



Memorandum

To: Presbytery Clerks, UDC Secretaries, Te Aka Puaho PI Synod
From: Martin Baker AES
CC:
Date: 8 February 2010
Subject: General Assembly 2010

Dear Clerks and Secretaries

There are two matters which I would like to bring to your attention as we make early preparations for the 2010 General Assembly to be held in Christchurch from 11 am on Thursday September 30th to no later than 5 pm on Sunday October 3rd.

1. Presbytery Reform

It is great to hear the stories of presbyteries working together to form new entities that will better serve the life and mission of our Church

The Presbyteries Task Group is conscious that some presbyteries appear to be having difficulty in engaging positively and actively in the reform of presbyteries as agreed to by the 2008 General Assembly. They have raised the concern that some presbyteries have appeared to have decided to opt out of the process.

A decision by the GA is conclusive and binding on the whole Church. From the GA minutes two of the things that are compulsory for presbyteries:

To establish Presbytery Reform Teams for the purposes of implementing the model outlined in the Report, and, that the new model be implemented as soon as practicable.

There is not an option to not engage with this decision. If presbyteries are having difficulty we have set aside some resource that will enable a member of the reform team to meet with the presbytery and support them in this process.

For further advice or help please contact the Convenor of the Reform Team:

The Very Rev Garry Marquand
+64 07 8556608 / m. 027 2345 528
gmarquand@clear.net.nz

2. Please note that the 2006 Book of Order includes changes to two major pre Assembly procedures:

- A. commissioners to Assembly**
- B. bringing proposals to Assembly**

A. Commissioners to Assembly

1. Presbyteries are required to ensure that each congregation has the opportunity to have either a minister or an elder as its commissioner at Assembly, and to ensure that as near as practical the number of ministers equals the number of elders appointed.
2. Presbyteries must decide which church councils are to elect elders, and this is to be done in sufficient time to enable each church council to elect an elder on a date 6 months before Assembly is due to meet. If your presbytery has not already done so, please make this a priority, and advise your church councils as soon as possible.
3. Book of Order proposals formalising a process for school and other chaplains who are ordained ministers to attend the General Assembly will be considered at this General Assembly. In the mean time Presbyteries could try to ensure that 'vacant' parishes, who might otherwise have sent their minister, consider sending a chaplain who is an ordained minister and who may not have attended the previous General Assembly.
4. The '6 month out' date is March 30 2010, and I will be asking then for an indication of how many commissioners (just the numbers at this stage) your presbytery is proposing to send.
5. The previous formula for presbyteries to calculate the number of commissioners to Assembly no longer forms part of the Book of Order.
6. There is provision for youth representatives who are members of the Church, or of a co-operative venture, to be additional members of Assembly. Please advise how many youth representatives you propose to send.
7. I attach a copy of Book of Order clauses 8.17 (Commissioners to Assembly) and 14.5 (Membership of Assembly).
8. Commission forms will be sent out in March. They should be returned to the Assembly Office by 30th June.
9. It is too soon to calculate costs, but the fee for a commissioner is expected to at least match that of 2008, which was \$660. Commissioners' information packs will give firm costings.

B. Submitting proposals to Assembly

Please note that the former procedures of overture, petition and memorial no longer apply.

1. Book of Order Chapter 14.17 explains the legislative function of the General Assembly. Chapter 14.8 (attached) outlines the process for proposals for legislation.
2. If a proposal which has come to your presbytery does not appear to meet the definition of legislation, it may be possible for the proposal to be considered under the provision for References in Chapter 14.22 (attached). Please note that consideration of a reference may be referred to a Commission of Assembly, rather than heard on the floor of the Assembly meeting.
3. If you receive a proposal which does not appear to fit the criteria for either legislation or reference, I suggest the proposal be sent either to the Council of Assembly, or to the appropriate Assembly Sub-committee or Work Group for consideration.
4. Proposals for legislation and proposals by way of reference should be submitted in the following format.

Format for submitting proposals to Assembly

- (a) This proposal for legislation / reference (choose one) is brought to the (insert year) General Assembly by the presbytery/synod/church council of***
- (b) The proposal is that***
- (c) The reasons for the proposal are***
- (d) The recommendation, to be moved by , is:
That***

For references, please ensure the form is accompanied by the documentation listed in Chapter 14.22.

With warm regards

Martin Baker

Assembly Executive Secretary

2 pages of Book of Order extracts follow

Extracts from 2006 Book of Order

8.17 Appointment of ministers and elders to attend the General Assembly

- (1) A presbytery must ensure that each congregation shall have as its commissioner either a minister or an elder.
- (2) A retired minister who is serving as an elder on a church council is not eligible to hold an elder's commission to attend the General Assembly.
- (3) A presbytery must nominate which church councils are to elect elders in sufficient time to enable each church council to elect an elder on a date 6 months before a General Assembly is due to meet. The presbytery must then appoint and commission such elders to attend the General Assembly.
- (4) A presbytery must ensure that as near as is practical the number of ministers equals the number of elders appointed.
- (5) Each presbytery must send a list of its commissioners to the Clerk of Assembly and must also forward to the Clerk of Assembly the form of commission or certificate received in respect of each elder from the church council and a copy of the minute of presbytery or Te Aka Puaho certifying the names of those ministers, elders and youth commissioners who are commissioned to attend the General Assembly.

14.5 Membership of General Assembly

- (1) The General Assembly consists of
 - (a) ministers and elders elected by presbyteries to be commissioners,
 - (b) associate members, being ministers or elders or any other persons whom the Assembly require to be present for the conduct of its business,
 - (c) the president and the secretary of the Association of Presbyterian Women, or their substitutes chosen by them from the membership of the national executive; their names to be intimated annually to the Clerk of Assembly by the national secretary,
 - (d) additional members, being youth representatives who are members of the Church or of a co-operative venture, and
 - (e) other persons and representatives of organizations that an Assembly resolves should be included in its membership.

14.8 Proposals for legislation

- (1) The General Assembly must initiate any legislative action by proposal.
- (2) The following may place a proposal for legislative action before the General Assembly
 - (a) the Council of Assembly or any of its committees or commissions,
 - (b) a presbytery,
 - (c) a synod,
 - (d) a church council through its presbytery, or
 - (e) a commissioner of the General Assembly while the Assembly is sitting.

(3) Except in the case of a proposal proposed by a commissioner of the General Assembly while an Assembly is sitting, notice of intention to propose or transmit a proposal to the Assembly must be received by the Clerk of Assembly not later than the time provided for by the Standing Orders of the Assembly.

14.22 References by presbytery for advice or decision

(1) A presbytery may refer to the General Assembly for advice or for decision any matter, or part of a matter, or any point arising in a matter, which has been brought before it or any part of a matter or any point arising in a matter which is considered to be of special difficulty.

(2) A reference may be in respect of any matter dealt with or being dealt with by a presbytery and within its jurisdiction.

(3) Where a reference includes or may include matters connected with the doctrine, discipline, worship, or government of the Church, the reference must identify those matters clearly.

(4) Assembly must receive references and appeals by way of proposal.

(5) In respect of a reference:

(a) the presbytery must:

(i) forward to the Clerk of Assembly all documents and extracts of minutes connected with the reference,

(ii) appoint one or more members of the presbytery making the reference to support the reference, and

(b) the Clerk of Assembly must advise all parties concerned with the reference of the General Assembly sitting at which the reference will be heard, and

(c) the General Assembly must give all parties an opportunity to be heard when the Assembly considers the reference.

(6) A reference to the General Assembly stops all further action on or application of the matter dealt with in the reference until such time as the Assembly has heard the reference.

(7) If the Council of Assembly decides that it is impractical or undesirable to delay any action or implementation of the matter, subsection (6) does not apply.