

# Candour



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of Aotearoa New Zealand

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR MINISTERS

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## Ordination



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# Ordination is about “setting apart”

*Allister Lane, St John's in the City, Wellington Presbytery*

**C**hurch leadership has been topical since the Apostle Paul attempted to clarify such functions in the very early church. At many times it is obvious that the commission to join in the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ is hampered by very human concerns as we jostle to see things done our way and to be recognised for our contribution.

Whatever the distractions to genuine service of God, the church community remains resolutely committed to upholding the best form of leadership possible to remain faithful to her commission (2 Timothy 2:2). And so in that tradition, the topic of leadership is addressed in this issue of *Candour* by considering the nature of ordination in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ordination is a form of leadership unique to the Church. There is no equivalent leadership in any other context; religious or secular; commercial or community. And perhaps this should be no surprise, given that ordination emerges from the initial commission of Baptism – a unique identity given by God and practiced in the church. Baptism defines us as both gift and guidance in the Spirit.

Throughout centuries of change and innovation, and despite many differing models and structures in various denominational traditions, ordination has remained recognisable by the combined act of the laying on of hands and prayer. This act of ordination expresses both the internal and external call: the recognition and empowerment by both the Holy Spirit and church community.

And just like the act of ordination, so the function of ordination has remained focussed on our faithfulness to the Apostolic tradition. We, the church community of the baptised, identify from among ourselves those recognised as having gifts for this specific leadership. In recognition of God's initiative, the Presbyterian Church ordains by “setting apart” men and women as ministers, elders or deacons as servants to the servants. They are given a new and distinctive relationship within the community of God's people; to be responsible, accountable and available in a new way, in accordance with the Spirit at work among the people.

It is worth reminding ourselves that ordination is about “setting apart” not “setting above”. It is leadership focussed on a commitment to carrying out certain functions on behalf of the church community. Perhaps the greatest temptation is to instead see ordination as conferring some ontological status to an individual. Such a view risks departing from an understanding that seeks wise and humble leadership emerging from the community of faith and devoted to serving God's people in remaining faithful.

In this season of Lent we are reminded that for a period of 40 days Jesus was tempted to exercise leadership modelled by the devil. As we pursue authentic (and unique) servant leadership in our Church, may God save us from temptation and deliver us from evil.

In this issue we have contributions that bring together people's ideas, theology and experiences. Thanks to those who have spent time reflecting and writing, to provoke and encourage for the sake of the ministry and mission we are called to join in with Jesus Christ.

For further reading on ordination in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, I commend to you the report from the Doctrine Core Group to the last General Assembly.

*Editor's Note: The Rev Allister Lane is minister at St John's in the City, Wellington. He is on the Candour Editorial Committee.*

# The Mission Sequence

*Peter Cheyne, Moderator Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*

## A Story

**G***oing Deep*, tells of pastor Gordon MacDonald, whose neighbours, Hank and Cynthia Soriano, had no interest in the church but were good friends. Hank showed an interest in Gordon's work, and he challenged Gordon to clarify what the church actually did. That set Gordon on a course of discovery culminating in a commitment to meet regularly with a group of hand-picked church members to intentionally "cultivate deep people".

As part of the exploration phase though, Gordon and his wife invited a number of people to a discussion about their most profound learning experiences. The discussion group included the Sorianos who became intrigued with the depth of that conversation and with this idea of a church focussing on growing people. They offered to help set up for the subsequent meetings and to serve the meal. They were invited to stay for the first evening when Gordon talked about biblical discipleship and put the proposal of regular meetings to those who had been invited. That night, and as they served the meal on subsequent nights, the Sorianos mixed with Christians and observed how they operated.

Eventually, they were intrigued enough to want to know "how this religious thing works" and to ask about the possibility of meeting with someone from the church to explore it.

Sometime later they came over to say that they had been studying the Bible with their mentors and had decided to become Jesus-followers.

That is fictitious and the brief version possibly sounds a little too easy. However, I think it illustrates something.

Every person and every situation is different. Jesus never demonstrated a formulaic approach to mission. Nevertheless, I suspect there is a mission sequence evident in this ministry that is applicable to personal mission, parish mission and global mission.

I don't try to define "mission" here. In what follows, there is an implicit understanding of our mission. I am sure you will be able to identify it.

The sequence I am suggesting is:

1. Pray and seek God
2. Build relationships
3. Demonstrate the kingdom of God
4. Bear witness to Jesus
5. Seek a response
6. Mentor to maturity
7. Commission the new missionaries.

### **Pray and seek God**

Jesus' claim that he did only what he saw his father doing indicates a level of discernment that allowed Jesus to be alert to the activity of God – a level of discernment birthed in prayer.

Jesus' ministry began with his proclamation of his mission manifesto (Luke 4:16-20). But this followed 40 days in the wilderness. Prayer is not mentioned explicitly, but it is impossible to think that the period was not a time of intense prayer accompanying the fasting.

His time of prayer in Mark 1:35-39 gave birth to a new phase in his mission, clearly linked to his whole sense of purpose.

Likewise, his selection of the twelve – a crucial part of his mission – was preceded by a whole night of prayer (Luke 6:12).

Jesus' readiness to complete his mission emerged out of yet more prayer.

Prayer is the means of guidance whereby we discern what God is asking of us at any moment and the source of power without which any mission will be fruitless.

### **Build relationships**

Mission happens as people interact. Mission is essentially relational.

Jesus was criticised for being a friend of sinners. He attended parties, meals and weddings. He mixed with tax collectors and prostitutes. He cared for the rejected or overlooked. He touched lepers.

Not all relationships required a long period. Jesus presumably had only part of a day with Nicodemus but the whole encounter was intensely relational.

Even brief encounters were relational. Jesus was present. He took an interest in the person involved. He didn't heal whole crowds with a single wave of the hand.

We easily feel that we do not have time for relationships. Our culture values privacy. Community has, in many respects, broken down.

We prefer to put people through programmes than build relationships with them. Programmes are quicker and tidier. Relationships are messy and inconvenient, time-consuming and sometimes deeply disappointing.

Yet, Jesus modelled relating. Maybe God is calling us is to have a lot more time for people and to open our lives up much more.

### **Demonstrate the kingdom of God**

This is a huge topic. My suggestion is that we let people see the kingdom of God before we ask them to respond in faith.

The kingdom of God exists wherever God is king. Where God is king, the values of the king are exhibited by God's subjects, and the power of the king is visible.

We could list many characteristics of the kingdom: community, compassion, justice, power, freedom, mercy, fellowship, worship, righteousness...

Disciples, as individuals and as a community are called to manifest the kingdom, reflecting the character and values of the King and providing a graphic alternative to the world. That might be done through a vast array of behaviours: personal integrity, gentleness, thoughtfulness, praying for someone who is sick, casting out demons, befriending, being a servant...

We manifest a different way of life and a different set of values and we invite people to see these manifestations of God – love, power, righteousness and truth.

Jesus' early mission strategy was "Come and see" (see John 1:39. Note also John 1:41-42; 46; 50). The kingdom was present. He healed the sick, cast out demons, forgave sin, befriended, was merciful, performed miracles, extended hospitality... Jesus invited people to see the evidence of the kingdom.

The demonstration of the kingdom of God has missional force. Jesus said that it would be by our love for one another that people would know that we are his disciples.

We are urged to live such good lives among pagans that they may see our good deeds and glorify God on the day of the visit (1 Peter 2:12, reflecting Jesus' words in Matthew 5:16).

Paul talks about an unbeliever coming into worship, being convicted by prophecy and declaring "God is really among you!" (1 Cor 14:24-25). That is the point – actions that demonstrate the presence of God.

It is not a question of inviting people to see our church but to see the kingdom of God (and, thereby, God).



Building relationships and demonstrating the kingdom can happen in the other order. Demonstrating of the kingdom can initiate the relationship. Sometimes the kingdom is demonstrated by befriending

### **Bear witness to Jesus**

Paul asks, “How can they believe unless they hear?” (Romans 10:14) and Peter urges us to always be ready to give an answer to the person who asks about the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15).

While our actions may demonstrate that we belong to a different kingdom, we still need to tell people about the king and the possibility of a relationship with God through Jesus. If our lifestyle raises questions for people or creates a yearning in them, we need to then answer those questions or provide the satisfaction of that yearning. We simply have to talk about Jesus; about who he is and what he has done; about our experience of him – in other words, bear witness to Jesus.

Jesus frequently invited people to follow him. After they had seen his love or power, or heard his authority, they were asked to make a decision about their allegiance to him. Would they follow?

Even when those words were not used, Jesus’ demonstration of the kingdom inevitably led to questions: Who is this man? Why did he heal me? What should my response be? It was simply impossible to separate the demonstration of the kingdom from the questions it raised about Jesus.

Evangelism is integral to the whole process – in fact, the lynch pin of the whole process.

### **Seek a response**

Simply bearing witness to Jesus without encouraging the other person to respond and enter a faith relationship with Jesus is doing only half the job and leaving the person dangling – telling them about the food that will satisfy but not offering any.

The greatest act of love is to offer salvation through Jesus Christ.

“**P**rayer is the means of guidance whereby we discern what God is asking of us at any moment and the source of power without which any mission will be fruitless.”

Jesus’ message is summarised as, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” (Matthew 4:17). Repentance was, and is, the necessary response and Jesus urged that response.

Similarly on the Day of Pentecost and in Paul’s later preaching, the Apostles loved people enough to urge them to respond and to find life in Jesus.

### **Mentor to maturity**

Suffice to say that we have been commissioned not to make converts but to make disciples (Matthew 28:16-20). In Matthew’s version of the Great Commission, Jesus describes disciples as those who obey everything He has commanded. Clearly, this speaks of a radically transformed life and of living in a way that is, by definition, Christ-like.

Jesus invested massive time into the twelve in order to train them to the point where he could commission them to repeat the process. Growing these men was perhaps the highest priority in Jesus’ ministry prior to going to the cross.

### **Commission the new missionaries**

Jesus made disciples then commissioned them to make disciples. Disciples are to become disciple-makers.

Paul famously told Timothy to entrust what he had heard from Paul to reliable people who would then teach yet another generation (2 Timothy 2:2). There are four generations in that verse, with the obvious intention that each generation passes these things on to the next. In that way the mission sequence repeats and the kingdom expands.

### **Fragmented mission**

Many people and churches are willing to go as far as demonstrating the kingdom of God, but no further. They are involved in caring ministries demonstrating the love of God, but are very reluctant to bear witness to Jesus.

Whole mission organisations and denominations talk in terms of compassion and justice and being prophetic, but will be dismissive of evangelism. Churches will rejoice in having community groups use their buildings, but if there is no witness to Jesus, in what sense is that Christian mission?

We care for people because we love them and because they are in need. It is what Jesus wants us to do. But we don't stop there. We love people too much for that. Caring for people's physical and emotional needs without also offering eternal salvation shows a very truncated love.

The demonstration of the kingdom allows people to see God's alternative society and to be drawn to it. Often the door to evangelism is opened by the fact that we have served selflessly and people see our genuineness; or because we prayed and people experienced God for themselves.

Other people and churches want to jump in at step four and immediately talk about Jesus, without having taken the time to build a relationship and without having demonstrated the kingdom in any way.

We can all be guilty of not birthing the whole process in prayer.

Even those who are enthusiastic about evangelism can fail to make mature disciples.

In other words, we tend to break mission up and choose to do only bits of it.

I suggest mission involves all of those steps and that each step is simply to be added to the previous ones. We don't stop praying when we start building relationships. We don't stop developing relationships when we start demonstrating the kingdom. Modelling kingdom-living is crucial to mentoring younger Christians to maturity. Likewise, we mentor people to maturity by a continuing to bear witness to Jesus – his teaching, his commands, his lifestyle.

### **Another Story**

The Motueka Baptist Church has a team of "Saturday Servants" – young people who on some Saturdays go out to serve in the community. The leadership has impressed on the team that their purpose in serving is simply to build relationships. It is not evangelistic. It is to build relationships.

On one occasion the team was asked to help tidy up a house and property in preparation for an open home later that same day. The property was not in good shape. Nevertheless, the team did what it could and certainly made a difference.

Later, as they ate lunch together, someone suggested they should pray for the sale of that house. It wasn't in good condition and the property market was weak. The chances of a sale were small. However, they prayed and, that day, the house sold.

Sometime later, a similar situation presented itself. Again the chances of a sale were small. However, this time the team was able to ask the owner if he/she would like them to pray for a sale. They were able to say they had a pretty good track record in this area! The owner agreed and again the house sold.

I forget the exact details, but one of those families started attending the church and in the week after I heard the story some family members were to be baptised.

*\*Editor's Note: Peter's review of Gordon MacDonald's book Going Deep is included in this edition of Candour. And a longer version of this article is available on Peter's blog <http://pcanzmod.blogspot.com/2012/02/mission-sequence.html>. He invites comment or suggestions – email Peter at [Peter@followers.org.nz](mailto:Peter@followers.org.nz).*



## KEYNOTES

### LLYOD MARTIN

Lloyd Martin is an educator and writer around youth development, cultural competency, and organisational leadership in the community sector. He co-ordinates Praxis; a network of practitioner educators in youth development which operates in the Pacific Islands, Australia and New Zealand. He is the author of *The Invisible Table, Perspectives on Youth and Youth Work in New Zealand* (2006). Lloyd and his wife Anthea have four adult children and live in Cannons Creek, Porirua. They have recently written a book together, *Small Stories; Reflections on the Practice of Youth Development* (2011). Lloyd is nearing the end of a long and illustrious footy career (round ball).

### Agents of Change

Understanding our role in creating positive change in our churches, our communities and in the lives of young people we interact with. How do we use youth development approaches to involve our young people in addressing some of the big issues at a local level? How do we bring our churches with us on the journey?

#### Dr Rod Thompson

Rod took up his role as National Principal of Laidlaw College in September 2010. Prior to this Rod served as Head of the School of Theology. Rod has also worked as the Executive Officer for Vision Development with Christian Parent Controlled Schools in Australia; a high school teacher; and a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Sydney. Rod is married to Rosanne and they have four adult children and two granddaughters.

### Dream Big: Immersing in the gospel story

We live in an era of extremes, including extreme stories about human adventure and achievement. The gospel is a big story. It impels us to big dreams for our own lives, the world and the glory of God. How can we immerse in the biblical account of the gospel of Christ? What will that mean for our lives in the 21st century?

#### Mick and Ruby Duncan

Mick and Ruby live and work in Manurewa, South Auckland. Mick is the Pastor of the local Baptist church and the author of several books on discipleship *Who Stands Fast?: Discipleship in Difficult Times and Wild Ones*. Ruby leads an organisation (IOSIS, situated in Manurewa) that seeks to provide assistance to families facing issues around violence, addiction and poverty. She is the current president for the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services. They have three adult children and two grandchildren.

### Dreaming Big...Again.

Dreams we have for ourselves, others, and our ministry, sometimes fall over and collapse on us causing pain, a sense of failure, and despair. How do we dream and risk again in such a context? How do we keep serving in the trenches as life long followers of Jesus? How do we dream together as a community?



# A Hands-on Approach

*Graham Redding, Principal, Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership*

**O**ver the past few years I've noticed a bit of variety creeping into Presbytery ordination services. When it comes to the ordination prayer and the laying on of hands there seems to be considerable uncertainty about who should do the laying on of hands. Is it the moderator? Is it the clergy? Is it all members of presbytery (elders included)? Is it the congregation? Is it a mixture of the above?

I've been to services where each of the above practices has taken place, seemingly at the discretion of the moderator of the day.

In this rather eclectic situation it is perhaps worth asking ourselves what the usual Presbyterian practice has been historically, and whether this is worth maintaining.

In his definitive tome on the worship and offices of the Church of Scotland (1882), GW Sprott declared that "the power of ordination belongs to preaching Presbyters, and this is, of course, a fundamental principle of Presbyterianism".

A fundamental principle of Presbyterianism? Isn't that going a bit far? Why did Sprott accord the laying on of hands by preaching Presbyters such high status?

It had to do with a Reformed understanding of the doctrine of apostolic succession and the desire to steer a middle path between Romanism on the one hand and congregationalism on the other.

John Calvin and other Reformers had insisted that the church is apostolic not because of an uninterrupted leadership chain from Peter forward, as the Roman Catholic Church taught, but rather that the church is apostolic when it follows the teaching of the apostles as witnessed to in Scripture. Because this is a succession of function rather than persons, it is neither a bishop nor a congregation that ordains, but rather those preaching presbyters or pastors of the church who have themselves been called by Christ and set apart by the church to exercise this apostolic function.

Calvin's own teaching on this matter arose out of his reading of certain passages in the New Testament where through prayer and the laying on of hands an apostle or apostles were described as consecrating pastors, teachers and deacons. He wrote about this in his Institutes of Christian Religion, section 4.3.16, concluding, "Finally, we must understand that the whole multitude did not lay hands upon its ministers, but pastors alone did so."

Calvin's reasoning and resultant Reformed practice is not widely known these days; indeed, many people have come to view the laying on of hands by the pastors of the church as a reversion to the very kind of clericalism that Reformers like Calvin sought to expunge from the church. It is further suggested that this antiquated clericalism needs to be countered by a new practice that gives expression to the priesthood of all believers.

I would suggest, however, that such a reaction, though entirely understandable, is misplaced, and that any decision to revise or change this ancient practice should lie not with individual moderators but with the General Assembly, which should first be persuaded by a biblical and theological rationale for change. There are plenty of opportunities in an ordination service to give expression to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers without eliminating an act which, following the example of Scripture, speaks most clearly of apostolic authority and function.

Now, if we say that the ancient and Reformed practice of the laying on of hands by pastors of the church should still be the norm at ordination services, are we obliged to conclude that departures from this practice are rendered invalid, and that there are numerous pastors out there who have not been properly ordained? By no means. The Holy Spirit is not constrained by our sense of order. Nor should we bestow upon our reading of Scripture and understanding of the doctrine of apostolic succession the status of infallibility.

However, recognising the freedom of the Spirit and diversity of perspective in these matters does not mean that we are obliged to say that order no longer matters and to adopt an "anything goes" mentality. However imperfectly we might do it, we order the Church in ways that seek the mind of Christ and embody doctrinal principles grounded in the witness of Holy Scripture. And we do this collectively as a Church, not as individuals each doing what is right in our own eyes.

# Some Threads Come Together

*Geoffrey Skilton, Highgate Presbyterian, Southern Presbytery*

## Preface

Ordination is a public act preceding the first appointment of deacons, ruling elders and teaching elders (ministers) to a particular office in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. While the rubrics and mechanics of the associated services are frequently the focus of attention, little time is spent addressing the question, "What is ordination?" In 2010 the opportunity for me to examine and come to a renewed personal understanding of ordination was presented when a study leave topic was taken. The focus of the study was *Ordination in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand 1900 – 2010: a reflection on theology and practice from a historical perspective*. This included a minor comparative survey of the ordination services of the United Reformed Church (URC), and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI). This article is drawn largely from the concluding section titled, "Some Threads Come Together".

## Early ordination

In Jesus of Nazareth God Incarnate, the Old Covenant was fulfilled and the New Covenant inaugurated. In Christ there is both discontinuity and promise – promise that the descendants of Abraham will be more numerous than the grains of sand on a beach, and discontinuous, for in Christ all prior acts of, and future need for, atonement will be fulfilled. The pre-Christ ordering of the community of the faithful is negated, and a new way of ordering the life of the community of the faithful is still being worked out. The ordering of the community of the New Covenant will be completed, and perfected at the return of Christ.

Ordination as practised by the church of Jesus Christ has no direct antecedent in the Old Testament. It was a response to the needs of the second generation of Christians to organise community life after the death of the Apostles; to account for the multiplication of early churches geographically; to facilitate the need to authorise, recognise and protect the preaching and teaching of an oral Gospel. It is interesting to note that the New Testament does not locate the presidency at the table of the Lord, nor the responsibility to baptise, with any particular group of people. Thus unlike preaching and teaching, the ordinances were not offered the same protection.

Ordination in the period of the early churches was a human institutional response to a need to recognise leadership in the churches and to respond to Holy Spirit graced invitations to vocation. The most notable institutionalisation after the early period was the re-ordering of the Western churches with the evolution of large assemblies of believers under the emperor Constantine (CE 272-377). The re-ordering was expressed in religious orders, and rank within orders. The institution of the Roman church mirrored the ordering of the secular administration.

The universal church, the church catholic has over the centuries looked to the post-apostolic period for archetypes upon which to develop modes of selection and recognition of leaders, including leaders who preach-teach. The principle source of examples has been the New Testament, particularly the Book of Acts and the Epistles.

In the Jewish and Graeco-Roman culture of the New Testament period, respect and honour associated with age and gender were primary requirements for public recognition. So the elders were usually the head-owner of the house in which the church met, rather than someone appointed from outside the house. It was natural that the home-owner was host at the table in the house. Therefore we do not find a sub-group of elders designated with a particular title in the New Testament with a unique and exclusive teaching-preaching-sacramental role. What we do find are bishop-elders defined by culture, character traits, behaviours, and a solid grounding in the Gospel (1 Ti. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9). Some bishop-elders taught in addition to their oversight role (1 Ti. 5:17).

We also find that that following a process of selection-election (Ac. 1:15-26; Ac. 6:1-6; 13:1-3; 1 Ti. 4:12-16) an act of public recognition generally occurred. This act set people apart to do a particular task – the work of an apostle, works of charity, the work of mission, the work of preaching and teaching. The public recognition may also have served as a means of authorisation. Fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands were associated with the public recognition. This public act we call ordination.

### The Presbyterian Church practice

The Presbyterian Church has the practice of ordaining ruling and teaching elders. This is consistent with the supreme standard<sup>1</sup> of the denomination. However, an examination of the Appendices to the Book of Order, the ordination services of the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church's own ordination services and the Doctrine Core Group Report on Ordination to the 2010 General Assembly, suggests there is ambiguity surrounding the theology and practice of ordination within the Presbyterian Church.

Some of this ambiguity arises from the heavy dependence upon the churches of Scotland in our formative years, particularly in the development of service books. The shape of the churches of Scotland ordination services was influenced by Reformation politics in England and Scotland, and the intimate state-church relationships of the Reformed churches of Calvin in Geneva and Zwingli in Zurich. The consequence was an acceptance of a division in the elders, which was expressed in the ordination of teaching elders by laying on of hands with prayer (by teaching elders), while the ruling elders gave their assent by standing.

The unease that some may feel about ordination in the Presbyterian Church may be accounted for by three factors. The first factor is the requirement that ruling and teaching elders sign the same formula. Secondly, there is almost identical prayer wording (at the point of laying on of hands) in the ordination service of both a minister of Word and Sacrament and an elder.

The third factor is not related to the content of the ordination services but the context and actions which convey perceptions. The service of ordination for a teaching elder is a function of a duly constituted meeting of presbytery. Whereas, the ordination of a ruling elder occurs in a congregational service of worship in which the wider Church is present in the minister and the commissioned presbytery elder. However, it is the minister who lays hands on the elder elect, who prays and announces that the ordination is complete. The minister then invites the other ruling elders to greet the newly ordained ruling elder.

The first perception given is that the ordination of ruling elders is not as important as that of teaching elders despite what good theology, regulations and rubrics might say. The impression of subordination occurs because the ordination proceeds at the instruction of a lower court.

At the ordination of a minister of Word and Sacrament, where a number of clergy lay hands on an ordinand, the impression may be given that the power or the indelible quality of the ordained resides in a group. While at the ordination of a ruling elder, the perception that may be conveyed is that the authority to ordain resides in a particular individual. The location of an indelible quality or the power to impart additional grace exclusively through an individual or group is sacerdotalism.

### Ordination in other churches

Removal of the ambiguity and any impression of sacerdotalism may be overcome by looking to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) and the United Reformed Church (United Kingdom). All the denominations in this essay affirm that ordination is enacted in the name of Christ, and under the authority of the universal church.

The PCI in *The Code*, made the representation of the church universal to ruling elders, teaching elders, the session and the congregation, through the action of presbytery. Therefore, it has required that the ordination of ruling and teaching elders is the responsibility of a duly constituted meeting of presbytery. This process enhances the respect and honour of all elders. The honouring of the office is also recognised in the participation of teaching elders and commissioned elders of the presbytery imposing hands with the moderator during the prayer of ordination.

The URC has made the congregation a necessary participant in ordination. It is the congregation which first tests an individual's sense of vocation, and without a vote to issue a call toward the conclusion of the period of testing, there is no ordination. Vocation is initiated by the prior and first movement of the Holy Spirit, who graced the one who is to be ordained with a sense of call, or who prompted a believer, unbeliever or elder of the church to invite that person to consider training for the ministry. The local church is a participant in the process that leads to, and authorises ordination.

1 Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, *Book of Order: Rules and Forms of Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*, 1.1(2).

Likewise, the Presbyterian Church here in New Zealand will licence, through a presbytery, an individual who has satisfactorily completed a course of study and has met readiness for ministry requirements. However a licentiate cannot be ordained until a congregation has voted to extend a call. The call requests that the presbytery ordain the licentiate and then induct her/him to the charge. The congregation is active in the process.

#### **Ordination – challenges and opportunities**

In the URC the presence of congregational polity, finds expression in representatives of the congregation participating in the act of ordination at the laying on of hands. By adopting such practice, our Church might belatedly honour the many congregants, elders, deacons and clergy of the congregational union who were received into the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand in 1969. Such an action might also visually depict an understanding that the elders – ruling and teaching – exercise their vocations from within the congregation at the authorisation of the church universal through the presbytery.

“ Examination suggests there is ambiguity surrounding the theology and practice of ordination within the Presbyterian Church.”

The current practice of distinctly separate courts authorising ordination, and the language of CVs – minister information forms, can give the impression that ministers come alongside congregations as consultants, enablers, facilitators, or ecclesiastical experts. A less beneficent take of the visual impression is that ministers come from above as CEOs, managers, or regents.

If the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand honoured its Reformed presbyterial roots, and made the ordination of ruling elders and teaching elders a function of a duly constituted meeting of presbytery, we may have a fuller, unambiguous biblical understanding and practice of ordination. It would be legislated that in such a meeting, ruling and teaching elders impose hands on the ordinand, as would representatives of the calling congregation. To embrace this position is not without its challenges.

One obvious outcome of holding such a position and arguing for a single ordination, conducted by the presbytery, with hands imposed by the institutionally ordained, and people ordained by baptism is the difficulty created for ecumenical progress with Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Episcopalian denominations. Denominations which honour successional (apostolic) authorisation and the indelibility of ordination already have difficulty recognising the ordination of Reformed ministers. The participation of people who might be described as lay ordained (ruling elders) – now there’s an ambiguity – and the laity in the laying on of hands at ordination would make the mutual recognition of ministry more difficult – if not impossible.

However, our bedrock is not the lack of unity in the Church, or the rightness of an ecumenical journey. Our foundation is sourced in Jesus the Lord and Saviour of the Church, as revealed in the Supreme Standard of the church, and expressed in the Subordinate Standards. Therefore the question we must answer to measure our progress toward being the church catholic is not, “Is our ecclesiology Reformed?” but, “Is our ecclesiology more consistent with our understanding of the Scriptures today than it was a year, a decade, or a century ago?”

# My Journey to Ordination

*Ryhan Prasad, Khandallah Presbyterian, Wellington Presbytery*

**A**s a recent graduate of the new ministry training format I was asked to write an article about my journey of ordination. I am going to attempt to do that in the shortest amount of words possible to ensure that you don't get too bored reading this, and so that I also have time to write the sermon for Sunday.

You see it really has been like flicking a switch in some respects, one minute you're an intern learning and reflecting and studying and then the next you are intimately involved in everything in your parish as well as feeling the ever present, Spirit-filled shadow of preparing the Sunday service looming over you.

And I'm not being negative – I'm simply stating the fact of life as a minister of Word and Sacrament as I see it. I am no longer "practicing" – I am now doing it for real. If there is one difference from the practice to the training I would say it's responsibility. There is a difference that comes with ordination and I believe it is a Spirit-given mandate to actually fulfill the role of minister of Word and Sacrament that I could never do on my own.

My journey to ordination began and ended with two distinct events of being nurtured and welcomed. The first I remember was the weekend of national assessment where we were robustly put through our paces in areas of teamwork, personal ability, preaching and psychological evaluation. Throughout all of this weekend my family and I felt welcomed and supported in a way that was extremely empowering.

Then at my recent ordination and induction service I was once again humbled by the feeling of welcome and support present in the building. It was here that it hit me just how many people had been involved in my journey of ordination. To stand in the aisle and shake hands and hug so many people whom I knew had played some part in my formation for ministry was truly humbling. As I stood there, I was a little bit embarrassed because I didn't want to hold the service up but I also didn't want to be disrespectful to those who had cared enough to be involved in my formation.

This is when I realised how important our Church's process of discernment and call to ordination truly is. It is not simply me thinking that God is calling me to be a minister – it is also the whole body of the Church recognising and affirming that call. I am not alone in my ministry; I have the backing and support of all those who have been a part of my formation, and they also discern that this is God's call to ministry and not just my own.

And this is important when you hear the sermon at your ordination outline the perils of being a pastor and how it's "a mug's game" and "you'd have to be crazy to be a minister" – at this point I was wondering what I gotten myself into as the preacher seemed intent on making me change my mind! In fact, I remember being an 18 year-old in a church service thinking that standing up there trying to engage and teach people sitting down would be the last thing in the world I would want to do.

And that is why ordination is so different from many other roles we have in life. I answered a call, a call I couldn't deny. It is a commitment based on God's call, not our choice. The Church with its processes at a parish, presbytery and national level, tests and hopes to affirm that call.

And I am so thankful that once the Church discerns a call, it then provides formation and training for all of its ordinands. My time spent as an intern at Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership (KCML) was one of the most amazing and spiritual times of my life. I learned both the practical and theoretical sides to ordained ministry, and the staff were both incredibly supportive and challenging in their teaching roles. I definitely had a sense that the KCML staff were serving the wider Church well in terms of ensuring we were equipped in the best way possible to be future ministers. The particular ability to talk freely and honestly about our views on theological issues and then on how those views would translate into a parish environment were invaluable learning experiences.

I wrote earlier that the call to ordination was a journey with others and my fellow ordinands or interns were a big part of that journey. I have made friends for life among my fellow students and a large part of my learning was, and continues to be, from their input.

I believe as a Church we have a strong understanding of ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament and the quality processes for formation of such people. Again I would reiterate how affirming my ordination service was and how I felt that I was not in this alone. I imagine that is a great support for all ministers of Word and Sacrament, to know that we are not alone in our ministries, that we are called by God and that call is supported by our congregations, our peers and our loved ones. It is a call we could never live out on our own and so I am immensely thankful for the love and support of the Church, that even though we may not feel it all the time, we know it is there by the virtue of our very ordination.



# Understanding ordination

Anne Thomson, First Church Dunedin, Southern Presbytery

**O**rdination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament is a tradition of very long standing in the church, reaching back to the early centuries. In the New Testament the call and equipping of the Holy Spirit recognised by the local congregation was publicly manifested in prayer and the laying on of hands.

In the next centuries this developed into a threefold pattern of ordained ministry, which came to be described primarily in the language and imagery of priesthood, although this was not a New Testament image of such roles. The Reformers reacted against this imagery, particularly in its sacramental focus, and lifted up the reaching-teaching role of the minister as central.

The World Council of Churches has sought to bring together these various understandings of ordained ministry within the church. The hierarchical pattern of ministry which has been inherent in the threefold ministry has been challenged by others who do not believe that hierarchy is appropriate or credible within the Christian community.

## Different understandings of ordination

Ordination has been viewed in a variety of ways through the church's history and in the different branches of the church. One understanding is that ordination effects an *ontological* change in the person ordained, creating a different sort of person. Another understanding is that ordination is a *sacramental sign* of God's initiative, of the covenant between God and the church, and of the new relationship between the one ordained and the congregation. There is the *charismatic* understanding of ordination: the Spirit's gifts to individuals for the building up of the church. Another understanding of ordination is *representative*, representing both God to the church and the church to the wider society. Ordination can also be understood in *functional* terms, focusing on the tasks of ministry within the church which belong to the ordained ministry.

Often people seek to answer the question "what is ordination?" in terms of one of these understandings. I think it is more helpful to hold them in creative tension, to see them as different facets of ordination, each reflecting a different aspect of one of God's gracious gifts to God's church. In each we can better understand something of God, something of the church, something of those who are ordained. At times it will be more important to emphasise one over others, yet we need all together to gain a more complete appreciation of God's care and provision.

## Origins of ordination

Laying on of hands (*epithesis ton cheiron*) was part of the way in which the church in the New Testament instituted people to a particular task or office. In Acts 13:1-3 God called on the church at Antioch to 'set apart' Barnabas and Saul for a particular task to which God had called them, and the church, after fasting and praying, laid hands on them and sent them off. Earlier, in Acts 6:6, the twelve had appointed seven deacons by praying and laying hands on them.

Beyond the narrow range of words associated directly with ordination (*cheirotomia*, *epitheis ton cheiron*), there is a broader understanding of ministry within the body of Christ found in the New Testament. Paul's various lists of the gifts of the Spirit given for ministry (Romans 1:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:11) indicate the diversity of roles and tasks which were part of the church. The various gifts and ministries were given to different members of the church for the purpose of contributing to the health and wellbeing of the whole.

In this egalitarian vision of the church as body of Christ, each member has their own God-given Spirit-breathed ministry to carry out. Leadership gifts and ministries are included, but hierarchical ordering of these gifts and ministries is not part of the context in which they are to be exercised – "everyone among you [is] not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to think"<sup>1</sup>; "God has so arranged the body, giving greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body"<sup>2</sup>.

There is a tension between the egalitarian vision of Paul's writing and the more ordered church life depicted in the Pastoral Epistles. As the church becomes institution, there develops "congregational

1 Rom.12:3

2 1 Cor.12:24,25

ministry based on a hierarchy of presider (bishop), elders, deacons and deaconesses"<sup>3</sup>. This three-form pattern of leadership was established as the norm in many times and places throughout subsequent church history.

By the fourth century, ordination rites attested in *The Apostolic Tradition*, a work found in Latin, Sahidic, Arabic and Ethiopic versions, and closely paralleled in three other texts,<sup>4</sup> share two principal characteristics: (a) both election by the people and prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit are central to the act of ordination; (b) ordination happens within a local church community, in the presence of the people who have chosen the person and who pray together for the gift of the Spirit to come to him or her, even if the laying on of hands is carried out by a bishop.<sup>5</sup>

In the New Testament the only references to "priest" (*hierus*) refer to Jesus in his high priestly role, to pagan or Jewish priests, or to the priesthood of the whole Christian community.<sup>6</sup> Yet within three centuries, priesthood became the predominant image of Christian leadership.<sup>7</sup> John Chrysostom at the end of the fourth century, in his treatise *On Priesthood*, outlines the responsibilities of the priesthood – sacramental functions, administering the saving rite of the Eucharist; disciplinary functions, excommunicating, providing judgement; teaching functions, refuting pagans and heretics; pastoral functions, visiting all manner of people but with particular responsibility for virgins, widows and married women.<sup>8</sup> The gift of the Holy Spirit sought at ordination came to be seen as effecting a change in the person ordained, classically expressed by Augustine as an indelible character impressed on the soul.<sup>9</sup>

The Reformation challenged the notion of priesthood as it had developed in the medieval church. Martin Luther said, "Our baptism consecrates all without exception and makes us all priests."<sup>10</sup> Luther's understanding of priesthood centred on the offering of gifts and intercessions, which all Christian people were called to share in by their baptism. John Calvin's understanding of priesthood focused on offering a sacrifice in propitiation, and since Christ had accomplished this once and for all on the cross, there was no need for further priests.<sup>11</sup>

Calvin rejected all notions of priesthood, and looked rather to God's gift of ministry to the church. It was God's choice to govern the church through "the ministry of men"<sup>12</sup>, so that we could learn humility by obeying the gospel preached by one like us, and be bound together in dependence on another. From Ephesians 4:11, Calvin lists the foundational ministries of the church as "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers", but he considers that the roles of apostle, prophet and evangelist were applicable only in the early days of the church, or in extraordinary circumstances. Pastors and teachers, however, are given by God to hold the "ordinary offices" in the church.<sup>13</sup> Pastors are the successors of the apostles, whom Jesus commissioned to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments: baptism and communion. These are the two principal tasks of the pastor in a local congregation.<sup>14</sup>

Ordination to ministry was the external and formal recognition of God's call on a person's life, a call which was both secretly inward and publicly given by the people. Such an election was to be undertaken with prayer and "religious fear,"<sup>15</sup> by the "consent and approbation of the people,"<sup>16</sup> and the appropriate form of ordination was the laying on of hands by other pastors.<sup>17</sup>

3 *ibid.*, p.12

4 *The Apostolic Tradition: a Commentary*, Paul F Bradshaw, Maxwell E Johnson and L Edward Phillips

5 *ibid.*, p.27

6 'Before there has been any theological reflection all the NT witnesses are sure of one decisive fact: official priesthood, which exists to conciliate and mediate between God and the community, is found in Judaism and in paganism; but since JC there has been only one such office – that of JC himself. It is shared by whole church, and never by one church member as distinct from others. Here therefore there is without exception the common priesthood, with no laity.' In *Church Order in the New Testament*, Eduard Schweizer, p.21d

7 *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry*, Donald E Messer, pp.34,35

8 *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, Richard H Niebuhr, and Daniel D Williams (eds.), pp.82-3

9 *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* Everett Ferguson (ed.), p.665

10 *An Appeal to the Ruling Class*, Martin Luther, cited in *Reformed Ministry: Traditions of Ministry and Ordination in the United Reformed Church*, Tony Tucker, p.5

11 *Ministry and Priesthood*, T W Manson, p.38

12 *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Jean Calvin, IV.3.2, p.317

13 *ibid.*, IV.3.4, p.318

14 *ibid.*, IV.3.6, p.320

15 *ibid.*, IV.3.12, p.323

16 *ibid.*, IV.3.15, p.325

17 *ibid.*, IV.3.16, p.326

### Twentieth century developments

In the 20th century, the formation of the World Council of Churches focussed the attention of many on the goal of visible Church unity. The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council provided theological support for the efforts towards manifesting more visibly God's gift of Church unity.<sup>18</sup> The 1982 paper *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* was the culmination of 50 years of study and discussion.

In considering ministry, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* began with the understanding of the calling of the whole people of God. Within the multiplicity of gifts, "the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and provide... a focus for its unity."<sup>19</sup> Such people are the ordained ministry of the Church, called by Christ through the Holy Spirit to represent Christ, to proclaim his message, to lead and teach, to assemble and guide the people.<sup>20</sup> Ordination is the public act by which Christ confers authority and the community accords public recognition to a particular person. Such setting apart is consecration to service, a gift of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the whole body.<sup>21</sup>

Ordination occurs "in the name of Christ by the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands"<sup>22</sup> In ordination both God and the community act, as those ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task, and the congregation upholds them in acknowledgement and prayer.

It is not surprising that the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document upholds the traditional understanding of the ordained ministry within the Church, as essential for its ongoing life, a focus of unity, a representation of Christ's ministry to the people and of the people's ministry to Christ and to the world. The threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon is commended as the most generally accepted pattern through history and an expression of unity. It is noted, however, that there is no single New Testament pattern and that a variety of forms of ordained ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit in different historical contexts.<sup>23</sup>

### What the book of Order says

In the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, two statements in ordination are included in the Appendices to the Book of Order. The first, approved by the General Assembly in 1937, states clearly that "ordination is not the conferring of a personal status or privilege, but the setting apart of men and women to perform certain functions within the Church to the glory of God".<sup>24</sup> The later statement, approved in 1966, rejects the understanding of ordained ministry as an expression of democratic leadership or sacramental priesthood or autocratic hierarchy, but grounds it firmly in the Word of the Gospel, which is to be the primary pre-occupation of the ministry. The statement does suggest that the ordained minister is "engaged on a task of such a character that he or she is marked by it", as one who is now bound in the service of Christ and the Church.<sup>25</sup>

The current Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand defines ordination and sets in the context of baptism. The functional understanding of ordination remains the strongest within our Church, along with the representative function of ministering "in the name of Jesus Christ to, with, and for the whole Church."<sup>26</sup>

### Challenges to traditional forms of ordained ministry

Over the past century, alongside these explorations of the commonalities in the traditional views of ordination across the churches, there have been those who have questioned the validity of such views, critiquing them as inadequate to be the style of leadership among followers of Jesus Christ. Feminist theologians have been among those most sceptical of the traditional forms of ordained ministry, particularly since those churches which hold most strongly to the threefold pattern of ministry and the priestly understanding of ordained ministry have also been or continue to be unwilling to ordain women to the priesthood.

18 *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No.111, p.vii

19 *ibid.*, Ministry' II.A.8, p.21

20 *ibid.*, 'Ministry' II.A.11, p.21

21 *ibid.*, 'Ministry' II.B.15, p.22

22 *ibid.*, 'Ministry' V.A.39, p.30

23 *ibid.*, Ministry III.A.22, p.24

24 *Appendix D-3: Statement on Ordination*, [www.presbyterian.org.nz](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz) 28/8/07

25 *Appendix D-4: Ordination and the Ministry of Word and Sacraments*, [www.presbyterian.org.nz](http://www.presbyterian.org.nz) 28/8/07

26 *ibid.*, 9.1.2

The hierarchical structures of power that have been part of the traditional understanding of Church, shaped by patriarchy (or kyriarchy<sup>27</sup>), have been challenged by women, both as a barrier to women's ordination, and more generally as incredible and inappropriate patterns of order in church life.<sup>28</sup>

Miroslav Volf has raised questions about the position of ordained leadership in the church, as he develops ecclesiology in the light of the Trinity. Starting with the premise that relations within the Trinity are symmetrical rather than hierarchical, he suggests:

"The more the church is characterised by symmetrical and decentralised distribution of power and freely affirmed interaction, the more it corresponds to trinitarian communion."<sup>29</sup>

All members of the church are gifted with the Spirit's charismata, to be used for the good of all others. The distinctive character of the charismata of office is that they are focused on the entire local church, "representing and serving the congregation, acting in the name of the congregation and in name of Christ before the congregation as whole."<sup>30</sup>

Ordination is the public reception of the charisma given by God focusing on the local church as a whole, and it is the action of the entire local congregation led by the Holy Spirit.<sup>31</sup> The charismata of office, like any of the Spirit's charismata, are not in Volf's view irrevocable or necessarily lifelong – that would deny the Spirit's sovereignty – but he does see them as more stable institutions than other charismata because they are explicitly and publicly recognised by the church.<sup>32</sup>

*Editor's Note: This synthesis, which Anne completed at the end of her ordination training, has been edited for length. A full copy of the synthesis is available from Anne e.anne.thomson@gmail.com*



**KNOX CENTRE  
FOR MINISTRY  
& LEADERSHIP**

## KNOX CENTRE MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS 2012



**Each year, the Knox Centre offers six music scholarships.  
The deadline for applications is 30 April 2012.**

The purpose of the music scholarships is to encourage and equip young musicians in the conduct of public worship. Each scholarship consists of an expenses-paid two-day workshop on music and worship at the Knox Centre, plus a cash grant. Applicants must be under 30 years of age. The next music and worship workshop will be held in December 2012, to coincide with the Samstock music festival.

Applications for the above scholarships will close on 30th April 2011. Enquiries can be directed to the Principal of the Knox Centre. To apply for the scholarships, write a letter of application to the Principal detailing the nature of your involvement in music and worship, and include with your letter a reference from your Minister.

<sup>27</sup> "rule of the father/lord/master/husband", elite male-defined relationships of ruling: *The Power of Naming: a Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, p. xxi

<sup>28</sup> *Feminist Theology/Christian Theology*, Pamela Dickey Young, p.106

<sup>29</sup> *After Our Likeness*, Miroslav Volf, p.236

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p.247

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p.249

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, pp.250-1

# Going Deep a good read

*Reviewed by Peter Cheyne, Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand*

**Gordon MacDonald, *Going Deep: Becoming A Person Of Influence* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2011). ISBN 978-0-7852-2608-6; 383pp.**

**G***oing Deep* is a semi-fictional account of a church that decides the pastor and his wife should give up a number of their responsibilities so as to meet with a group of about 12 hand-picked people every week for a year. The intention was to deepen those people. In other words, the pastor was to be like a rabbi with his school of disciples, training them by instruction, imitation and examination – like Jesus, in fact!

The book follows the church's progress as it establishes what it calls "cultivating deep people", and then through the first year of meeting. During that year, the group explored issues such as how to read and really understand, temperament, the marks of Christian character as found in biblical and other Christian case studies, spiritual gifts, leadership skills, spiritual disciplines, and telling the story of their own lives. Each person also had the opportunity to shadow the pastor for a day and met regularly with a mentor.

The motivation came from a conviction that, in these turbulent times, the future of the church will depend on having grown good leaders. The pastor is galvanised by a quote from *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster: "The desperate need today is not for a great number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people".

In the context of the story, there is a large amount of very useful information for anyone thinking about focusing his/her ministry on making disciples. MacDonald gives his criteria for selection, his curriculum, his expectations of group members, etc.

Telling the story as a novel slows down the delivery of the information but does provide a picture of the dynamics, decisions, objections and other realities of doing this in a church.

The book is semi-fictional in that it is actually based on MacDonald's own experience of making disciples in this way. He describes this as his "ministry sweet spot". He says that cultivating deep people is a pastor's top priority. The pastor's role is not so much to lead an organisation but to develop people; yet MacDonald questions the commitment and ability of the modern church to do that.

My only criticism of the book is that everything seemed a little too easy. I suspect that any such implementation of intentional disciple-making is going to run into more serious opposition than is encountered here.

I highly recommend this book. It is easy reading, but focused on a crucial ministry issue and gives lots of guidance. It is well worth reading and might change your understanding of where you should be investing your time.



# Accessible for young adults

Thomas Mitchell

**Bartha Hill, *Trust God, Keep the Faith: The Story of Guido de Bres* (Neerlandia: New Inheritance Publications, 2011). ISBN: 9780921100102; 89pp.**

**I think I might classify as a soft Christian. That's what I'm tempted to believe after reading Dunedin-based author Bartha Hill's biography of her hardy and steadfast ancestor, French Protestant pastor and theologian Guido de Bres in *Trust God, Keep the Faith*.**

Living in Europe during the 16th century, de Bres stood on the side of church reform and therefore became the subject of extreme persecution in his Catholic homeland, which eventually led to his execution at the gallows in 1567 when he was just 45 years old. A student of both John Calvin and Theodore Beza, de Bres wrote an important statement of the Christian faith known as the Belgic Confession (1561) and his life makes an excellent subject for a book. His story also serves as a good reminder to 21st century "softies" like me that "faith under fire" means a bit more than keeping my cool in Auckland traffic.

The book itself is not large. It is intended for older children and at 89 pages, and with some pictures, I think my 13-year-old niece would happily read it in one sitting. Hill writes in language and a tone that are definitely accessible, and as a journalist whose work has appeared for World Vision, *Otago Daily Times*, and *NZ Women's Weekly* she is a skilled writer who adds nice touches throughout the story to recreate conversations between de Bres and his family, as well as providing period background that offers some logic behind his decision-making.

If it lacks anything, I would say this book could provide a little more information penned from the Catholic side of the story and definitely more information on de Bres' legacy, especially in helping to establish the Reformed church in Europe.

Overall though, this is a book that I have enjoyed reading and testimonies like this deserve to be told both within and outside the Church. The religious and other democratic freedoms that we enjoy in New Zealand should not be taken for granted. They were won through the determination, courage and love of people who have gone before us – like Guido de Bres.

*Editor's Note: Copies are available by emailing Bartha Hill (barthahill@yahoo.com) or sending a cheque (\$15.00 including P&P) to Bartha Hill, 3 McMillan Street, Maori Hill, Dunedin, 9010.*

# Account of Presbyterian theological education wins praise

*Geoff King, Knox Presbyterian, Christchurch*

**Simon H Rae, *Challenge and Change: An Account of Theological Education and Ministry Training at Knox College, Dunedin, 1976–2010* (Dunedin: Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, 2011.) ISBN 978-0-473-18599-2; 202 pages.**

**“Change is the law of life. And those who only look to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.”**

The quotation from John F. Kennedy with which Simon Rae begins the eighth chapter of *Challenge and Change* strikes this reviewer as a succinct and provocative summary of the author’s purpose, and also his not inconsiderable achievement in writing this book.

Rae brings the skills of an accomplished historian and theologian to the fraught and difficult task of fashioning a narrative of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand’s variously-named official provider of theological education and ministry training during arguably the most tumultuous time in its history. The result is an eminently readable, insightful, and in itself challenging volume that does much more than merely look to the past.

Following a brief foreword by the Very Rev Dr Graham Redding, who as principal of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership commissioned the book, a slightly longer preface by the author outlines the volume’s intent to: “bring the story of ministry training and theological education in the Presbyterian Church up to date” by means of the analysis and careful interpretation of reliable (and in most cases primary) sources.

A two-page glossary of terms and abbreviations follows, preceding the aptly-titled first chapter *Celebrating One Hundred Years – 1876–1976*. Drawing both on Ian Breward’s seminal *Grace and Truth: A History of the Theological Hall Knox College, Dunedin 1876–1975* and referring also to a wide range of primary and secondary sources, this chapter provides a concise yet comprehensive introduction to the topic and concludes with an account and some insightful analysis of the celebrations that marked the Theological Hall’s centennial year.

The second chapter, *The Theological Hall 1976–1984*, deals with developments that took place during what some would later regard as the Hall’s heyday, including a new partnership with the Maori Synod; changes in Hall staff, the student body and the Hewitson Library; developments in cultural, social and spiritual formation; and the first signs of the conflict to come with the formation of a special committee on training for ministry in 1975.

Chapter Three, *Creative Energy and the Stress of Diversity – 1985–1989*, and Chapter Four, *In Difficult Times – Years of Tension, 1989–1994*, deal honestly with the sequence of events that led to the demise of Knox Theological Hall, which is described in Chapter Five. *The aptly-entitled sixth chapter, Back to the Drawing Board: Inventing the School of Ministry – 1997*, charts the process of transition which ensued following the University of Otago’s decision to terminate its agreement with the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and other churches in regard to the provision of theological education.

Chapter Seven, *The School of Ministry, Knox College – 1997–2007*, provides a comprehensive overview of the ordination studies programme developed for the increasingly diverse group of people presenting themselves for training as ministers of word and sacrament in the Presbyterian Church. Chapter Eight, *Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership*, brings the narrative chronologically up to the present, and the final chapter offers an incisive analysis of the theological, sociological, and ecclesiological factors that have made the period 1976–2010 one of both “continuity and change”. A helpful appendix providing names and years of service of staff, a select bibliography and a comprehensive index bring the volume to a close.

As one who trained for ministry during what Rae describes as the Theological Hall’s “years of tension”, and also worked as a research assistant on what turned out to be the University of Otago’s fateful review of its theological faculty, I found *Challenge and Change* compelling reading. Many

times I found the author's skilful interweaving of sources and careful analysis making me aware of a much bigger picture than I had been able to see when enmeshed in the processes being described.

I also found, and still find myself thinking, that this book deserves a place on the bookshelves not just of those who have a personal association with the former Theological Hall and School of Ministry, or the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership as it is today. I sincerely hope that *Challenge and Change* will be a required text for all seeking to train for any kind of ministry in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, as with all due respect to John F Kennedy, any serious student of Church history in general and the history of theological education in particular cannot avoid concluding with George Santayana that those who cannot (or will not) remember may well be condemned to repeat the past.

*Editor's Note: Copies of Challenge and Change are available from the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.*

## New traditions

Martin Baker

**T**here is something strange about tradition. I remember quite clearly a few years ago introducing a time at the start of our church service when we paused to welcome those around us. No big deal. It happens in hundreds of churches across New Zealand every Sunday. It just hadn't ever been a practice in this one. Within two months of us including this as part of our weekly welcome, the elder who had responsibility for this part of the service announced, with complete sincerity "that we have a long standing tradition in our church of welcoming those around us at the start of each service...".

In our Presbyterian Church we commonly identify Lent, we celebrate Christmas, we have rituals that involve candles and use images, and have musical instruments in our worship – many practices which would have been unthinkable in some of the Presbyterian congregations of another era.

I am not sure what happens, but at some point, some practice came into being for some reason, and through some process, became sanctioned as a tradition worth fiercely holding on to.

There is a fascinating book by William Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain* where he tells of visiting some of the ancient monasteries and religious communities located in the arc from Turkey round to Egypt, that trace their origins to the earliest times of Christianity. He makes a good case that the posture adopted for prayer by the earliest Christians was much the same as that preserved by practicing Muslims today. Kneeling or standing, arms outstretched in supplication to God. Arguments that seem to upset modern-day people about the correct forms of baptism for instance, do not seem to reflect the pragmatism of a far more ancient era which seemed more concerned with how much water happened to be around at any given time. There are ancient records, for instance, that tell of desert monks using their own spittle to baptise new believers, (don't try that at home).

While we affirm the sacraments as central to our worship life and Christian understanding, other church traditions and rituals, and the buildings and structures in which they are enacted, have been created by people to reflect particular contexts and situations. They are transient, conditional and temporary. None should be above interrogation, nor should any be sanctioned by attributing them with the qualities of God. We, in our Reformed tradition, may dedicate or set aside building or even ordain people, but we do not consecrate or make holy through some ritual or other. That is God's business.

I have just read a really good article in the 12 September 2011 *New Yorker* called "Decline, Fall, Rinse, Repeat" by Adam Gopnik. He uses a word which I did not even know existed, but I am pleased to find out that it does. Here goes, this is the first time I have ever used it. The word is declinism.

A declinist is a person who points to current changes, and predicts that an end to something is coming (e.g. the world, rock music, western civilisation, the daily newspaper etc). As Gopnik

explains, to be a really good declinist, you need to first of all explain why previous declinists were wrong. The population boom that did not go boom; the Russians that did not invade; the dominoes which did not keep falling. In fact, it seems that the best declinists insist that the previous era was actually a peak rather than the valley that the former declinists thought they were looking at.

Gopnik concludes that declinism is a bad idea, because no one can have any notion of what will happen next. He adds "...yet the idea of our decline is emotionally magnetic, because life is a long slide down and the plateau just passed is easier to love than the one coming up".

Maybe it is being too hard, but I think churches can provide something of a breeding ground for declinists. Or at the very least we get confused between providing a prophetic voice which points to the presence and outcomes of injustice and sin, and a declinist who sees a worsening situation as being inevitable. The writer of the hymn with the words "...change and decay in all around I see..." was a declinist rather than a prophet for instance.

I do not think there is, for example, any doubt that far fewer attend our churches than was the case 30 years ago, that we now have fewer active ordained ministers, or that the role and presence of our church in society has changed significantly from what it once was. Even though it is going to happen, I am not sure what we are going to do when a significant portion of our church buildings are going to be identified as being unsafe for public use.

What I am sure about is the affirmation central to our resurrection faith, that the inevitabilities of the past do not determine what might happen in the future. We have 30,000 members, over a billion dollars of land and buildings and \$100m stored up in our congregations' bank accounts. Our congregations generate over \$50m per year - most of it coming from the enormous generosity of church members.

We have able, smart, committed leaders, well-trained ministers and elders. We have an amazing cross-section of cultures, wonderful young people and excited children. We do have some great traditions and inspiring testimonies from our present and past. Whether we find ourselves listening to the stories of Cargill and Burns from First Church, celebrating a cup of tea with our Pacific communities, listening to our ministers tell about establishing Korean churches in Auckland or the story behind Te Aka Puaho's most recent congregation of Te Taitokerau. With the blessings of such richness come the challenge not to grasp onto decaying edifices or preserve what once was, but to create the new traditions and ways of being the Church that will speak Good News to the communities of today.



# Glen Innis

**Free holiday accommodation for ministers in Central Hawkes Bay**

## Upcoming vacancies

March 19 – 26	Cottage
March 26 – April 2	Homestead / Cottage
April 2 – 9	Cottage
April 23 – 30	Cottage
May 7 – 14	Homestead

**For information and bookings, please contact**

**Margaret Black at [glen.innis@xtra.co.nz](mailto:glen.innis@xtra.co.nz) or (06) 855-4889.**

**There is a \$50 booking fee, refundable on arrival at Glen Innis.**



# Keen on a Challenge?

Lansdowne Presbyterian and St Luke's Union Churches in Masterton (population around 18,000) are seeking a dynamic nationally ordained minister to lead the next stage of their faith journey. After nearly a hundred years working separately these two Churches are now together seeking a minister who will enable each to develop a fresh approach to ministry and mission in the context of worshiping and working together. The two parishes expect to work together within the structure of a Local Ecumenical partnership (LEP)



The minister being sought should be young at heart, a well trained outward and forward thinking person, with a good sense of humour possessing a mature personal faith, who will link faith to life in a high quality and relevant teaching ministry. You will need to relate well to people of different backgrounds and have well tuned leadership skills. You will lead creative inspirational services in both Churches ably supported by a joint worship committee and lay worship teams.

Lansdowne is a well established suburban Church with experience of working with both Presbyterian and Methodist ministers in its recent past.

St Luke's Union strategically located in the centre of Masterton includes a Samoan Congregation with its own lay leadership. It also has a distinctive, fully registered, and well supported Christian Child Care Centre as a part of its complex. It is also home to XplorationsNZ: a centre now more than ten years old, open to all that facilitates and encourages progressive Christian thinking.

## **The position is full time and attracts standard Presbyterian terms of call**

If you think you are the person to respond to the challenge of leading these two Churches into a new stage of their journey in Masterton and can work well with colleagues in the other five parishes in the Wairarapa (with whom you will be planning mission and outreach for all the parishes) then contact Judith Harris [donjudith@yahoo.com](mailto:donjudith@yahoo.com) or 06-378 2778 (evenings) or 021 02347066 without delay and ask for a profile of the ministry planned for these two parishes. Judith is a member of the Settlement Board and Chair of St Luke's Parish Council. Expressions of interest close at the end of April but if you are thinking that this position is for you then do not delay-we wish to hear from you as soon as possible.



# GROUP STUDY SOCIAL ISSUES RESOURCES

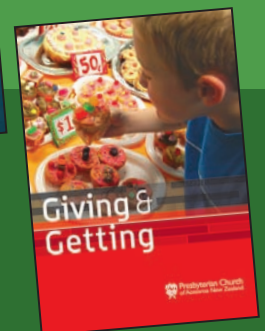
To obtain free additional copies of these booklets for study groups in your parish, contact us:

Email: [info@presbyterian.org.nz](mailto:info@presbyterian.org.nz) or

Phone: 04 801 6000

Or, all studies can also be downloaded free on our website:

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