

Candour



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR MINISTERS

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Global Mission and Partnership



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Joining together in mission...

Pamela Tankersley*

Kiwi Presbyterians join together in mission beyond our shores with great enthusiasm – we have consistently done so over the 160 years of our history in New Zealand. While the primary agency for parishes and individuals has been Global Mission (and its predecessors), others have supported overseas mission through other mission agencies. Still others send missionaries off to remote parts of the world in their own capacity. To the extent that we are supporting these ventures with our prayers, our practical help and our funds – we are involved in overseas mission as Presbyterians.

Personally I am inspired by the self-giving compassion, the resourcefulness and resilience, the sheer faithfulness to the gospel of our great missionary forebears. Though we might have begun in New Zealand as a settler church, nevertheless we have inherited a gospel imperative for mission that is at the core of our existence as a church. I have seen many examples during recent travel: those parishes that take seriously the call to be in mission, locally and globally, are the ones whose health is sound and whose energy and drive create growth.

Yet mission is evolving – how we do it now will be formed by current theology and the practice of our being church in our time. The varying contexts and cultures in which we serve, and of course, the way the world is changing will make a difference. I encountered a poignant example of this at the Assembly in Vanuatu last year: a young woman in her modest “Mother Hubbard” (missionary designed) dress, with a cell phone glued to her ear! In some ways the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu Assembly looked like it might have 50 years ago – the dress code, the worship (especially the hymns), the style of debate, the paucity of power and running water and comfortable seats echoed the missionary experience of our forbears. But there was a significant difference, technology has reached Vanuatu and it has become part of the global network! This changing context has to influence what we offer and what we receive as partners in mission.

So how should we regard and interpret this continued imperative to be in mission mode for today’s changing context? What has changed and what has remained since the good old days of the Busy Bees¹ and the PWMU² – both born out of a colonial style of missions, an era and style of missionary activity which most of us now recognise as inappropriate for contemporary church partnerships.

The first thing we are clear about (as we have always been) is that it is God’s mission not our own. (You can read an excellent article on this by Chris Nichol in this edition of *Candour*.) We are joining with the spirit of God, carrying the message of God’s love and hope, offered to us and through us in Jesus Christ. It is not our message, so though we might understand it best in our cultural forms, it is okay for it to be translated into someone else’s. When we are sure about this, we can relax and let the local culture and context shape the churches we are in partnership with – and us.

Partnership is such a critical idea: as a contemporary mission church we go in partnership, to give and receive; to listen to local wisdom and to offer our own; to bring skills as they are asked for by the local church (whose agenda is paramount); and to learn ourselves. Our task as missionaries is to empower our partners to know and love God through serving Christ. Angela Norton’s account of, and rationale for, our partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar illustrates this really well.

I am currently reading an excellent book called *Just Courage: God’s Great Expedition for the Restless Christian*³ – written by Gary A Haugen. He has some interesting things to say to individuals and parishes that, having done all the usual in their Christian journey, still have a sense of restlessness and wonder “what next?” He suggests they are in danger of “going on the trip but missing the adventure”, that because of ignorance, fear, and despair they choose “to remain stuck in the Visitor’s Centre rather than climb the mountain,” because to take the risks of climbing would take them beyond their capacity for self-reliance and leave them dependent on God! Haugen maintains that we are in an era when Christians are called to enter into a global fight for justice for the world’s

1 Busy Bees: Presbyterian children’s club for supporting missionaries

2 PWMU the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Movement, out of which the Association of Presbyterian Women was formed.

3 *Just Courage: God’s Great Expedition for the Restless Christian* Gary A Haugen. IVP Books, 2008

poor and abused, "Nothing presents a more compelling and authentic witness of Christian faith in this era than the struggle for justice". "To seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1: 17 NRSV)

As we go into the beyond that is mission, as partners, we have to be real about how much power we wealthy, educated, white, coming-to-save-the-world foreigners hold. The ethics of power sharing are really important. Perhaps we might acknowledge our own vulnerability and all become open to the transforming power of the Spirit; in weakness we will find God's grace to make us strong. There are hard questions around this for us, particularly when we see injustice and hardship - and yet we must resist the temptation to be the problem solvers, the rescuers, the heroes.

A big change in our understanding of mission is that we are *all* missionaries: we are the ones that God is sending, not someone else. This may mean we will travel to Cambodia to help end sexual slavery or it might mean that we are involved in confronting those in New Zealand who don't care about the plight of millions of young women all around the world. We are *all* called to the experience of going up the mountain, working for justice, relating to our brothers and sisters of different cultures and lifestyles, becoming friends, sharing faith together, encouraging one another - this lifts our horizons and gives us new perspectives. And in the process, we discover that we have not taken the gospel to others, rather our God is already working and loving, waiting for us in the relationships, in the challenges, in the Good News.

I finish with a saying by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury:

"Mission today is about discerning where the Spirit of God is working and joining in."

It seems to me to be very true, whether in local mission or global mission, each of us is called to engage with the Spirit, to witness the goodness of Jesus Christ, the one through whom we know that we are dearly loved by God.

*The Very Rev Pamela Tankersley serves as Global Mission coordinator for the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.



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Some things we can say together about mission

Chris Nichol*

Introduction

This short statement is not a catechism, nor is it a definition. It is intended as a reference, a point of contact, a touchstone that can be used to focus our mission commitment and encourage a shared vision.

While the statement explores mission in general, it arises from consideration of our Church's commitment to mission beyond Aotearoa in particular. Nevertheless, aware that mission overseas is simply local mission in another place, the understanding of mission reflected here stands wherever the Church shares in God's missionary determination, at home or abroad.

Mission is grounded in the love and activity of the Triune God, and is integrally related to the act of worship

God calls the Church to be a sign of the presence and coming of the Kingdom of God. Our lives, indeed our very being, are rooted in God's creating love (John 1:1-5, Acts 17:28).

God's initiative in Christ, that the world is and will be fully reconciled to God, is the basis of our call to become ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

In response to God's love and missionary calling, Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, creates a worshipping community in which God nurtures faith, and through which God bears witness to God's participatory love for the world in Jesus Christ. Worship is a celebration of what God has done, an act of participation in who God is and what God is about, and an anticipation of what God will yet do.

Whose mission?

The God to whom scripture testifies is determined that creation will enjoy the fruits of divine love. Through Christ, God offers life in abundance (John 10:10). This is God's mission and it arises from God's initiative.

And yet God calls us to be participants in this mission.

God has called us to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ and the good news he brings. If we are to be followers of Jesus we must not ignore this invitation.

But without God our words and actions are as nothing. Mission that is not dependent on the sovereign grace of God no longer knows the good news. We cannot transform the world by our own labour. This is the work of God.

God has gone into the world before us; God is present with us now; and God will remain after us. The missionary Spirit is not constrained by our plans and actions. The Spirit blows where the Spirit will, using and transfiguring human culture, empowering our intentions and breathing new life into our brokenness.

We are both partners in and recipients of God's mission. The people of God, wherever they are to be found within the global community of faith, constitute both a sending and receiving community. Just as we are called to share the good news with others, so we need to hear afresh the good news for ourselves.

Our part in God's mission may be understood as an anticipation of what has yet to be accomplished, a foretaste of the future, a costly act on behalf of creation.

The scope and dimensions of mission

The object of God's missionary love is not merely humankind but the whole of creation (Romans 8:19-22).

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand speaks of its part in God's mission in terms of mission's five faces. The Church believes it is called by God to work with others to make Jesus Christ known by:

- nurturing people in and teaching people about Christian faith
- responding to human need through loving service
- proclaiming the gospel
- helping transform society
- caring for creation.

Conclusion

As a missionary church within a global community of faith, the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand is committed to:

- worshipping the Triune God, who invites us to be partners in mission
- being open to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit
- calling people to faith and fullness of life in Jesus Christ
- praying and working for healing and reconciliation, justice and peace
- taking greater responsibility for the care of all of creation.
- respecting the local context as the priority for missional and theological reflection and action
- deepening our partnership in mission with others also committed to Jesus Christ, both here and overseas
- sharing our human, spiritual, material and financial resources for the sake of God's mission.

** Note: This statement was prepared in 2010 to provide a common understanding of what mission means. It was developed as part of the project that led to the establishment of the Global Mission coordinator role.*

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Everyone has something to give and something to receive

Walking with our friends: how can we journey together?

Angela Norton*

Over the past four years the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand has been developing an overseas mission partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (PCM). First established through two friends, one from New Zealand and the other from Myanmar, it has now grown to the Church-to-Church partnership we have today.

The association between the Church and PCM is primarily based on relationship and the fact that we are all equals and all children of God, and that each and every one of us has something to give and something to receive.

Travelling to Myanmar in 2007, I could see and experience for myself that I personally had something to give, and to receive, from these beautiful people I now call family.

Part of my involvement with PCM latterly has been leading team trips to Myanmar, spending time with women's groups, students and church leaders, learning from them and encouraging them in the work they are doing in their communities.

We've also established the Rice Bowl Fund, where through regular donations from individuals and churches we are able to support the PCM in establishing income generating projects. These initiatives are designed to help the church minister to its communities in word and deed. The fund also provides aid and relief in times of devastation as well as offering scholarships that have a particular focus on empowering women within the local church. This is particularly significant in a country and society where women are oppressed.

Myanmar (also known as Burma) is a country of more than 50 million people, and was once known as the "Rice Bowl of Asia"; it was rich in natural resources. For the past 60 years the people have suffered under a cruel military dictatorship leaving most struggling on subsistence wages at best.

With an average income of US\$30 per month it would be easy to think that our financial aid would go a long way. And, it does. But is this the solution?

Bryant L Myers, in his book *Walking with the Poor*, says:

"Poverty is not alleviated primarily by money but by the restoration of relationships; the poor and the non poor, the poor and social environment, political and economic structures, the poor and the earth, the poor and God. Partnership is a means of facilitation in healing these relationships."

Bryant's views are significant and consistent in our experience and have been formative in guiding our partnership with PCM thus far.

From our experience we believe that partnership is where everyone has something to give and something to receive. Partnership is mutual (not paternal, colonial, abusive or dependent). Partnership precedes programmes.

Authentic relationship transcends all descriptions. The only basis for authentic relationship is our mutuality and equality as people made in the image of God. Through Jesus Christ there is no rich or poor. We are one!

After his first visit to Myanmar in 2007, Andrew Norton, in his study leave report *Establishing Overseas Mission Partnership* describes "mission" as both evangelism and empowering aid. "We seek opportunities where we can offer practical and tangible help and also share the life changing message of the gospel."

Andrew also describes "aid" as the giving of the necessities of life that people cannot provide for themselves, and "development" as partnering with people so that they may stand on their own feet and not be dependent on hand outs.

Consistently and across the visits of several teams, we have found the people of Myanmar to be a very humble and generous people. They are hard working, intelligent and resilient. The PCM's slogan is to "stand on its own feet" (Ezek 2: 1)

So can a relationship with the poor really be equal when there can be such inequality in material terms? Perhaps not, if that is the only standard of comparison. And similarly, to our shame, if faith and mission were the criteria we would surely be the poorer.

This was highlighted when students at the Tahan Theological College asked me what percentage of New Zealanders attend Sunday worship. In their State it is 80 percent.

In Myanmar Christians (and those of other faiths) must rely on God for their daily bread (rice).

It is in the practice of faith and care for one another that we can learn a lot from our brothers and sisters in Myanmar.

But, of this we can be sure "rich and poor have this in common, the Lord is the maker of them all". Prov 22: 2

But is friendship enough? Of course not! Jesus calls us to look after the poor: "for I was hungry, you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of your brothers of mine, you did for me". Matthew 25: 35-40

It's through the Rice Bowl Fund that we are able to financially provide assistance to those needing food, clothing, shelter and support in sickness. It's through our face-to-face visits that we are able to provide encouragement, prayer and support to those who are imprisoned by the country and society they live in.

Our relationship with the people of Myanmar is about being present; it's about sitting down to a cup of green tea and listening to each other's stories. It's about meeting them where they are, in dilapidated homes with no electricity or running water. Even if you're not able to meet their needs today, it's not hard to be a friend. The people of Myanmar, like other people isolated from the world by their cruel governments, long to know that they have not been forgotten.

Everyone has something to give and something to receive.

Friends care for one another. If your friend had nothing to eat, would you feed them? If your friend had no place to sleep, would you shelter them? If your friend was in trouble would you not do anything and everything in your power to try and help them?

So what does partnership with the church in Myanmar look like when our own brothers and sisters are in desperate situations?

I was extremely humbled the day after the second and more destructive of Christchurch's earthquakes when I received even more frequent messages from our friends in Myanmar, expressing their deep concern, offering their prayers and asking how they could help. And, as I met with them in March, against the backdrop of Japan's devastation, they continued to ask about Christchurch and the welfare of their brothers and sisters in New Zealand. More than conversation - they gave me an envelope containing US\$ 1,200 (equivalent of around NZ \$70,000 to them), to give to the Church's Christchurch churches.

I hesitated to receive it knowing the cost and sacrifice. The PCM's former General Secretary, the Rev Dr Lalengzauva, said "Angela, what little we have we must still give to those in need and at this time it is our brothers and sisters in New Zealand that are in need." This is our partnership in action.

Everyone has something to give and something to receive.

**Angela Norton first visited Myanmar in 2007 with her father the Rev Andrew Norton. Much affected by the experience she has returned six times and is now the Church's part-time Myanmar Partnership coordinator. Angela attends St Columba at Botany Downs in Auckland. For more information on the mission partnership in Myanmar or the Rice Bowl Fund, please contact Angela at myanmar@stcolumba.org.nz*

Taking off the rose-tinted glasses

Kirstin Harray*

I have realised that I still hold onto the idea of a missionary as someone going overseas to eradicate poverty with an “I can change the world” mentality and thinking that “they” are the ones with the real problems.

Maybe it is my Western perspective seeping through, but somehow in Africa we expect to be able to walk around anywhere and see the billion children right in front of us starving, suffering and crying for help.

We expect to find the injustices like a neon sign hanging over us that we can simply turn off and unplug. Instead, those in need are camouflaged in every country's desire to seem “developed” and without social problems.

It is more complex in each continent, country, suburb, town, and street. This forced me to realise my own ignorance, and to look at the society around me in New Zealand. In our own neighbourhood we do our best to close our eyes to “them” by meticulously carving out our path of who we know and where we go.

Every suburb has a “dodgy” street, and in fact it wasn't until late last year I learnt that I have lived my whole life in a city with one of the poorest suburbs in New Zealand...somewhere I never go... naturally. There is also the recognition that “they” is actually a broader catchment of people than just poverty-stricken.

Mother Teresa said: “Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.” It is those society creates as unwanted, unloved and uncared for that are in need of experiencing fullness of life.

“They” are all around us, if we dare to look. As Christians, we say Jesus loves all peoples, all faiths, all colours, and that inclusion is the experience of fullness of life. Do our lives reflect that? We can easily say we need to stop creating distance between ourselves and others but do we really live that reality?

Even if we know who “they” are in our world, country, town, street or church, we make choices everyday that are acts of unity or division, acts of embracing communal life or personal life. The truth is: reality is hard. The ideology of embracing others on our journey is not easy to do.

Robbing life

His name was Daniel. He wasn't old, perhaps within 10 years of my age. He spent his days on the couch watching TV. He was blind. He needed help with every basic human action: walking, to be put in the wheelchair, eating, using the toilet.

He relied on the nurses for his daily life. Some days I would help him eat, help him drink tea. I tipped the enamel cup to his lips, as it dribbled down his chin he would say: “Thank you”.

It didn't feel like an act worthy of thanks. I didn't know what to say. Once we talked of New Zealand. Travel. India. He had a brother living in India and wanted to travel there. With a sense of humour, he asked me to take him with me in June.

One day he asked for help to get to the toilet. More than one person was required to lift him; it cannot be done alone. Searching for a nurse, then the response: “Just ignore him, he has a nappy he can go in that.”

The nurse acted like she was in a sterile office job and not dealing with a real person – a person needing help for a basic human need. Sparrow Village is a place for those rejected and left alone in society because of HIV / AIDS.

Where is Daniel's dignity if one of the only functions his body has left is denied when we do not help him to the toilet? How does he not feel the stigma if he must sit in his own faeces all afternoon?

It is barely a life he is living.

The first few days at Sparrow Village were great. I could see the kids playing, the green grass and immaculately kept gardens showed vibrancy and life.

Then after a couple of weeks I noticed the cockroaches under the beds, the dirty marks on the lino that never got cleaned, the children fighting from boredom – all physical symbols speaking to the reality that not everyone was experiencing quality life within that place.

This was not only the case with Sparrow Village; also at Tshwane Leadership Foundation, Christian Medical College Hospital, and VISTHAR, I had similar experiences of the rose-coloured glasses coming off.

There were always problems and issues of division and un-loving actions. I was shocked and challenged to realise that even within an NGO that is proclaiming the love of God and embracing others, we fall short, we rob life.

** Note: This is an excerpt from Kirstin's blog that she kept while with Training in Mission (TIM), a youth leadership development programme run by the Council for World Mission (CWM)*

Review of CD “Hope is our Song”

Stuart Grant

What an impressive line-up of talent has been brought together to produce a CD of 27 songs, hymns and carols selected from the hymn book, *Hope is our Song!*

Taken from the latest publication of the New Zealand Hymn Book Trust, the selected pieces represent but a small sample of the 158 compositions that make up the hymnbook. It must have been a very difficult exercise to make such a limited choice, but those responsible have succeeded admirably in offering the listener a selection that covers a wide variety of themes and musical styles. The booklet accompanying the CD gives the full text of all the hymns and songs.

The CD was recorded in St Michael's Catholic Church, Remuera, by Viva Voce, an Auckland based chamber choir well qualified for the task. The accompaniments are by organ or piano, and there is also some very fine a cappella singing. To quote from the booklet accompanying the CD:

“... Viva Voce was formed to inject vitality and fresh ideas into the New Zealand choral scene. In 25 years the choir has given over 350 performances and premiered many new compositions ... specialising in the innovative programming and attractive presentation of a huge variety of music, Viva Voce strives equally for excellence and entertainment.”

These claims are well borne out in this high quality recording.

The musical director of Viva Voce is John Rosser, who founded the choir in 1985. He guest conducts several other choirs and orchestras, and is associate conductor and chorus master for the NBR New Zealand Opera. The accompanist, Michael C W Bell, is organist at St Matthew in the City, Auckland. He is a composer and improviser, and is in demand as an accompanist and concert performer. The members of Viva Voce are trained singers and several have been successful in top vocal competitions around the country.

The composers and lyricists whose works are represented on the CD include some well-known names; nearly half the lyrics are the work of Shirley Murray, sometimes in collaboration with Colin Gibson, whose own work is also well represented. Marnie Barrell, Bill Wallace and Jocelyn Marshall are also prominent among the lyricists, and Barry Brinson and Jillian Bray among the composers, while Bell Bennett contributes both lyrics and music settings.

There are songs based on scripture passages, such as *My heart is leaping*, (Marion Kitchingman/ Brinson), a paraphrase of the Magnificat. Also in this category is *Nothing, nothing in all creation*, (Murray / Brinson) inspired by St Paul's well-known words from Romans 8, verses 35 to 39. In *From this holy time* (Barrell/ Brinson), the prophet Micah's call to justice and mercy form the refrain.

Honour the dead (Murray / Gibson) is a fine hymn for Anzac Day, ending with a call for peace. The opening song of the collection, *God bless our land* (Murray / Brinson) might gain acceptance as an alternative national anthem. It is an attractive expression of some of our national ideals and history.

All of the songs are suitable for use in worship services, but some are particularly so: *Beautiful presence* (Joy Cowley/Brinson) is an insightful hymn of adoration. *Wisdom far beyond our knowledge* (Gibson) is another hymn of adoration that offers fresh and profound metaphors for the divine. As a statement of faith, *God was in Christ* (Murray/Gibson) impresses by its simplicity and succinctness of expression.

There are several songs for festivals of the Church year: *Christ ascends to God* (Barrell/Brinson) is a hymn for Ascension Day. *On a cool and autumn dawn* (Bill Bennett) gives the crucifixion a Southern Hemisphere expression. *Always there's a carol* (Murray/Gibson) is a new Christmas song set to a pleasant, lilting melody. *Where the light of Easter Day* (Murray/Bray), is a fine and fresh expression of resurrection faith.

Viva Voce was formed to inject vitality and fresh ideas into the New Zealand choral scene.

In the name of Christ I will walk with you (Gibson) has particular application to ministry in hospitals and rest homes. It was commissioned by the Interchurch Council for Hospital Chaplaincy.

Most of the songs will be easily learned by church congregations. There are a few which are more demanding musically and may be better suited for performance by choral groups.

The New Zealand Hymnbook Trust is to be warmly congratulated on producing this latest CD, a worthy successor to its previous recordings of songs from *Alleluia Aotearoa*, *Carol our Christmas* and *Faith Forever Singing*. It is a pity that the selection had to be limited to just a small number of the hymns and songs contained in the book. It would be a great bonus if a further group could be recorded. *Hope is our Song*, both the CD and the hymnbook, contains many new and attractive melodies as well as lyrics that use plain language to express Christian faith in 21st century Aotearoa New Zealand. It will be warmly welcomed by worship leaders, church musicians and congregations seeking a fresh and thoughtful approach.



Knox Centre Music Scholarships 2011

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS EXTENDED UNTIL 15 JUNE 2011

Each year, the Knox Centre offers six music scholarships. The deadline for applications is usually 30 April, but because of a shortage of applications this deadline has been extended to 15th June.

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 \$250 cash grant. Applicants must be under 30 years of age. The next music and worship workshop will be held in December 2011, to coincide with the Samstock music festival.

Applications for the above scholarships will close on the 15th June 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.

Passage to Taiwan

Martin Baker

Unmistakable with his long flowing beard and pith helmet, revered Canadian medical missionary Dr G L Mackay was a significant figure in the founding of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT). His most celebrated saying, “burn out rather than rust out” is written in large letters almost wherever in Taipei his image is reproduced, and especially on the walls of the three hospitals that bear his name. Mackay seemed to be the embodiment of the 19th century Protestant missionary, coupling his skills as a physician with what is reported as “an unshakable commitment to proclaim the gospel in the lands beyond European civilisation”.

Dying prematurely in Taiwan in his late 50s from throat cancer, Mackay left a legacy of evangelical endeavour based on a seamless relationship between proclamation of the Word and the need to address in practical and sacrificial ways the impact that poverty and oppression had on the community. It is with this kind of theological perspective that the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan confronted the oppression of the post WW2 Chiang Kai-shek Kuomintang (KMT) regime, which over the years has been responsible for the torture and death of tens of thousands of Taiwanese.

Perhaps the most public expression of the PCT’s role in confronting the KMT has been its unshakable commitment to worshipping in the indigenous Taiwanese language rather than in Mandarin. For decades the KMT made the teaching of Taiwanese illegal in schools, insisting that Mandarin be adopted as the common language.

Just after Easter I enjoyed the privilege of attending the PCT’s General Assembly. It was held at the Mackay Memorial Hospital in Taipei and conducted in a mixture of Taiwanese and Mandarin; it gets complicated for the PCT, because with young people taught only Mandarin at school, the church is caught in something of a conundrum between using the language of the historical oppressors thereby making the event more accessible to the young, or speaking only in Taiwanese and thus confronting the KMT’s legitimacy and affirming Taiwan’s identity and independence from China.

A fascinating highlight of the Assembly was an address by the newly elected opposition leader, Tsai Ying-wen. She appears a strong and charismatic leader who, in her speech, thanked and acknowledged the PCT’s role in confronting the KMT’s legitimacy, especially through the years when it represented an oppressive and dictatorial regime.

A little oddly, I thought, the KMT (now the elected Government) has adopted a pro-China policy supported by Taiwanese business interests reliant on China’s manufacturing base for their wealth. Both Tsai and the PCT are strong advocates for Taiwan’s independence, despite the fact that not even the UN or its agencies recognise Taiwan as a nation.

There are far more knowledgeable people in our Church than I, about the complex interplay between missionary endeavour and social and political engagement in Asia. But a really great book that I enjoyed during my time in Taiwan, and which I found very helpful in coming to some understanding of the nuances of this dynamic, is Eliza Griswood’s *The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line between Christianity and Islam*. According to one commentator, Griswood “teases out the threads of a complex fabric of religious doctrine, capitalist economics, ethnic pride, and power politics”. Despite the complexities, Griswood retains her hope that authentic faith can yet transcend theological differences and foster peace.

One of the concerns I have for our Church is the way that a fear-based and internally focused parochialism undermines not only our willingness to be hospitable to those who are different and to share our resources with one another, but also prevents us from seeing ourselves as part of something bigger: this organic body of Christ which has all the complexities, joys, pain and sorrow of a fully living, spiritual, political and economic being.

The priority Jesus placed on the simple joy and freedom in sharing food and drink with friends, strangers and sinners, appears at times to present an overwhelming contrast to the anxiety, fear and resources associated with maintaining the Church as an institution and its various physical and organisational structures. It is probably an ambiguity we have to live with. Mackay needed funding for his mission, medicine and books. Someone somehow has still to pay for the wine and bread.

As we open ourselves to embrace Christians from many Asian nations, we are also engaging with people whose faith and church involvement is characterised by complex histories of colonial mission endeavour, living and often suffering as a minority faith in their communities, experiencing political opposition and martyrdom, often coupled with a strong evangelical commitment. Hearing and honouring their stories, as a Church which welcomes these new immigrants, can only enrich and strengthen our witness together.