill of Rights
 - Children Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989.
- 13.2 Children and young people, particularly those belonging to under-represented or marginalised groups, are vulnerable to being taken advantage of. Leaders will respect the rights of children and young people they work with, and encourage them to respect the rights of others.
- 13.3 Leaders will not unlawfully discriminate against children and young people for any reason, including those contained in the Human Rights Act 1993.
- 13.4 Leaders will be aware of the rights and responsibilities of Tangata Whenua to practice indigenous models of child and youth development.

14. Ngā Mahi Ora Safe Practice

- 14.1 It is a Leader's responsibility to maintain the safety of children and young people in any service, programme, event or activity provided.
- 14.2 Leaders will adhere to the provisions of the Health and Safety in Employment Act 2015.

- 14.3 Leaders and their organisations will ensure that appropriate Risk Management procedures, systems and paperwork are completed for services, programmes, events or activities organised for and with children and young people.
- 14.4 Specialised activities with moderate to high risk must have:
- A worker, volunteer or external contractor with appropriate qualifications or proven experience pertaining to the activity
 - A written agreement entered into specifying who is responsible for what risks, and at what point risk transfer happens.

15. Kawenga Agents of Change

- 15.1 Leaders will recognise the impact of social, political, economic and cultural structures on children and young people and seek to remove barriers that restrict life opportunities for children and young people.
- 15.2 Ministry is not limited to facilitating change within the individual young person, but extends to the social context in which the child or young person lives.

STRENGTHS-BASED - HAKAMANATIA NGA UARA RANGATAHI "HOW CAN WE UTILISE AND DEVELOP THIS CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON'S STRENGTHS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS?"

16 Hakapakaritanga - Working Holistically

- 16.1 Leaders will work holistically with children and young people. Leaders will support the healthy development of children and young people, including their social, emotional, mental, physical, spiritual, whānau and cultural skills. Leaders will support children and young people to identify and develop their strengths, encouraging them to reach their full potential.
- 16.2 Leaders will seek to be inclusive and ensure accessibility of Child and Youth Work services, programmes, events or activities to all. Leaders will take all reasonable steps to ensure accessibility of programmes and activities for those with mixed abilities.
- 16.3 Leaders will identify and promote the strengths of the traditions and inspirational people within the cultures of the children and young people they work with.

17. Āhua Pononga - Working Positively

- 17.1 Children and young people are an integral part of our society. Leaders seek to have this acknowledged and valued by society as a whole.
- 17.2 Leaders do not see children and young people as problems to be solved, and will avoid labelling children and young people negatively.
- 17.3 Leaders acknowledge the impact of risk factors on children and young people. They will seek to develop protective factors to build resiliency, enabling them to fulfil their potential.

18. Tiakitanga - Looking After Yourself

18.1 Ethical practice is based on the social, emotional, mental, physical, spiritual, whānau and cultural wellbeing of leaders. This allows leaders to develop their full potential and equips them to best serve children and young people.

18.2 Leaders and their organisation must take responsibility for the leader's overall well-being.

19. Whakahaeretanga – Supervision (*Especially relevant to paid workers*)

19.1 Supervision provides ministry workers with a safe place to reflect on professional development, personal support, organisational and practice issues with the purpose of providing increased effectiveness, safety and accountability for their practice.

19.2 Ministry workers will actively participate in regular supervision (such as individual, group, tandem, peer, or team supervision) with skilled supervisors within the organisation and/or external to it.

19.3 Other forms of supervision, such as cultural or spiritual, are vital processes for the development of the leaders' personal, cultural, spiritual and professional development and to ensure accountability in that context. Leaders will access this where appropriate.

19.4 Supervision will be resourced and initiated by the employee's organisation. Employees have the right to negotiate who their supervisor/s are.

20. Matatau Personal Awareness

20.1 Leaders will actively reflect on their practice with others and maintain support from supervision and co-leaders.

20.2 Leaders will be aware of any physical or personal circumstances that may affect their ability to work safely and effectively.

20.3 Leaders will approach differences in others with respect.

20.4 Leaders will understand and reflect on the impact that their own culture, values, attitudes and beliefs have on children and young people. Where there is a conflict, a leader may refer the child or young person to a more appropriate support person, however the relationship with the child or young person should be maintained during this process.

PARTICIPATION - URUNGA - YOUTH PARTICIPATION

“HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE THIS CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON TO BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN SHAPING AND CONTRIBUTING THE MINISTRY THEY ARE INVOLVED IN?”

21. Hiringa Personal Determination

21.1 Leaders will support Tangata Whenua to care for their rangatahi.

21.2 Leaders, with the involvement of appropriate others in the child or young person's community, will encourage and enable children and young people to identify their own strategies to deal with challenges and the direction of their lives.

- 21.3 If a child or young person lacks capacity, or is otherwise unable to act with self-determination, there is a responsibility to protect the child or young person's rights and welfare.

22. Hakamanatia Empowerment

- 22.1 Leaders, as part of the child or young person's wider community, seek to empower children or young people, ensuring they have a greater say in decisions that affect them and the world around them.
- 22.2 Leaders will use their experience and skills to ensure children and young people are equipped to make positive choices.
- 22.3 Leaders encourage children and young people to exercise genuine power to consider risk, make decisions, follow them through and to take responsibility for their consequences.
- 22.4 Leaders will be resourceful in providing opportunities for children and young people to help shape their lives.

NETWORKING - MAKING KEY CONNECTIONS - HONONGA "WHO ARE THE OTHER PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS THIS CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON NEEDS IN THEIR LIFE TO SUCCEED?"

23. Papakāinga - Ensuring Key Connections

- 23.1 Leaders will endeavour to relate to, create, strengthen and maintain children or young people's connections to their key social environments.
- 23.2 Leaders will recognise and honour the importance of the relationship with whakapapa through whānau, marae, hapū and iwi when working with Tangata Whenua.
- 23.3 Leaders will recognise the importance of whānau and the complex nature of these relationships. Leaders seek to strengthen the relationship between children and young people and their whānau.
- 23.4 Leaders balance the importance of whānau with the child or young person's need to work towards independence (e.g. when working with children or young people of mixed abilities).

24. Tautauamoā - Working Collaboratively

- 24.1 Leaders will respect and co-operate with other professionals and/or other significant people involved in the child or young person's life to secure the best possible outcomes for the children or young people they engage with. There may be issues of confidentiality to take into account.
- 24.2 Where an organisation contracts or invites an individual or agency for a specific purpose (e.g. outdoor recreation, facilitation etc.) there will be clear communication between the two regarding expectations.
- 24.3 Leaders will network and build relationships with other leaders in order to gain collegial support and to share experiences, skills and knowledge.
- 24.4 Leaders will connect with and strengthen networks with other key groups that contribute towards children and young people's development.

- 24.5 Leaders will relate to others in the community with integrity, respect, courtesy, openness and honesty.
- 24.6 Leaders will seek guidance from tangata whenua with regard to working with rangatahi.
- 24.7 Where there is concern regarding a leader's practice that is too serious to be resolved by discussion it must be brought to the attention of the appropriate bodies.

DATA - GOOD INFORMATION - HAKAMANATIA TE WHANAKETANGA
"WHAT INFORMATION DO WE NEED TO HELP US MAKE THE BEST DECISIONS AND ACTIONS POSSIBLE FOR THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WE SERVE?"

25. Māramatia Aotearoa - Understanding Aotearoa New Zealand

- 25.1 Leaders will take personal responsibility to participate in ongoing training on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Te Reo me ona Tikanga Māori, and apply this learning where appropriate.
- 25.2 Leaders will acknowledge our shared histories and past and present power relationships between different groups of people in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 25.3 Leaders will acknowledge there is a unique relationship between Tikanga Māori and good child and youth development practice in Aotearoa New Zealand - and will recognise the important role this relationship can play in nation-building.
- 25.4 Leaders will acknowledge the importance of whakapapa and will explore their own cultural heritage.
- 25.5 Leaders have an obligation to acquire legal knowledge, including Acts of Parliament, public policies and strategies that impact on children and young people.

26. Mana Akoranga - Training and Professional Development

- 26.1 Leaders will make it a priority to participate in formal and informal training and professional development (e.g. courses, forums, conferences and debates) to enhance and support their practice. It is recognised that needs vary and access to training opportunities can be limited.
- 26.2 Leaders will develop their practice by regularly reflecting on attitudes and methods, and seeking feedback from children and young people, their organisation and other professionals. They will be open to new knowledge, theories and practices.
- 26.3 Ministry workers are encouraged to consider and reflect on their long-term career path.
- 26.4 Leaders will have knowledge and understanding of this Code of Ethics and how it applies to their work.

27. Rangahau me Wāriutanga - Research and Evaluation

- 27.1 Good ministry is informed by relevant research and evidence. Leaders will source local, national and international research that will enhance their knowledge and skill base.

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- 27.2 Leaders will ensure their work is evaluated (this may be formal or informal) to promote ongoing learning and improvement.

Appendix Five: Servant Mission Leadership

The following paper on Leadership for Mission has been downloaded from the PCANZ web site: www.presbyterian.org.nz

Introduction

God invites the church to join with God's mission in the world. The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand has made the development of healthy congregations a priority so it may work more effectively with God in this mission.

To achieve this our Church has identified the need for good leadership. Servant mission leadership is one way of describing the kind of leadership our Church believes it needs. Understanding more clearly what this phrase means will help us identify potential leaders and equip them to exercise leadership more effectively.

Servant mission leadership may mean different things to different people. How you think about it will relate to the community you belong to. But it has some core features we can agree on. Broadly speaking, it refers to the style of leadership and to the direction that leadership takes. More specifically, leadership is about vision, accountability, character and variety.

It's about Vision

The job of the leader is not to serve exclusively the people of the congregation or the organisation called the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. It is to work with others in serving the *mission* of God.

This mission is the 'vision' that informs the plans for the future of a congregation. It is a vision of life in all its fullness for both humankind and creation, grounded in the good news and mission of Jesus Christ, and it involves, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, interpreting and extending the Presbyterian Church's place in that mission.

This vision includes:

- the ability to tell the difference between what is of God and what is the latest fashion
- the ability to communicate in ways that make sense in today's world
- respect for tradition coupled with an eagerness to usher in the Church of the future creativity that is neither gimmicky nor trite
-

perseverance especially when the going gets tough

It's about Accountability

Leaders know they are answerable for their actions, and that there is value in giving an account of their actions. They also know that mutual accountability strengthens the Church and enhances the vigour of its mission.

As a result they will:

- exercise their leadership in a professional
- manner adhere to the Church's code of
- ethics
- be committed to ongoing learning
- seek an appropriate level of supervision

It's about Character

Leadership is not only a matter of having the right skills, important as these are. It is also about having the right character and spirit. It's about trustworthiness. This implies a life of personal faith and prayer that enables leaders to grow in the likeness of Christ and to draw upon Christ's wisdom and strength for the task of leadership. Paul encouraged the Church at Philippi to "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ" (Philippians 2:5). He then identified humility, integrity, servant hood, and obedience to the mission and will of God as part of the character of Christ.

Trustworthy leadership will show among other things:

- an appropriate use of power that avoids its misuse and
- abuse authority without becoming authoritarian
- a reconciling ministry, willing to be decisive without being divisive, determined to
- advocate for those whose voice is not being heard
- faithful stewardship of the resources available for mission

It's About Variety

Parish ministry has often assumed that ministers of Word and Sacrament have the responsibility of leadership in the Church. This belief is reinforced by a distinction often drawn between clergy and lay people. This distinction is not grounded either in Scripture or the Reformed Tradition of which our Church is part.

In the Presbyterian Church, leadership doesn't stop with the people who are ordained, ministers or elders. Leadership is a gift and a responsibility given to many within the Church community including youth leaders, APW leaders, and those leading home-groups.

- Much Christian leadership is also exercised in the wider community. The New Testament doesn't distinguish between ministries in the Church and the wider world. Everyone has their own calling, depending on their gifts. Ministry of Word and Sacrament, which serves as a guardian of the gospel, is one among these many ministries. All the Church's leaders are invited to exercise leadership.

Summary

Although it will take different forms in different contexts, some characteristics lie at the heart of our leadership vision:

- it reflects a contemporary **vision** of the mission of Jesus Christ

it is appropriate and **accountable** to the gospel

it reflects a **character** built on personal faith

it can be practiced by anyone within the **variety** of church leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Appendix Six: A Sample Strategic Planning Exercise

There are many different ways of undertaking a strategic planning process. Here is one such approach, broken down into five easy steps.

Start by generating a brief summary statement about who you are as a church and what sort of community you believe God is calling you to be in Jesus Christ. This is your mission statement.

The mission statement should be consistent with the PCANZ's mission statement, which is stated in terms of making Jesus Christ known through: (1) nurturing and teaching; (2) loving service; (3) proclaiming the Gospel; (4) transforming society; and (5) caring for creation.

Here is an example:

We are a community being shaped and guided by Holy Spirit to be:

- A *gathered* community. We are drawn together in all our variety to joyfully worship one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- A *learning* community. We seek to follow the way of Jesus, grow in our understanding of the Bible and extend the outworking of our faith.
- A *caring* community. We are committed to the well-being of those who suffer in body, mind or spirit.
- A *sent* community. We yearn for the liberating message of God's kingdom to heal and transform lives and, indeed, all creation; and that yearning influences our choices, commitments and priorities as we share in God's reconciling work.

Note how the above mission statement consists of four main (interrelated) areas of activity: worship; education and faith formation; pastoral care; and mission and outreach. Of course, these divisions are rather arbitrary, for it can be rightly pointed out that mission is not just one activity among many; rather, it describes and underpins everything we do.

Nevertheless, the categories serve the task at hand.

The second step is to describe your church's commitments and priorities under each of those headings. Each statement should be both descriptive (of what is important to you) and aspirational (what you aspire to be and do).

For example, under the category of worship, there might be a statement along the following lines:

Excellence in worship and music is important to us, as is a strong preaching tradition. We believe that the act of public worship should be informed by sound biblical and theological principles, which include a balance between form and freedom, the integration of word and sacrament, the connection between liturgy and life, and the involvement of the whole people of God. At the same time, we recognise that styles of music and worship change over time and vary according to context, and that not

everyone worships God in the same way. This means that traditional forms of worship must be supplemented by fresh expressions that draw upon a wide range of musical sources and will encourage a breadth of interaction and congregational participation across all ages. To this end, we encourage variety and creativity whilst maintaining the integrity and core principles of Christian worship. We further rejoice that our congregation is more ethnically diverse than ever before, and we are committed to finding ways to allow this diversity to enrich our worship.

The third step is to brainstorm and prayerfully discern what fresh commitments might be entered into and what new opportunities might be explored. These will be quite specific and will arise out of your own particular context. Here is an example of a checklist of ideas, again under the heading of worship:

1. Conduct a series of studies on the nature of Christian worship, noting in particular current trends, and identifying issues that merit further reflection – e.g., the frequency of the celebration of Holy Communion.
2. Review the physical layout of the church. How might our worship space better serve the principles and dynamics of worship that we believe are important?
3. Build up our pool of people involved in the conduct of public worship, especially in the area of music. Hold training workshops as needed – e.g., in the art of leading a congregation in prayer.
4. Build up our pool of music resources and extend our repertoire of hymns and worship songs, giving particular attention to our New Zealand and Pacific context.
5. Building upon our linkages with organisations in our area, look for worshipping opportunities both on- and off-site—e.g., offering regular devotions and/or worship services in a local retirement home.
6. Organise kids-friendly Christmas and Easter worship services for the Mainly Music Group and their families.
7. Talk with other local churches about extending the range of opportunities for shared worship events.
8. Trial a brief mid-week communion service.

The fourth step is to rank the above possibilities in terms of priority, agree on the level of resourcing needed (money, facilities and personnel), and decide who will take responsibility for what and over what sort of timeframe.

The fifth step is to monitor progress, at least annually, but preferably every six months. Progress should be recorded in the annual reports.

The strategic plan should be reviewed every three years or so.

Appendix Seven: Tips and Techniques for Chairing or Moderating a Meeting

Duration: Few meetings should need to go for longer than two hours. If more time is needed, consider deferring business to the next scheduled meeting or set up an extra meeting.

Who should moderate the meeting?

The minister is expected to “moderate” the church council. The reason for this is theological: There is no aspect of parish life that should not be informed by and come under the oversight of the Ministry of the Word. When the minister is in the chair, he or she should be referred to as “Moderator”. Moderating a meeting carries two responsibilities: facilitating or chairing the meeting; and maintaining pastoral oversight.

The minister may nominate someone else to chair the meeting in his/her absence.

How to keep meetings to time:

1. **Agenda:** Plan the Agenda carefully – decide what needs to be included and the order in which things should be dealt with. Give a time allocation to each item on the Agenda, allocating the most time to the most important items of business.
2. **Distribution of papers:** Ensure all relevant papers and reports have been distributed in advance of the meeting, and create an expectation that council members will read their papers before they come. Undistributed papers can be tabled at the meeting, but may not be discussed, and any recommendations which they contain may not be voted upon.
3. **Speaking protocols:** Each person may speak once to each item of business. They may only speak twice if the Moderator is satisfied that everyone else has had an opportunity to speak.
4. **Keeping a tight rein on General Business:** All items of General Business should be brought to the attention of the Moderator prior to the start of the meeting, and preferably in time to be included on the Agenda. The Moderator should discuss with the person raising the item of General Business the best way of dealing with it – is this the right forum for the item to be dealt with; how urgent is it; does it need a paper to be written and circulated in time for the next meeting? etc.

Ground-rules for discussion:

1. Confidentiality: What is said in committee stays in committee; and papers that pertain to that meeting should remain confidential to committee members unless a decision is made to circulate them more widely.
2. Being bound by decisions: Once a decision is made on a particular matter, even those that spoke and voted against the motion are bound by the decision. They

cannot speak against the decision in another forum, or disclose the fact that they voted against it, unless they have opted to “record their dissent”.

3. Listening with respect to others. This involves allowing others to speak without interruption, avoiding the use of “passive-aggressive” body language (e.g., rolling of eyes), and not using verbal put-downs.

Tips for facilitating discussion:

1. There are two ways to have an issue discussed. The first is to have a motion or recommendation formally moved and seconded and then opened up for discussion – see (2) – (8) below for protocols around this. The second is for a (preliminary or general) discussion to be held prior to a motion being put. Under this model, consensus is aimed for by discussion, and then the moderator asks if someone would like to formulate a motion which they think reflects the consensus that was reached. The motion might be modified through further discussion or by the amendment process, and then voted on.
2. Make it clear at the beginning of a discussion what is the issue, recommendation or motion under consideration. When the time is right, someone should formally move the recommendation; another person should second it; and it should then be opened up for discussion and debate. If no one seconds the motion then there is no need to proceed with the discussion. Sometimes a person will second a motion not because they personally support it but because they want to allow it to be discussed.
3. Encourage people to keep their comments brief and to the point. Where somebody is rambling, politely interrupt, say that time is limited, and ask them to get to the point.
4. Provide opportunity for those who have not yet spoken to do so.
5. At some point in the discussion you may want to ask those who have already spoken to refrain from speaking again until others have had a chance to speak.
6. If several people in a row (say, three) have spoken either for against a particular motion, ask if anyone who has a contrary view would like to speak. If no one comes forth, there is probably no need for further discussion and the motion can be put.
7. If, at the end of the discussion, people are not ready to put the motion to the vote, the report can be left to “lie on the table”, for it to be picked up for further discussion at a subsequent meeting. Don’t feel obliged to vote straight after the discussion. The thing about discernment is that you don’t need to always rush things. Occasionally you will have to make decisions quickly, but much of what comes before church councils could wait one or two meetings to let things sift out through prayerful consideration of the key issues. Elders and council members can be encouraged to stop and pray at any point in the discussion or voting process. The minister can suggest a pause for prayer, and so can an elder. Sometimes a pause to pray for God’s guidance in the discussion can slow things down enough that new ideas emerge.

8. Occasionally a person may say, “Moderator, I move that the motion be put.” This is a procedural motion. It usually means someone feels there has been enough discussion, but sometimes it is used to try to circumvent discussion. If the motion is seconded it should be put straight to the vote without debate.

Receiving apologies:

People who cannot attend the meeting are entitled to have their “apology” recorded. Absentee people who do not give their apology cannot subsequently question a decision with which they might personally disagree. Those who give their apologies can.

Conflicts of interest:

Where a conflict of interest is declared or determined, the Moderator shall formally note the conflict, and have it recorded in the minutes, and either invite the elder or council member to leave the meeting during that item of business or require the elder or council member to remain silent and not be a party to any resolution.

Two types of motions:

There are two types of motions: those that deal with the business itself (“substantive motions”) and those that deal with the way the meeting is run (“procedural motions”). Each motion has to be supported (“seconded”) by another person before it is open for discussion. The Moderator then asks the proposer to speak to the motion. Other members can add to this discussion. The proposer of a substantive motion is normally given a “right of reply” at the end of the discussion and just before the vote is put.

During the course of discussion, someone may move an amendment to the original motion. If someone seconds the amendment, then the amendment is debated. If the amendment is passed, then the amended motion becomes the new substantive motion, which is then opened up for further debate. If the amendment is lost, then debate continues on the original substantive motion.

Debate on an amendment may be avoided if the mover of the original substantive motion declares that they regard the proposed amendment as a “friendly amendment”.

Unlike the mover of a substantive motion, the mover of an amendment does not have a right of reply.

Forms of voting:

For most items of business a verbal “yes” or “no” will suffice. If the vote is close, it is advisable to vote again via a show of hands. On particularly important or sensitive issues, it is advisable to vote by way of secret ballot. Ballot papers should be prepared beforehand, and at least two “scrutineers” should be appointed to collect the ballot papers and count the votes.

Proxy or absentee votes are not allowed in any of the church courts, including congregational meetings. Discernment involves listening to what the Spirit is saying through discussion and debate. How can you do that if you've already decided what your vote will be? It is for this reason that Assembly attendees are called "commissioners", not "delegates". The role of the commissioner is to discern what the Spirit is saying, not merely represent a particular constituency or view point.

Determining the voting threshold:

At the General Assembly the voting threshold for a motion to be passed is 60% rather than a "simple majority" of 50%. Many church councils have chosen to adopt the same or even higher threshold. It is advisable to know what the threshold is before a debate on a contentious issue takes place.

Types of decisions:

People can vote on a recommendation or motion in one of four ways: (1) For (in agreement); (2) Against; (3) Abstain; (4) Against, and record their dissent.

Abstaining means you adopt a neutral position. Reasons for this could be that you don't feel you have enough information on the issue being discussed, or that you have a conflict of interest.

If someone chooses to record their dissent, they must give their reasons for dissent in writing, and these are appended to the Minutes of the meeting. The mover of the motion should also be given the opportunity to offer a written response to the reasons for dissent, and this statement will also be appended to the Minutes. Note: Even in dissenting an elder should always seek to preserve the unity of the church; dissenting does not mean you can then lobby or canvas opinion or fuel dissent within the parish.

Keeping minutes and recording discussions:

The formal record of a meeting is called the Minutes. Keeping accurate Minutes is important. The Minutes of the previous meeting should be circulated with the papers for the current meeting. Someone should move, and another person second, that the Minutes of the previous meeting are accepted as a true and correct record. Both the mover and the seconder must have been at that meeting.

If everyone votes in favour of the motion, it should be recorded in the Minutes as "Agreed", which means it is unanimous.

If the majority of people vote in favour of the motion, it should be recorded as "Carried".

If the majority of people vote against the motion, it should be recorded as "Lost".

There is no need to record verbatim comments of everyone who contributed to a discussion. Simply record the motion, the fact that it was moved and seconded, and the outcome of the vote – “Agreed”, “Carried” or “Lost”. Occasionally a summary of the key points in the discussion is helpful, but keep the detail to a minimum.

Communicating decisions:

Thought should be given as to what should be communicated about a meeting, to whom, what format, and when. A written report is always preferable to simply making the Minutes available, because a report is in narrative form and allows the context of a decision to be described.

Example of a Session Agenda:

Opening Devotions & constitution of the meeting in prayer (10 mins)

Apologies

Personal sharing and prayer support (10 mins)

Pastoral concerns and time of prayer (10 mins)

Theme discussion⁵ (30 mins)

Approval of Minutes from previous meeting

Matters Arising (from the Minutes)

Correspondence: Receipt of inwards & approval of outwards

Reports:

 From the Minister(s)

 From the Board of Managers or Administration Committee

 From the Session Committees

General Business

Date of next meeting

Benediction

Keeping it relational:

1. Depending on the time of the meeting, think about preceding or following it with food and fellowship.
2. Aim to be efficient without being clinical; don't hide behind technical points of procedure. Remember, the primary task of the church council is to discern what the Spirit is saying. Don't become so preoccupied with moving through the items of business that you leave no room for prayer and for waiting on God.
3. Keep one eye focused on the business of the meeting; use your other eye to observe pastoral dynamics (Who is saying little, and why? What will be the likely effect of a

⁵ The “theme discussion” could consist of any number of things: a remit from the General Assembly; a biblical or theological issue; a strategic planning issue; a significant business item from one of the reports; an aspect of training for elders; etc.

particular decision on those who hold a minority view? Should we stop and pray for a few minutes to slow down the discussion, reduce the intensity of the conversation or ask for God's guidance? Would it be a good idea to wait until the next meeting to vote?).

4. If tensions become apparent in the meeting, think about how best to handle them. Techniques might include verbal acknowledgement of the tensions, leading in a time of prayer, or asking people to take a 5 minute break while you get alongside those who seem especially worked up about the matter under discussion.
5. Ask if those who hold a minority view on an issue can live with the decision of the majority. Living with a particular decision is not the same as endorsing the decision. In most cases, people will say they can. If they say they cannot, then you can arrange to meet with them to talk about how they process their disappointment in a constructive way.

Appendix Eight: An Order of Service for the Ordination and Induction of Elders

The following liturgy is based on the Church of Scotland's Book of Common Order (1994) and Appendices H-5 and H-9 of the PCANZ's old Book of Order.

The ordination and induction takes place during a public service of worship, at an appropriate point, preferably after the sermon.

Congregational responses are in bold type and italics.

Prologue (based on 1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

There are many gifts,

but it is the same Spirit who give them.

There are different ways of serving God,

but it is the same Lord who is served.

God works through different people in different ways,

but it is the same God whose purposes are achieved through them all.

Each one is given a gift by the Spirit,

to use it for the common good.

We have the joy of using our gifts as members of the Church of Christ, which is his body continuing his ministry in the world today.

Those who are chosen for the office of eldership are asked to seek the fruit of God's Word in people's lives, to care for God's people and encourage them in the Faith, and to exercise spiritual oversight and leadership within the congregation.

A brief narrative of the process followed for the election of new elders shall be given by the minister/Moderator or the session/church council clerk.

Preamble

In the name of the risen and ascended Lord,
who gives gifts for building up the body of Christ
and sharing in God's mission,
we are gathered ...

either

to ordain A,B,C, and D
to the office of eldership
and to induct them as elders in this congregation.

or

to ordain A,B,C, and D

to the office of eldership
and to induct them,
together with E,F,G, and H
as elders in this congregation.

or

to induct E,F,G, and H
as elders in this congregation.

In this act,
the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand,
as part of the holy catholic or universal Church,
worshipping one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
affirms anew its belief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
and, through the power of the Holy Spirit,
commits itself afresh to sharing in his life and mission.

We acknowledge the Word of God,
which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,
to be the supreme rule of faith and life.

We hold as our subordinate standards the Westminster Confession of Faith,
the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and Kupu Whakapono.

We recognise liberty of opinion on such points of doctrine
as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith,
and claim the right,
in dependence on the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit,
to formulate, interpret, or modify our subordinate standards;
always in agreement with the Word of God
and the fundamental doctrines of the Reformed Faith
contained in the subordinate standards,
of which agreement the Church itself shall be sole judge.

Affirmation

The Moderator/minister says to the elders-elect:

In view of this Declaration, you are now required to answer these questions:

Do you undertake, with God's help,
the office and ministry of elder,
encouraging people in the Faith,
exercising spiritual oversight, leadership and discernment,
and remaining diligent in prayer and service.

I do.

Do you believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith

contained in the standards of this Church;
do you promise to seek the unity and peace of this Church,
to uphold the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline thereof,
and to take your due part in the administration of its affairs?

I do.

The Lord bless you and enable you to keep your promises.

Signing the Formula

The elders-elect may sign the Formula here or at the conclusion of the service. The Formula reads as follows:

I believe in the Word of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and the fundamental doctrines of Christian Faith contained in the Kupu Whakapono and Commentary, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and other subordinate standards of this Church. I accept that liberty of conviction is recognised in this Church but only on such points as do not enter into the fundamental doctrines of Christian faith contained in the Scriptures and subordinate standards. I acknowledge the Presbyterian government of this Church to be agreeable to the Word of God and promise to submit to it. I promise to observe the order and administration of public worship as allowed in this Church.

Prayer

The elders-elect may kneel or stand. Other elders may be invited to gather round. The minister/Moderator prays:

Loving God,
we give you thanks that by your grace you have called
A,B, ... G, and H (or these your servants whom we have named before you)
to lead and care for your people as elders in your Church.
We commend them to you now
as we (ordain and) induct them into the office of eldership.
Grant them the gift of your Holy Spirit
that their hearts may be set on fire with love for you
and for those committed to their care.
Make them pure in heart
as those who have the mind of Christ.
Give them vision to discern your purpose
for the Church and for the world you love.
Keep them faithful to the end in all their service,
that when the chief shepherd appears,
they may receive glory, a crown that never fades.

These things we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Declaration and Welcome

The minister/Moderator says:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the King and the Head of the Church,

(I declare you to have been ordained to the office of the eldership, and)

I induct you as elders in this congregation.

As a sign of our welcome we give you the right hand of fellowship.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The elders follow the minister/Moderator in offering the right hand of fellowship.

Renewal of Commitment

The minister/Moderator says:

Christ calls us all to share in his ministry.

Let us, then, dedicate ourselves anew to his service.

Please stand.

To all:

Members and elders of this congregation:

putting your whole trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord,

do you commit yourselves to love and serve his Church and Kingdom?

We do.

To the congregation:

As members of this congregation,

will you encourage and support your elders,

and remember them in your prayers?

We will.

To the elders:

In your service as elders,

will you seek to be a worthy example

“in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity”

to the people you serve,

God being your helper?

We will.

Prayer

Together:

God of grace,

you have called us to be servants of Christ Jesus,

and to share in his eternal ministry of love and reconciliation.

Renew our enthusiasm; give us joy in your service,

that we may declare your wonderful deeds

and show your love to the world;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The service continues in the customary manner.