

Candour

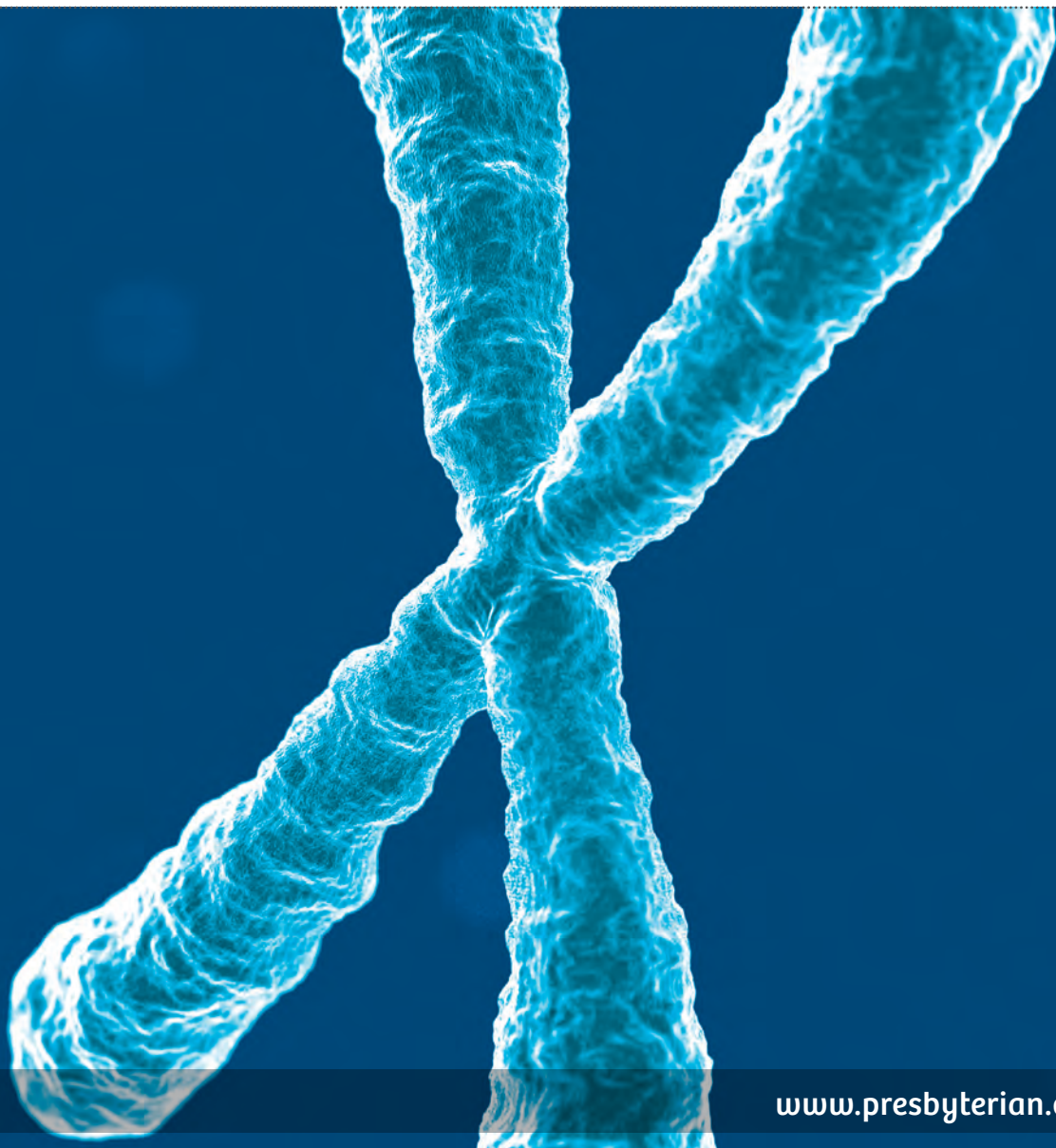


Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR MINISTERS

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Finding the DNA of a parish



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Contributions

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The editor on (04) 801-6000 or candour@presbyterian.org.nz

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We will call for contributions in January once the editorial themes for 2012 have been established.

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Understanding DNA: the catalyst for metamorphosis

Peter Cheyne*

DNA (as I understand it) contains the genes that define our biological traits – our height and hair colour, our blood type and susceptibility to certain diseases.

When we think of the DNA of a church, we mean those characteristics that define its nature; those things that make it what it is at a most fundamental level. For example, is this particular church prayerful? Is it innovative? Is it a Great Commission church? Is it encouraging? Who does it look to for leadership?

It is clearly advantageous to know what the DNA is. We will be fighting an uphill battle if we don't recognise the fundamental nature of the church. Peter Mackenzie, Geoff New and Bruce Fraser, in their articles, help us discern that DNA.

But how did that DNA get there? My DNA is inherited from my parents. John Roxborough reminds us of the influences that have shaped Presbyterian DNA. A church's DNA is also inherited. On one hand, the Holy Spirit has been at work, through its history, shaping members' understanding, values and priorities. On the other hand, certain people have determined what the church will be like. Past ministers and members will have helped shape those values and priorities and patterns of behaviour. Christian teachers and authors may have had an influence. As have past events.

Of course, the work of the Holy Spirit will have been positive. The influence of other people and events may or may not.

If the existing DNA reflects the influence of both people and the Holy Spirit over time, then the DNA can change again! Unlike my DNA which, as far as I know, no one can change, the DNA of a church can change. In fact it should change. That is the whole point of ministry.

Ephesians 4:11-16 talks about the leadership gifts God has given to the church – for what purposes? "To equip God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Under the influence of the leaders, and as the members serve, the church is to mature. In biological systems maturity doesn't mean a change of DNA. However, in the church it does. As we grow we are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, becoming more like Jesus. At a fundamental level our nature changes.

Take a moment to imagine a Christ-like church! You might want to write down some of the characteristics that would be found. That is our goal. That is what God has called us to have a part in producing and we should aim for nothing less. The bride Christ returns for is to be pure and spotless. Note passages such as 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, Philippians 1:9-11, 2 Peter 3:14 – all written to churches. Paul said that all his energy was focused on presenting everyone fully mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28-29).

If we need to know a church's DNA, we also need to know Christ's DNA. We need to know what God wants that church to become. The only reason for knowing a church's DNA is surely so that we can then be part of the metamorphosis that sees it become more Christ-like.

Or does that sound too pretentious? Surely that transformation is entirely a work of the Holy Spirit.

Of course it is, but Scripture shows that we all have a crucial role. Jesus told us to make disciples even though only the Holy Spirit can do that. We are to do it always remembering that we can't, except as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Paul said, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow." (1 Cor 3:6). Only God can produce growth/transformation. In comparison, Paul says that he and Apollos are nothing (v 7).

Nevertheless, Paul also says that the planter and waterer will each be rewarded according to their own labour and he calls himself "God's co-worker".

A gardener cannot make anything grow. They can only provide the best possible environment for growth.

Our task is to provide the best possible environment for the transforming work of God to have its effect so that the DNA of the church is changed. What are those environments? What are the circumstances in which God transforms the life of a church?

May the articles in this Candour help you identify the DNA of your church. May God inspire you to aim for the DNA of Christ. May the Holy Spirit work powerfully in your church to achieve that. And may you receive your reward as God's co-worker.

*Moderator, the Right Rev Peter Cheyne, has written this month's guest editorial.

Designer genes from the Presbyterian pool: participatory leadership, responsibility and the power of knowledge

John Roxborough, Minister Emeritus, Southern Presbytery

Values clarification is an interesting element in the journey of self-knowledge. We all have our own ideas about what really matters. Some of these may be “designer” in the sense that they seem to be deliberate choices, but often they turn out to be a heritage we were hardly conscious of absorbing. Presbyterian values lie deep in our collective identity, born of choices that go back centuries. They are also shaped by our New Zealand experience. Nature and nurture, like predestination and context, have a dynamic relationship with the choices of life which can be endlessly fascinating.

Any selection is bound to be personal. For me important elements in the Presbyterian DNA include being a Christian community of communities committed to participatory leadership, personal responsibility for faith and life and a sustained belief in the saving power of knowledge – religious and secular. Respect for those we disagree with has a stronger place in our heritage than many versions of our history might suggest.

We are a Christian church. The heart of it all is worship which calls us together to praise God, acknowledge our humanity – good and bad – and see Jesus Christ as God with us. We enjoy personal autonomy, but we live our faith with others and these days we do not always define ourselves by the failings of other traditions. We value shared leadership and seek the contribution of all in church and in society. We took shape in an age of expanding literacy and we still value education and the sharing of information. Knowledge is power, not just for ourselves, but for others who want to be the people that God wants them to be.

There is a certain irony in the way we use the word presbytery. It is a value we do not seem to value. Some associations are with traditions our ancestors rejected. A presbyter is a priest and a presbytery is the place where priests gather. What is different is who we include. We see ourselves as belonging to “a kingdom of priests” where each is called and gifted, and each can minister to the other and bring one another to God.

For us, in its blessing and inconvenience, presbytery is a regional gathering of elders and ministers that guides its congregations; ensures that the means of grace are available; and licenses, ordains and disciplines ministers within its bounds. Presbytery remains a sign that our living the gospel can never just be local however much it must be rooted in the local community. What we do may define what Presbyterianism means to others, but presbytery is part of who we are.

We also change. We try to go on reforming and we argue about what that means. Some things about who we are, including our belief in education, help us renew our faith in Christ with each new generation. Shared leadership helps make it possible to get things done and take people with us. Finding the language we need for talking about what we are doing also matters to us. It may be important for the future that often ours has been the faith of emerging groups in rapidly changing social and economic circumstances. Some of those groups have been urban business people, teachers, artisans and academics. Others have been farmers. God and land are part of our identity. Migrants are part of our story. For all sorts of reasons, being settlers, pioneers or missionaries, we are happy to be children of Abraham.

Even if the sources are social as much as religious, there are resonances in our being of freedom and democracy, not just of Calvinism and capitalism. Presbyterianism is a profoundly political faith with economic and ethical implications and its independent voice has often been a worry to the powers that be. Church leaders who become politicians are seen as living their faith whether we agree with their politics or not. “Jesus is Lord” is a threatening assertion not just a personal confession though we struggle with what that means when science and society challenge our definitions of conventional morality.

Being Presbyterian does not necessarily make for an easy life. Participation in the things of God requires giving space to other voices as well as exercising the privilege of contributing our own. A commitment to education has its conceits as well as its glories. We live with the temptations of our strengths and are quite capable of losing our way to the well-springs of the Spirit. Some discover that the Word of God comes to us in symbol, ritual and mystery not just the teaching of an educated ministry, but it should hardly be a matter of either/or.

Hereditary allergies to gambling and superstition still run deep for those infected by a Presbyterian childhood. We can be surprised to discover that God appears to be happily at work with people who have different sensitivities. Some of us surprise ourselves and others by being proud of some of our Presbyterian agnostics, not because we undervalue faith, but because we have been taught to value people for who they are. We reach out to what is common in humanity, but we also learn from telling the stories of the people and circumstances that have made us who we are.

For some Presbyterianism is about doing things decently and in order and I find it interesting that older ministers have subtle ways of signalling their preferences for how things should be done. Predictability and fairness require that we pay more attention to this than we sometimes have, though what it means in today's culture is not the same as it used to be. While there can be no life without mess, there is security in due process and sometimes a necessary provision for safety.

We will all have our own lists of influences. Mine includes Adam MacFarlan at St Kentigern College who modelled prayers which meant something, preaching that stuck in the mind, and even for a 14 year old school-boy the idea that philosophy helped us know what we are talking about. He also made church and Scottish history interesting and showed us that talking about the humanity of the Bible was a safe thing to do.

Later the Inter-Varsity Fellowship did for me what SCM had done for earlier generations and ecumenism enabled me to appreciate others without denying an evangelical identity. At Knox College the combination of perspectives provided in training for the ministry modelled dimensions of Presbyterianism that are seldom explicit. We could talk about theology as if human experience was irrelevant, yet engage with human experience as a gift of God which reveals theology and shapes its expression. Perhaps there is a genius in that contradiction.

When at Auckland University I was struck by the chaplain David Simmers talking about his study in Scotland. He said how much he learnt from people he disagreed with. Somehow that too seemed Presbyterian.

Tensions abound even if partisan politics exhausts itself and the ecclesiastical world like the political passes from "first past the post" where the winner takes all and only one group can be right, to an "MMP" theology which sees diversity as a gift more than a sin. Perhaps this is a more recent addition to the gene pool, brought by the cultural diversity to which we struggle to give due. Christian life is about context as well as heritage and Presbyterian forms of Christian faith are not the only ancestors in our mix. We can be sure that a mono-cultural All Blacks would never have got near the Rugby World Cup and we too are learning to mine our diversity of culture and ancestry as a strength.

We have recently affirmed that the Westminster Confession remains part of who we are, even if discovering its power as a model of contextual theology continues to elude us. We have celebrated the 500th birthday of John Calvin, though living with the complexity of his genius seems as hard for us as it sometimes did for the people of Geneva. One thing: it seems to be a trait that over the long haul we do not do personality driven theology well and that may not be a bad thing. It is said of the King James Bible that it was the one work of genius produced by a committee. The same can in fact be said of the Westminster Confession and perhaps Presbyterianism is another – whatever its famous names, it is certainly the product of a process more than of a personality.

Religious studies have been important in my journey. At Knox, Albert Moore taught religions and I often wished I had taken more than just his paper on the psychology and sociology of religion. His combination of faith, art and holy curiosity still inspires. Ian Dixon talked of theology formed in pastoral care and lived that tension of insight and commitment.

In Scotland I was a student in the Religious Studies Department at the University of Aberdeen and began with a paper taught by Harold Turner. I later learnt from Jim Veitch and Lloyd Geering whilst in parish ministry in Wellington. However much their views were debated, the quality of their teaching said something about the Church to which we all belonged. Being Presbyterian made

discussions possible. I remember that even in the Westminster Fellowship the idea of a separate theological college was rejected at the height of the Geering debate because ministers had to face these ideas somewhere. It was not just what you believed that mattered, it was the issues we were prepared to deal with in forging those beliefs.

This was not just about testing boundaries; it was about grounding Christian faith and mission in realities which were social and political as well as religious. Calvin and Knox constructed their theologies in engagement with new societies born in conflict. Scottish Presbyterians became committed to thinking about how communities actually developed as they worked to turn 18th century Scotland into a powerhouse of education, industry, and Christian mission. Thomas Chalmers was an inspiration to Free Church Presbyterians including those who migrated to Otago. He had been a lecturer in political economics as well as theology. He was the greatest evangelical preacher of his day, but he also wrote on urban poverty and the economics of parish churches.

It is no accident that the Synod of Otago supported the University of Otago in the teaching of religion and more recently public theology. Other faiths, different ethics, and divisive issues may be a challenge, but they deserve respectful engagement which we are committed to facilitate.

We encourage participation in the ethical questions of the day in different ways. The days are gone when Assembly committees tried to tell us what to think about social issues, but our Church agencies have not stopped asking us to think about them. When Presbyterian Support publishes data on poverty just before an election and our Church refrains from telling us how to vote it is saying something important about who we are.

We are expected to care and we are expected to take responsibility for our own views on the Christian good of society. Knowledge not just sentiment is needed to change society and empower its citizens. This cuts right across the theological and social groupings around which we have sometimes gathered.

As a theological tradition familiar with what belief in predestination is at least trying to say, we may realise that we carry predispositions which are a gift from our collective past, which we need to understand if we are to use them responsibly. We would like to think that some of these may be consistent with the mind of God, but such judgements can only ever be provisional and need more humility than we have sometimes shown. It can also be a Presbyterian trait to take responsibility for our choices and allow others to take responsibility for theirs. That too is an act of Christian faith.

COOPERATING PARISH OF PUKAKI – PARISH ENABLER

The Co-operating Parish of Pukaki is centred on the rural town of Twizel and seeks a Parish Enabler (one-fifth time).

PUKAKI'S MISSION STATEMENT IS: "CALLED TO BE CHRIST IN OUR COMMUNITY."

The Parish embraces Every Member Ministry but is not engaged in the ministry model entitled Locally Shared Ministry. It is time for an Anglican ordained minister to cover oversight of this vibrant ecumenical ministry. At present the ministry includes four licensed Communion Celebrants, several worship leaders, music leaders, preachers and Sunday School teachers.

The Church is	Family orientated Thoroughly ecumenical Committed to evangelism and mission.
The congregation seeks an Enabler who is:	Open and flexible A Bible-centred trainer and teacher Experienced in parish ministry, mission and evangelism Able to connect the congregation with the wider Church.

For further information, please email the office of the Rt Revd Victoria Matthews at: EMAIL >> bishopspa@anglicanlife.org.nz or PHONE >> [03] 348 6701.

CLOSING DATE: 15 DECEMBER 2011

Organisational assessment

Peter MacKenzie*

One of the guiding tenets for organisational psychology is the idea that an organisation acts and responds in a similar way to an individual. That suggests that organisations can be analysed, that they have unique attributes, and they can always surprise. So trying to understand an organisation's Defining Natural Attributes (DNA) will give a picture, but never a clear answer.

As I thought about congregational DNA I came up with five scales – totally untested and statistically unproven – but hopefully helpful to one or two. They are derived from my knowledge of psychological assessments and experience of the Church – so obviously limited and biased. A scale suggests that there is a spectrum between two opposite identifiers and that any organisation will fall somewhere in between – but generally not right in the middle. A church will have a tendency toward one or the other.

PEOPLE FOCUS

(Pastoral or Missional)

This scale centres around the orientation of the local church – is it focussed inward or outward? At the pastoral end of the scale the church will be known for its care of the family, it would look after their members and provide a high level of pastoral care. At the missional end of the scale there is a community outreach priority that takes people to serve with the local population.

- *Is pastoral care or community mission more important?*
- *Where does the energy for church come from and go to?*
- *Is the central focus on looking after the congregation or the community?*
- *Is there a focus on developing relationships between people or to the community?*
- *What are the four most important events of the local church year? (Are they pastoral or missional?)*
- *Are new people sought through Sunday worship or mission activity?*

MOTIVATION

(Head or Heart)

On this scale the balance is between an intellectual or emotional approach to faith. On an individual basis this might be linked with the Thinking-Feeling element of the Myers-Briggs temperament. The Presbyterian Church is particularly proud of its academic rigour in worship – very much tending toward the head. The impact of the charismatic movement in the 1980s certainly shook that aspect in many local churches.

- *Is there a greater focus on intelligence or on emotions?*
- *Is the highlight of worship preaching or singing?*
- *Are decisions made to move ahead or to keep everyone happy?*
- *What was the most popular service held recently? (Was it intellectual or emotional?)*
- *Are popular services intellectual or inspirational?*

INERTIA

(Open to new or settled in the known) (Progressive or Traditional)

Here again we can expand an element of personality to organisational level. Psychologists have understood that there are differences found in people's willingness to try something new – ranging from the adventurous to the sticks-in-the-mud. In churches we can see congregations that enjoy innovative, unpredictable and vibrant worship – while others enjoy a familiar, regular and vibrant worship. Please note, both can be vibrant.

- *Is there a willingness to try something new?*
- *Can chairs/pews be moved? Do people sit in different seats?*
- *Do gate-keepers hold on to key positions in the church?*

ORGANISATION

(Structured or Flexible)

On this scale the church is assessed on how tidy it likes things to be done. The structured church is fully organised in all that they do, while the flexible church may appear to be quite random in its activities.

You can recognise a structured church by the roster system, the efficiency of notices at worship time, the ordered feel of worship, meetings and buildings. People know their roles and are clear on what will happen. The flexible church appears haphazard to some, working as the Spirit moves. People take on emergent tasks, dealing with issues as they arise.

- *Are people encouraged to follow the rules or follow their heart?*
- *Is there regulation following or permission giving?*
- *Is communion celebrated traditionally or with diversity?*
- *Who drives the vision for the local church?*

THEOLOGY

(Evangelical or Liberal)

This scale is more of a dichotomy than a continuum – but there certainly are variations of strength. It courts controversy to try and make a definition in this way, but one way of expressing it has been that evangelicals give answers to the questions of life while liberals question a life of answers. That seems to be significantly vague enough not to cause offence, but still clear enough to create controversy.

An evangelical church will be known for its emphasis on the saving grace of Jesus Christ told in the gospels. A liberal church will be known for its exploration of the nature of God and a willingness to challenge traditional faith and belief. Most congregations have a mix of individuals who span a breadth of theological views, but overall the congregation will tend to one side or the other.

So what does it mean? Beginning to understand how our congregations are made up helps to understand why they sometimes fall apart. Too often churches have tried to be something that they are not and in doing so have created larger problems, especially when looking for ministry.

The pastoral church hires a missional focussed minister – and then wonders why there is a clash of agendas. The traditional church hires a progressive minister to make progress – then argues at every step. The structured church rejoices in the flexibility of the youth worker to deal with the young people, but then expect a structured formal report to the parish council.

These factors will also be critical when congregations are considering merging together – is the DNA compatible? And perhaps the biggest question of all – can a congregation change? History has shown that congregations can change, but only with great effort, a certain amount of pain, and usually after a critical incident when the normal behaviour has been upset.

As noted above, these ideas have had limited practical applications – so I am more than happy to enter into some discussion on what is written here.

** Peter is the executive officer for the Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand*



Pastor/Teacher

Bethlehem Community Church, charismatic and evangelical Presbyterian Church, is seeking to appointment a Pastor Teacher to lead the congregation. If you believe that God may be leading you in this direction please contact Donald Hegan for further details revd@slingshot.co.nz (07) 576-6756 ext 2

TAKE PART IN THE CHURCH LIFE SURVEY

What does the Church Life Survey offer your parish?

The Council of Assembly is offering to pay for any parish that wants to do the Church Life Survey. So why should your parish take up the offer?

This survey is quite unlike the dry statistics of headcounts we do in June. It is focused on the impressions and feelings of person in the pews and it asks questions about their views on a whole range of things in parish and wider life. Some examples are:

- What aspects of this church/parish do you personally most value?" and
- Which music do you find most helpful?
- Does this parish resource your spiritual journey? ... or have an effective mix in services? ... or have helpful preaching/teaching?
- Do you feel you have grown in your Christian faith this year?
- Do you feel the presence of God at work? ... at home? ... in nature?

The focus of the survey is to ask questions that could be useful to parish councils, both as a "temperature gauge" of where their people are at but also potentially as a way of knowing how the current parish programme could be made more useful. To help, once the parish has input the information from the survey through an easy-to-use website, the site will automatically generate a number of customised reports that can be downloaded for free (or sent for a small cost). It is the potential usefulness of the survey for supporting parish decision-making that was the most attractive feature for the Council of Assembly.

To participate, parishes must register individually through the survey website www.clnz.com. The survey forms will be sent out to your parish in late October, and the survey should be done in church (either during or immediately after the service) on a Sunday of your choice in November.

The Church Life Survey is organised every five years by an interdenominational committee (on which we are represented). The last time most Presbyterian parishes participated was ten years ago. The survey is anonymous, and the organisers have ensured appropriate confidentiality for the data. For further information on the survey, contact our Presbyterian representative on the committee Margaret Galt at mgalt@paradise.net.nz.

Of Fish and Water

Bruce Fraser, Mission Advisor, Synod of Otago and Southland

I have heard there is a Chinese saying, 'Never ask a fish about water!'

As a Mission Advisor I work with congregations on a mission appraisal process developed here in the south. This is different than the official congregational review set up by the General Assembly. Using this mission appraisal process, the congregation/leadership work together over a six month period answering questions which are designed to promote thinking about who they (the congregation) are and why God has them in this place. This is not a box ticking exercise but an opportunity to closely examine their DNA, among other things.

It is interesting discussing this with those involved. "Tell me your story," I ask. "What has happened here in the past – how did this congregation get started – what have been some of the influences, both positive and negative, that have affected you?" This opens up all sorts of discussions and often can lead to the recognition that some event(s) of the past have become part of their DNA and exert a greater influence than realised. Together we look for recurring themes both in the positive and the negative. What does this show about the default positions in this congregation? In other words what sort of behaviour/reaction do they revert to – especially when things are tough or when hit by a crisis. It also serves to help uncover systemic issues that could well have been simmering away for years.

One of the other sections of the process looks at the congregation's values. What values are important – what are the bottom-line matters which you would die for? Once those things are identified a scenario is presented that deeply challenges these issues. In many cases, although they might be important, these issues may not be as fundamental as was thought – perhaps they are negotiable after all. It's these deep things that we don't think about that make up our DNA.

Most congregations with which I work think that they reflect the community in which they live, but as we unpack census and other resources, they are often far from reflecting their community and come to realise they have lost the connections. Often, part of the DNA is that people will come to us. For many congregations that simply doesn't – and won't – happen. However our DNA still has us in this mindset. Look at these three quotes that challenge the DNA of many congregations:

"The gospel says, "Go," but our church buildings say, "Stay". The gospel says, "Seek the lost," but our church buildings say, "Let the lost seek the church."¹

Church isn't about consumer or customer satisfaction. It does not exist for the benefit of its members. 'It exists to equip its members for the benefit of the world. To do that, it is about three things: community, spirituality, and mission.'²

A church which pitches its tents, without constantly looking out for new horizons, which does not continually strike camp, Is being untrue to its calling ...[We must] play down our longing for certainty, accept what is risky, live by improvisation and experiment.³

To change is a long and often difficult process. That's why I find that time spent on mission statements and the like is often time wasted. Unless these mission and value statements affect every decision we make collectively and individually then what is their use? Unless there is widespread buy-in (hence change in the DNA) then the existing DNA will override the statement every time. One of the questions we discuss relates to the mission of the congregation. On one occasion, the question was met with silence until a face lit up and the person pointed out to the entrance and said, "Oh, we have a mission statement – it's out there somewhere!" For many, the mission/values statement is something that was done by the elders and delivered to the congregation, but there has been no buy-in because there has been no recognition of the DNA that drives the congregation. I know that there are notable exceptions to this.

¹ Synder, H, *The Problem of Wineskins* (1975: 1st edition) Intervarsity Press

² McLaren, B D, *A New Kind Of Christian* (2001) Jossy-Bass

³ Hans Kung

Tension also arises if a congregation faces an influx of people who don't understand the history or values of the congregation and bring with them the DNA of other places. I see real tensions in congregations that have resulted from this and often people are bewildered, not understanding it's because their DNA is being challenged.

Not every part of the DNA is unhelpful but it seems that those that are unhelpful are the ones that seem to exert a greater influence proportionate to their importance. The helpful DNA needs to be affirmed and emphasised, the unhelpful faced and confronted.

I'm not saying anything here that most of us don't already know, so the question is how do we uncover this DNA. In short, not easily! Why? Because it requires us to step outside and look at ourselves objectively and that is a very difficult thing for any of us to do – and is compounded when you are dealing with a group. The fish needs an outside source to point out the water.

There is no easy way or 12 step programme to discover a DNA. It is far from easy. It takes patience and care and even then that does not mean that change will come about where it's needed. There has to be the desire to change because that change can often be painful for it requires us to face up to things that have been ignored or denied for many years. If, for example, I were to say that one of the basic DNA traits of the Presbyterian Church was "distrust", how many would agree, and if agree, actually set out intentionally to do something about it? It's not only identifying the DNA but the acceptance of the validity of that discovery and then the desire to face the pain of the change needed. Church people have long memories!

Tension also arises if a congregation faces an influx of people who don't understand the history or values of the congregation and bring with them the DNA of other places.

However, as part of a faith community we are not reliant on ourselves or our own abilities. One of the fundamentals of our wider DNA is a sense of our own ability, self reliance and self importance. We also like to think that we are in control – this is part of our New Zealand (European New Zealander anyway) DNA.

To effectively change DNA we need to continue to seek the One who is head of the Church. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings about that deep change that makes us more and more into the likeness of Jesus, both as individuals and as congregations. We can try all sorts of processes and programmes but in the end it is the ongoing development of that relationship that brings about the most effective change in lives. Jesus says in John 14: 5, "Apart from me, you can do nothing". He also says and demonstrates for us that mission is saying and doing his Father's will not his own. The problem is we want to try everything else and rely on our own resources. We are self reliant, self focused and independent – you see that's part of our DNA! There needs to be a change to being humble and reliant on Jesus, Jesus focused and Jesus dependent. That's the hard call because it requires a massive shift in our DNA.

Finding the DNA of a congregation: appreciative enquiry

Geoff New, Papakura East, Northern Presbytery

Appreciative enquiry is a way to explore and discover the height, breadth and width of what God has done among God’s people over whatever time frame. It is a way to discern what the Spirit is saying to the church.¹

Appreciative enquiry rests on several key principles:

- It is incarnational – it seeks to discover how God has dwelt among the community of faith during their history together
- It is thankful – it asks questions about the best memories
- It is light – it takes the view that organisms always grow towards light and seeks to discover the light in the midst of the church
- It is eschatological – it looks for the Kingdom “already but not yet”, and hopes for the future as promised by the Scriptures.

In short, appreciative enquiry has been described as possessing a reverence for life. It is a way of engaging with the mystery of God working among us and in our day. It is a way of living with a sense of wonder and seeing through the eyes of a child. All this rests on the stories of the people of God being found in the story of Christ.

So – exactly what is appreciative enquiry? How does it work? Appreciative enquiry has several forms. The following outline is one of many and the one I can recommend from personal experience.

1. A positive focus of enquiry is chosen

Like many organisations churches can be prone to habitually approaching issues from a problem-solving perspective and this vocabulary is deficit-laden. Hence, a clear understanding and commitment to focus on the best of the community needs to be established. The focus to investigate can be something as specific as the nature of your worship services; or as broad as your own church vision and *raison d’être*.

PARADIGM 1: Problem Solving (the usual church approach)	PARADIGM 2: Appreciative Enquiry
“Felt need” Identification of problem	Appreciating “Valuing the best of what is”
Analysis of causes	Envisioning “What might be”
Analysis of possible solutions	Dialoguing “What should be”
Action planning (treatment)	Innovating “What will be”
The church is a problem to be solved	The church is a mystery to be embraced

¹ Time and space does not allow me to provide a full description and foundation of Appreciative Enquiry, but I will endeavour to provide the headlines. If a reader would like further information, please feel free to contact me. Some further reading is provided at the conclusion of this article.

2. Stories of life-giving forces are gleaned

This is the fun part. Gather your leaders and/or congregation. Interview people individually or in groups; this is your choice. Engage with the following questions and adjust them to suit your purpose:

- i. Remember a time at this church which was especially meaningful and significant. A time when you were most alive, most motivated and excited.
 What happened?
 Who was involved?
 What did you do?
 How did you feel?
 What did you think about?
- ii. Don't be humble, this is important information:
 What do you value most about yourself as a member of this church?
- iii. What do you value most about this church?
- iv. What difference does this church make to your life?
- v. What is it about this church, without which this church just would not be the same?
- vi. State three hopes you have for the future of this church.

3. Themes from the stories are identified

With the recorded answers to the questions at hand, look for important and emergent themes. This step seeks to understand the why and how behind the success being talked about.

4. Shared images for a preferred future are created

Once the themes have been mined, they form the basis to write what I call the "prophetic promise."

This is a statement grounded in the themes gleaned and the best stories of the past with an eye on the hopes for the future. The statement is the touchstone for ongoing planning and imagination for the church's future.

The key is to write it in the prophetic perfect. Look at passages such as Isa 53. The prophet writes about the future suffering of Christ, but writes in the present and past tense. He writes as if it has and is taking place in his day! At this stage in the appreciate enquiry process, trusting the Spirit has guided the church in this exercise of discernment, you write a statement about the kind of future the church is being called to. However, write the future as if it is already happening.

5. Innovative ways to create that future are sought

With reference to the prophetic promise, work now begins to innovate and implement initiatives which honour the work to date; which give legs to the statement that has been written as a result of the process – the prophetic promise. This step is crucial and the most difficult to continue. There can be an initial burst of enthusiasm and then it tapers off. I can offer no other encouragement than lead well and consistently.

Appreciative enquiry talks about the Pygmalion Effect. Tell someone they are beautiful and gifted often enough and sincerely enough; and you will see true beauty and giftedness emerge.

Appreciative enquiry seeks to change the language within a congregation. Often the native tongue is "negativity" but appreciative enquiry calls forth stories and language which are earthed in thanksgiving. When such stories and such language become dominant, the Pygmalion Effect takes effect. The images and language fielded and shared by individuals have a definitive effect on behaviour and the destiny of the person and community. So where once there was a vacuum of belief, vision and energy, the Pygmalion Effect provides the catalyst for growth.

To engage with appreciative enquiry is hard work. But then, so is trying to lead a church which has forgotten the stories of what God has done in their midst and why they ought to be thankful. It's hard work leading a church which has lost its sense of the future and their sense of call. It's hard work leading a church which has lost sight of the light. It's hard work leading a church which has no idea about their God-created DNA; appreciative enquiry will help you rediscover it!

Recommended Reading

Branson, Mark Lou. *Memories, Hopes and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*. Herndon: Alban Institute, 2004.

Campbell, Dennis G. *Congregations as Learning Communities: Tools for Shaping Your Future*. New York: Alban Institute, 2000.

COOPERATING PARISH OF MACKENZIE – VICAR

The Bishop and the Co-operating Parish of Mackenzie (Presbyterian and Anglican) seek a full-time Ordained Minister. The Parish consists of the regional centres of Fairlie and Lake Tekapo. In Fairlie there is St Stephen's Anglican Church and St Columba's Presbyterian Church. Lake Tekapo has the iconic Church of the Good Shepherd.

Mackenzie's Mission Statement is: "to establish a united Parish working to develop pastoral strengths and relevance for the spiritual needs of the community in which we live. We will strive to make our Church/congregation welcoming and fulfilling and able to add new dimensions to the lives of the people."

The Parish Council sees that there is potential in the area to grow, extend God's work and become a relevant part of the Mackenzie community.

The Parish therefore seeks an experienced prayerful Team Leader to direct and help lead the Parish to fulfil the Mission of God. They will need good time management skills in such a geographically large parish; empathy for the country environment and be comfortable living in a small rural town. Above all they will be a person of God, led by a calling to take God into the community.

For further information, please email the office of the Rt Revd Victoria Matthews at:

EMAIL >> bishopspa@anglicanlife.org.nz or **PHONE** >> (03) 348 6701.

CLOSING DATE: 15 DECEMBER 2011

Team Minister – Full Time Dunedin



Beginning February 2012 we are looking for a third ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament to join a team ministry at Leith which will include the Leith Valley Minister and the *studentsoul* student Minister. The new position is to support the Leith Valley congregation in specific areas but will also have some responsibilities in relation to the student ministry. We are a great church and growing which is why we need to add another person to our ministry team.

For further information please contact the MSB convener Rev Geoffrey Skilton (geoff@highgatechurch.org.nz) who can provide a parish profile and a statement of ministry expectations.

Closing date for applications:
14th November 2011.

Adaptive Leadership

Martin Baker

“Listen or you will die.” These were the most important words that Brian told his students at NASA’s flight crew operations, where he works as the deputy director.

Brian was one of the 60 or so of my fellow participants at the leadership development course I attended at the Kennedy School of Government in October. We were going through a communications exercise where we each had to speak about the key messages that we needed to communicate to the audiences or communities with whom we worked.

The course, *Leadership for the 21st Century: Chaos, Conflict and Courage*, provided a terrific study leave opportunity. At about 12-14 hours a day, and as a live-in learning experience, it was pretty intense, and enough to take me away from the issues and routines of work. (I am grateful for the CWM leadership development grant that made it possible.)

The most interesting aspect of the course was the participants. They ranged from the director of a petrochemical company in Kazakhstan, an MP for the Thai parliament to a bloke who had built up his own waste management business in Iowa. There were people from various police, military and national security backgrounds as well as a range of others working in educational, not-for-profit and faith-based organisations. The course was highly participatory, based on case studies where the lecturers acted more as learning facilitators than sources of information.

One of the key concepts in the programme was the notion of “adaptive leadership”. It’s a concept which I have found especially helpful in thinking about the challenges we face together in our Church. As the course facilitator, Martin Linsky explains in his book *Leadership on the Line*:

“Every day, people have problems for which they know that to do, in fact, have the necessary know how and procedures. We call these technical problems. But there is a whole host of problems that are not amenable to authoritative expertise or standard operating procedures... we call these adaptive challenges, because they require experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the origination or community.”



The course focused on the kind of leadership necessary to meet these “adaptive challenges”. Some of the themes that emerged during the course:

- Leadership and being a leader are identified not with titles or positions but with actions and decision making. In one sense no one is a leader as such, but many people in different circumstances exercise leadership. People in positions of authority or managers are not necessarily exercising leadership even though they may be described as leaders. In fact, one of the key problems is that people in positions of authority can often have most to lose by exercising leadership, because leadership invariably means change.
- In the exercise of leadership don’t expect a win-win situation. There are invariably going to be people who are hurt or damaged in some way by the exercise of leadership. The benefits of change are never evenly shared. People who exercise leadership though do need to be aware of the consequences of their decisions and commit themselves to have in place ways that help and assist those damaged or hurt by change.
- Own your bit of the mess. You may be part of the solution, but you are also part of the problem. Being aware of how you interact with your environment and how your involvement perpetuates the problems is critical. You must be aware of the role you play for the adaptive leadership that is necessary in a rapidly changing and chaotic environment.
- Take care with how you use words like “vision” and “strategy”. In an environment that requires adaptive leadership it’s important not to set outcomes which may need to be adjusted and changed.
- It’s not all about you, but the role you fill in a system. It’s critical for your own wellbeing to distinguish yourself from your role – in other words, to have a sense of your own value that is not dependent on the status of your position.

- Do not go on about “dysfunction”. It annoys everybody and does not provide a way forward. As we were told “all organisations are perfectly aligned to get the results they are currently getting.” Being critical of the outcomes makes almost no difference at all. If you want to change what is happening, you need to change the way you and the organisation work.
- People fear loss more than they value gain. Speaking first to people’s fears may be far more important than articulating some end benefit.
- Take time to stand on the balcony. If you are in the middle of the dance all the time, it can be too easy not to see what else is going on - who is not joining in, why the crowd who are dancing are only occupying a particular space in the room. Observation, interpretation and intervention are all part of effective leadership.

The new flexibility in our regulations and the possibilities being explored by presbyteries and congregations to meet the missional challenges of our Church, point to a very positive future. There is risk and conflict in all of this, but also a hopefulness as we see coming into being a Church for the 21st century.

Martin

<p>GOING  FURTHER IN DISCIPLESHIP</p>	<p>GOING  DEEPER IN YOUTH MINISTRY</p>
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