

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Decisions & Feedback



Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

Dear presbyteries, synods, Te Aka Puaho and church councils

Please take the time to read the following Assembly decisions, and read and respond to the proposed legislative changes and discussion documents. Your feedback is important to the future of our Church.

For ease of use this booklet is divided into three parts:

1. BOOK OF ORDER CHANGES

All presbyteries, UDCs, Te Aka Puaho, Pacific Islands' Synod and church councils are asked to vote on a number of proposed legislative changes. The results of votes, either in support of or against these changes, need to be returned to the Assembly Office by 1 July 2013.

2. DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS

There are three discussion documents requiring feedback and responses. Please take the time to read these documents and provide a response to the questions, and send your feedback to the Assembly Office by 1 July 2013.

3. ASSEMBLY DECISIONS

There are a number of decisions that the 2012 General Assembly made which may have importance in the context of your own decision-making. These decisions are for your information and do not require any response to the Assembly Office.

PART 1

CHANGES TO THE BOOK OF ORDER

The 2012 General Assembly accepted a number of changes to the Book of Order, but some of these changes are subject to special legislative procedure. This means that they cannot be finally adopted until presbyteries/UDCs (including Te Aka Puaho and the Pacific Islands Synod) and church councils have considered and voted on them, and the 2014 General Assembly has considered the proposals for a second time.

The eight proposals to be considered are below. The rationale for each is presented. If a majority of presbyteries and church councils disapprove of a proposal, the next General Assembly cannot accept it. If a majority of presbyteries approve a proposal, the next General Assembly will decide whether or not to finally adopt it. The details of the special legislative procedure are set out in Book of Order 14.9.

You are asked to approve or disapprove of each of these proposals, and to complete and return the attached voting form by **1 July 2013**. Amendments *cannot* be made to these proposals.

Please note that all of the 2012 proposals which are subject to the special legislation procedure were adopted as interim provisions, and are thus in use in the meantime.

Proposal 1: Delete Chapter 10.1(6). *Confusion has arisen from the different meanings of “congregation” and “charge” in the Book of Order. The simplest way to resolve this issue is to drop the word “charge” from the Book of Order. 10.1(6) is the only such clause which requires referral under the special legislative procedure. Chapter 5.1(1) has been amended to make it clear that a congregation may unite for worship, life and mission in more than one place of worship.*

Proposal 2: (a) Amend Chapter 2.2 and 10.6(4) by deleting the words “Guide to Procedures in Cooperative Ventures” and replacing them with the words “Procedures for Cooperative Ventures”.

(b) Amend Chapter 8.4(1) by adding “(v) to undertake the duties of Coordinating Partner or Participating Partner for Cooperative Ventures according to the Procedures for Cooperative Ventures.”

These changes are a technicality, to make the Book of Order consistent with the wording of the revised Cooperating Ventures procedures, which the 2012 General Assembly adopted. (Similar amendments made to other clauses are not subject to the special legislative procedure.)

Proposal 3: Amend Chapter 14.15(1)(c) by deleting the words “Association of Presbyterian Women” and replacing with the words, “Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand.”

This change is also a technicality to make the Book of Order consistent with the name change adopted by Presbyterian Women. (Similar amendments made to other clauses are not subject to the special legislative procedure.)

Proposal 4: Amend Chapter 7.11(1) by adding at the end of the sentence the words, “save that up to 40 per cent of the members of a parish council need not be elders who have been ordained in accordance with Chapter 9.”

This change clarifies that not all members of a parish council need be ordained elders, and imposes a limit on non-ordained membership. This formalises a situation which has often arisen when sessions and boards of managers (whose members have frequently not been ordained elders) have combined into a parish council.

Proposal 5: Amend Chapter 14.23 by adding: “7A. If the Council of Assembly decides that it is impractical or undesirable to delay any action or implementation of the matter, subsection (7) does not apply.”

This applies to appeals from a presbytery to the General Assembly. Subsection 7 states that an appeal stops all further action on the matter until the appeal has been resolved, normally by a judicial commission. Currently, Chapter 14.22 provides that the Council of Assembly can override the prima facie provision in the case of references from a presbytery to General Assembly, which are dealt with in the same way as appeals, and the extension of this power to appeals is considered highly desirable.

Proposal 6: (a) Amend Chapter 8.4(2) by adding a second sentence: “For the avoidance of any doubt, a person may not appeal from a church council to a presbytery on an employment matter which is governed by the relevant Parliamentary legislation.”

(b) Amend Chapter 14.23(1) by adding a fourth sentence: “For the avoidance of any doubt, this section does not apply to an employment matter which is governed by the relevant Parliamentary legislation.”

This reflects the undesirability of permitting appeals in employment disputes to a presbytery or the General Assembly i.e. employment issues should be dealt with under employment law.

Proposal 7: Amend Chapter 16.2(7) by deleting the words “Church courts” and replacing them with the words “church councils”.

The term “court” is defined in Book of Order Appendix 1 as either a presbytery or the General Assembly. A church council is not a court. Chapter 16.2, however, places the responsibility for the day-to-day management of church property in the hands of members of the “Church court”. Given the definition of “court”, the easiest way to overcome this interpretation issue is to make it clear that it is the members of the church council who have responsibility for the day-to-day management of the property under its care.

Proposal 8: Amend the following clauses by adding the words, “and Pacific Islands Synod” after the words “Te Aka Puaho”:

(a) Chapter 8.17

(b) Chapter 10.5

(c) Chapter 14.9

(d) Chapter 14.26

(e) Chapter 14.31

(f) Chapter 15.4

General Assembly’s decision to grant the Pacific Islands Synod the status of a presbytery means that a number of clauses which refer to presbyteries and Te Aka Puaho need to be expanded to include the Pacific Islands Synod.

VOTING PAPER

For proposals accepted by 2012 General Assembly and referred to presbyteries and church councils under the special legislative procedure.

NAME OF VOTING BODY (presbytery, UDC, Te Aka Puaoho, Pacific Islands Synod, church council)

Please tick one box for each proposal.

ITEM	SUBJECT	APPROVE	DISAPPROVE
1	deletion of word "charge"		
2	Co-operative Ventures name change		
3	Presbyterian Women name change		
4	parish council membership		
5	appeals provisions		
6	employment appeals		
7	church council property responsibilities		
8	Pacific Islands Synod presbytery status		

I confirm that this is a true and correct record of the decisions made by the above body on the proposals referred by the 2012 General Assembly under the special legislative procedure.

The duly constituted meeting at which this voting was conducted was held on:

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signed: _____

name (please print) _____

position held _____

Please return this form **by 1 July 2013** to:
Assembly Executive Secretary
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
P O Box 9049
Wellington 6141

PART 2

DISCUSSION DOCUMENTS

Please take the time to consider these matters and send your responses to the Assembly Office **by 1 July 2013**.

Discussion 1: The Moderator as missional leader of the Church

A discussion and consultation document for presbyteries, the Pacific Island Synod, Te Aka Puaho and church councils.

INTRODUCTION:

In response to decisions at the 2012 General Assembly, the Council of Assembly has developed this consultation document inviting the Church to consider proposals relating to both the role of the Church's Moderator, and how that role could be developed to support the Church's mission.

Two key issues are:

1. The role of the Moderator in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. The way the Church discerns and provides national missional leadership in a time of change.

BACKGROUND:

Sometime back in the history of our Church, perhaps the only duty of the Moderator was to preside over the General Assembly. Over time, the role developed to include such things as visiting presbyteries and congregations, being the spokesperson for the Church, and using their specific skills and gifts to provide leadership and support for the Church's mission.

The role and function of the Moderator needs to also be considered within the specific context of the Presbyterian Church's polity and ethos. The Presbyterian Church is a hierarchical church, but not in terms of individuals holding increasingly significant authority, but of councils or courts of elders

– usually identified as session, presbytery, and finally General Assembly. Presbyterians believe God’s will is best discerned when the Church in all its diversity comes together as a whole. In order to discern God’s will on important issues and indeed in deciding these issues, the whole Church is needed.

There is then a tension, at times, within our Church, between the values we place on individual leadership and the importance of the decisions we make as leaders together discerning God’s purposes and will.

The proposals in this document attempt to hold these two critical issues for our Church in a positive and creative balance: on one hand, the need to provide the kind of national leadership that is responsive, focused, empowering and visionary, and on the other, to affirm the Presbyterian and conciliar way we discern God’s will and make decisions and rules.

Information from the General Assembly:

In adopting the Strategic Directions paper in 2011, the Council of Assembly agreed to the following:

“That the Council of Assembly establish a work group to review the role and function of the Moderator (including but not limited to extending the term of the Moderator, and including the role of Convenor of Council of Assembly in the role of the Moderator).”

In consultation with present and past Moderators, the work group’s report affirmed:

- *The primacy of mission in the life of the Church*
- *The locus of mission is the local church*
- *The mission priority expressed at a regional level through the reform of presbyteries*
- *The Council’s Strategic Direction paper endorsing the Moderator as the missional leader of the Church, seeing this as the Moderator’s primary role*
- *The call in the Strategic Directions paper for alignment throughout the whole Church for effective mission to happen*
- *The need for missional leadership at EVERY level (and particularly at the highest elected level) to reflect this mission priority.*

In terms of missional leadership and responsibility, the work group’s report noted the following:

1. There seems to be a vacuum within the Church’s thinking, structures and policy around the area of mission. There appears to be no individual, nor any clearly identifiable group, with responsibility for this as part of their agenda.

2. The current job description of the Assembly Executive Secretary does not describe him/her as the mission leader; although it is very clear the Assembly Executive Secretary must have a passion for mission and work within the strategic directions of the Council of Assembly to explore this aspect of our life together.
3. The Moderator of the General Assembly, Assembly Executive Secretary and the Council of Assembly have distinctive and complementary roles in implementing the mission of the Church.
4. In order to enhance the missional leadership of the Church in a way that is consistent with our Presbyterian conciliar government, and in line with the Strategic Directions paper adopted by the Council of Assembly, a moderatorial commission should be formed.
5. The membership of this moderatorial commission would comprise the immediate past Moderator, the Moderator Designate, and four other trusted leaders. Among other roles, the moderatorial commission would act as a search committee for the next Moderator, in a process similar to that which a Ministry Settlement Board uses to discern whom God is calling to a congregation with a ministerial vacancy.

A term of four years, full-time, for the Moderator seems appropriate in order to ensure the implementation of mission priorities, sufficient time to gain a thorough working knowledge of the Church and its role in society and (with the moderatorial commission) to research the trends in the diverse multicultural, multi-ethnic, bicultural and cross-cultural context in which the Church operates. This implies that a Moderator may moderate more than one Assembly in his/her term.

This will ensure continuity and enhance the opportunity for the Moderator to engage with the larger presbyteries, as well as engage face-to-face with the wider.

A four-year full-time role would open the possibility of a call to a wider range of candidates. It is also acknowledged that this will most likely lead to the breaking of the pastoral tie between a minister and parish or chaplaincy. Similarly, a lay Moderator would be expected to take up a full-time position in the Church.

Summary:

In the context of the rapidly changing and increasingly diverse environment that the Church finds itself, the Council of Assembly believes it important to provide a more cohesive and integrated engagement with mission at all levels of the life of our Church. It proposes to do this through the development of the role of the Moderator as a full-time committed function, supported by a small commission whose work will focus on discerning and engaging with the missional challenges of the Church. The Council acknowledges that the development of the moderatorial role, along with the establishment of a commission that supports this function, does represent some challenges in terms of our Presbyterian and conciliar way of being. However, with a commitment to ensure a high level of communication with the Church along with a clear accountability to the Assembly, there would be sufficient checks to ensure that this new structure would fulfil an important role in the leadership of our Church.

The Council welcomes any feedback from this document as it works on formulating specific proposals to be discussed at the 2014 Assembly.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you support:

(a) a proposal that the Moderator be identified as the missional leader of the Church and

(b) that the role becomes four years and full-time?

2. Do you support:

(a) the establishment by the Assembly of a moderatorial commission. This would have the functions of supporting the Moderator and his/ her work as missional leader?

(b) a moderatorial commission also serving as the search committee for the next Moderator?

DISCUSSION 2: MODERATOR OF TE AKA PUAHO

Moderator Of Te Aka Puaho Discussion Paper II

During the 2012 General Assembly discussion, relating to the role of Moderator, Te Aka Puaho, the Māori Synod, asked that the Church consider the following matter:

‘That General Assembly, acknowledging the sacred covenant of the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Kawenata Tapu o Te Tiriti o Waitangi), and the commitment of our Church to a bicultural partnership, asks the Church to consider the position of Moderator of Te Aka Puaho as being of equal status as the Moderator of General Assembly.’

BACKGROUND:

This request by Te Aka Puaho does not supercede the position of Moderator of General Assembly but is to be seen as a support role to the Moderator of General Assembly during the term of the Office of the Moderator of General Assembly.

The role of Moderator of Te Aka Puaho continues to grow and change with each generation. The Moderator is based in Whakatane but has a national and international role. Te Aka Puaho has pastorates throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. The role is continuing to grow into a cross-cultural role with the Moderator often being invited to visit parishes and other Church organisations throughout PCANZ to share the vision and mission of Te Aka Puaho. This cross-culturalism in action has a high priority as it offers an opportunity to share and interpret the mission of Te Aka Puaho to the entire Church. The role is becoming an educational and ambassadorial role which now also includes international duties. These not only include hosting church visits from international groups on

learning and cultural exchanges but also require reciprocal visits to international conferences and events. Te Aka Puaho is also expanding into Australia working in partnership with the Uniting Church of Australia to Māori living in Australia.

The request of Te Aka Puaho is based upon sound biblical principles of partnership in working together for the unity of the Body of Christ.

PRESENT SITUATION:

The current situation of the Moderator of Te Aka Puaho is that the role is currently unfunded and if the Moderator is a minister he/she is tied to a pastorate. It is the wish of Te Aka Puaho to have the position funded by PCANZ enabling the Moderator to be released from other duties to fulfil his/her moderatorial duties and to be more fully involved in the life of PCANZ. The Moderator is the acknowledged mission leader of Te Aka Puaho and has also become the recognised team leader of Amorangi ministers within Te Aka Puaho. The current Moderator is the Director of Te Wananga a rangi a non-NZQA or TEC registered Māori School of Theology and the Director of Amorangi Ministry Training. It is the desire of Te Aka Puaho to see the role of Moderator separated from the other two roles to enable the Moderator to concentrate upon the role of Moderator as mission leader of Te Aka Puaho, cross-cultural educator to PCANZ and international host.

QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK:

- 1. The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa new Zealand recognises, within the context of the Treaty of Waitangi, a bicultural partnership between Te Aka Puaho and its other Church Courts. What do you think are the principles that should guide the provision of Church resources in terms of upholding the values of this partnership?**
- 2. How can the Church affirm and recognise the status of the Moderator of Te Aka Puaho in relation to its commitment to this bicultural partnership?**
- 3. Please make any comments you would like on the suggestion from Te Aka Puaho that the Moderator of Te Aka Puaho be funded directly from national PCANZ resources as one of the ways the Church can recognise this partnership?**

DISCUSSION 3: MISSION AND PROPERTY

How can we make best use of the resources entrusted to us for the service of God's Church and its mission?

The most important things are matters of faith – who and what we believe God is calling us to be and do. We cannot make up rules and regulations to control and govern our mission. However, we are a Church together, and as an organisation we need to both affirm our hope and faith, and we do need to agree on the regulations which guide the way we work.

This discussion document asks you to reflect on the relationships between property and mission, and to discuss whether this proposal will help to meet the considerable challenges we face as we work to provide the resources to support our work ahead.

COMPLIANCE AND VISION

We want to be a dynamic, outward facing Church whose growth bears witness to our commitment to sharing in God's mission for our world. We recognize that our future cannot be based on telling people what to do or enforcing compliance to regulations. Scripture expresses powerful visions and stories of costly discipleship, radical hospitality and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. None of these things can be contained within, or prescribed, by any structure. However, we still need to set these stories - and the call God makes on our lives and our life together - alongside the way we organise and govern ourselves as the Presbyterian Church, and use our resources.

In this proposal, our hope is that our wealth will be celebrated as a blessing, and the guidelines we put in place to share our resources will ensure God's Good News will be brought to our communities and the world as a source of joy and unity.

We face the challenge of making decisions about buildings and property which are no longer fit for the purpose they were designed. We have, over the years, collectively accumulated very significant wealth in property and money, which, if shared, and amalgamated, could be the source of huge blessing for others, and support the shaping of a Church whose mission has real significance for present and future generations.

This proposal expresses an appeal for a vision larger than any single congregation's and asks for trust in people and processes that can make a real difference for the future life and growth of our Church.

WHAT IS HAPPENING NOW?

Presbyteries and congregations around New Zealand are exploring creative and exciting ways of being the Church in mission for, and within, our diverse communities. Almost all our growth comes from congregations who place a priority on mission to their wider communities, and who see their buildings as serving the primary focus of Christian service and outreach.

However, we recognise the escalating costs of building ownership along with the fact that many of our buildings were built to serve a very different social and missional context than the ones with which we are challenged today. We do not want to support a scenario which sees the spiralling costs of building ownership provide ever increasing limits on the resources available for mission.

We also acknowledge, with both gratitude and concern, that through the generosity and hard work of our forebears, and as a result of increasing property values, we now own collectively assets worth hundreds of millions of dollars. These assets serve a Church greatly diminished in membership from the time when many of our buildings were constructed. In fact, while we now have more congregations and quite probably more buildings than we owned in 1960, our membership has decreased by more than 60 per cent since that time.

As a Church we also wrestle with our own inclination to use resources to serve our local needs, to resist change, and to prop up structures and ways of doing things that are not working well to engage the Gospel message with those who are absent from our midst.

We acknowledge that there are biblical mandates that:

- ***Warn us of the dangers of accumulation of wealth***
- ***Affirm that what we have is not ours but is part of God's providence and blessing***
- ***Call us into a discipleship that challenges us to commit all we have and are for God's purposes***

Two further issues of justice and fairness which we also seek to recognise in this proposal are:

- 1. Our commitment to Te Tangata Whenua through Te Aka Puaho. Our Church has affirmed on numerous occasions the seriousness with which we take this partnership and the need to recognise and celebrate the special relationship between Maori and Pakeha in meaningful, tangible ways.***
- 2. Our recognition as a Church that a very small number of our buildings embody our taonga in their aesthetics, values, stories and traditions. They have special significance to our history, place and identity as a Church in this land and, for this reason, the cost of their care should be shared, at least in part, by us all.***

In recent years the Assembly has recognised some of the consequences of the changing context of our mission, and the need to support new and creative responses to the challenges we face. It has affirmed models of “healthy congregations” and identified areas of mission focus in “the five faces of mission” strategic framework. The Assembly has supported diminished spending on national operations, and the reform of presbyteries, as changes intended to ensure that the primary use of Church resources is to support the mission of congregations.

In terms of property the General Assembly has made decisions:

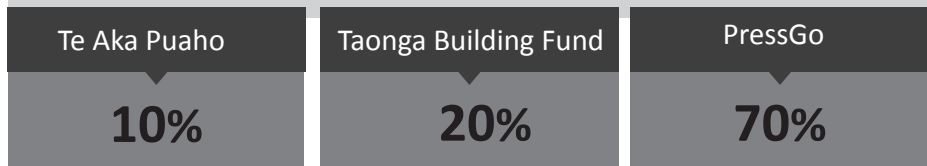
- Endorsing the principle that all property transactions serve the purposes of God’s mission.***
- Inviting the Church Property Trustees to release capital funds for growth, as well as building projects, and inviting them to ensure that all property sales and purchases conform to mission guidelines.***
- Establishing the PressGo Advisory Group who are charged with facilitating the sharing of Church resources for church growth, and whose work congregations and presbyteries have been encouraged to support.***

The Church has already agreed that the purpose of the Church’s property is to serve God’s mission.

However, the Assembly agreed to invite presbyteries and congregations to discuss these proposals:

- 1. That the Church Property trustees establish a Mission Enterprise Fund.**
- 2. That the Church Property Trustees transfer 10% of the net proceeds of all congregation and presbytery building and property sales to the Mission Enterprise Fund.**
- 3. That the balance of the sale be available to the congregation who sold the property for a maximum of 24 months, from the day of settlement, within which time the congregation must develop and receive presbytery approval for plans to allocate or use the funds for advancing God's mission. Any funds remaining at the end of 24 months will be released to the Mission Enterprise Fund.**
- 4. That, in order to build relationships across our Church, strengthen our shared commitment to mission, and to abide by the spirit of the Church Property Act, the use of funds released to the Mission Enterprise Fund will be undertaken in consultation with the congregation or presbytery identified with the sale of the property.**

ALLOCATION OF THE MISSION ENTERPRISE FUND:



Note that the PressGo allocation is accessible by any congregation or presbytery including the congregation who sold the asset, and Te Aka Puaho, for growth projects that comply with PressGo's mandate.

EXEMPTIONS FOR SHARING:

1. A manse is sold in order to purchase another manse. However, any profit from the transactions shall be subject to the Shared Proceeds calculation.
2. A single congregation is replacing one worship centre with another.

Administration of the Process:

The Church Property Trustees will, in consultation with the Synod of Otago and Southland, administer the disbursement of funds.

Applications for support by the taonga fund will be made by the congregations or groups responsible for the taonga building after receiving endorsements by their respective presbytery.

Determination of taonga status will be at the sole discretion of a committee established by the Council of Assembly for that purpose. However the number of buildings will not normally exceed 10 and will include our Church's national marae, Te Maungarongo.

The General Assembly may determine from time to time the ratios and allocations identified in this proposal.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you support the view that the purpose of all church property is to serve God's mission?
2. Do you support a collective response to the challenges of sharing and rationalising our resources for supporting this mission?
3. Are you supportive of these proposals?
4. What changes or additions would you like to make?
5. If you were to write a list of 10 Church buildings, the responsibility of whose preservation we should share because of their historical and cultural values to our Church, which buildings would you include?



PART 3

ASSEMBLY DECISIONS

The Assembly has directed that the following decisions be shared with all Church bodies to inform their own policy and decision making.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND PACIFIC NATIONS

That the Church advocates for climate change refugees by strongly encouraging the Aotearoa New Zealand government to establish relocation strategies with the governments of those Pacific island nations whose natural island habitats are no longer tenable due to the effects of climate change.

MARRIAGE

That General Assembly declares that it upholds the historic Christian understanding of marriage as the loving, faithful union of a man and a woman (reflecting the complementarity of male and a woman created in God's image), which is grounded in nature and in Scripture, is supremely revealed in Jesus' teaching about marriage, and is given by God for the well-being of human society "and this be communicated to our government".

That, in faithfulness to the historic Christian understanding of marriage as grounded in the Bible and the teachings of Jesus and in consistency with previous resolutions of the General Assembly relating to marriage (1991 and 2004), General Assembly resolves that the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand does not support same-sex 'marriage' and urges Parliament not to proceed with the proposed amendment to the Marriage Act "and through the select committee process as the majority view of the General Assembly".

That General Assembly urges Parliament not to alter or confuse the meaning of marriage, which has always been about the union of male and female, and is of deep spiritual significance for New Zealanders of many faiths and cultures; and the General Assembly also asserts that with regard to equality – the Civil Union Act (2004) already provides for clear societal recognition and legal protection of same-sex relationships.

CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE

That Assembly endorses the work and ministry of Christian World Service and recommends it to its parishes.

INTER CHURCH BIOETHICS COMMITTEE

That ministers and elders encourage people to access the Inter Church Bioethics Council website and raise bioethical issues of concern with the Council.

INTER-TERTIARY CHAPLAINCY COUNCIL (ITCC)

That Assembly affirms the importance of on-going support for tertiary chaplaincy in Aotearoa New Zealand through involvement in the Inter-Tertiary Chaplaincy Council (ITCC) and the regional ecumenical tertiary chaplaincy trust boards.

LIVING WAGE

That the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand affirms and supports the Living Wage Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign.

That the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand encourages congregations, church schools, and social service agencies with a connection to the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand to examine their employee remuneration packages and work towards payment of a living wage.

CARING FOR CHILDREN

That the Church commits itself in Christ to do justice, to love compassionately, and to walk with humility before God in our care for children by:

- a) Training church leaders to identify need.*
- b) Actively supporting those who work with and for children.*
- c) Advocating for vulnerable children as a Church and with other Church Leaders.*
- d) Acting wherever we can to care for vulnerable children*
- e) Raising awareness in our congregations and communities of the plight and needs of children in our midst.*
- f) Supporting and strengthening families.*



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