

# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

STRATEGY WORK GROUP  
JULY 2012



Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand



# Strategic Directions OUTLINED

**This document describes the strategic directions adopted by the Council of Assembly (COA) and how they can be used to support congregations in developing their missional imagination.**

# A long-term view of the Church's future directions

This document outlines the strategic directions adopted by the Council of Assembly (COA) of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) in 2011. It provides the COA and the Assembly Executive Secretary (AES) with a long-term view of the Church's future directions, highlighting priorities and creating a framework for achieving its mission. This, in turn, informs the annual operational planning process.

It needs to be stressed that the subject of this document is the institution known as PCANZ. As our Mission Statement makes abundantly clear, we are part of something much bigger: "The Church is called to be the sign, witness and foretaste of God's purposes in the world."<sup>1</sup> It has been said that "It's not the church of God that has a mission. It's the God of mission that has a church."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Roxburgh, Alan J and Boren, M Scott; *Introducing the Missional Church*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids

2 Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, quoted in Roxburgh and Boren, p 20

"Lasting missional transformation cannot be done by large scale plans imposed upon people. It is done by initiating all manner of experiments around the edges where people are given permission to try out what they are learning. These experiments are not about creating permanent change. They are about retesting and discovering along the way. The beauty of such experiments is that, like the wind of the Spirit in our sails, there is no telling where they'll take a congregation..."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore **this strategic document describes the strategies that PCANZ will use as an institution to enable each congregation to develop its own missional imagination.**

In a time of transition, the models of institutional bureaucracy do not serve us well. The role of the institution is to be clear about boundaries and then ensure that structures and resources support mission wherever it occurs. The

boundaries are already in place and defined in the Book of Order and are tested and amended via Assembly discernment and decision making. Within these boundaries, the institution should be permission-giving rather than prescriptive. Each congregation's mission needs to be worked out in terms of their own context, and the context of their relevant regional body is an important part of that discernment.

Organisational transition can be a time of ambiguity, when it is difficult to discern strategic directions. Our theology as defined in our subordinate standards, our Biblical and Reformed history, and our cultural heritages will all inform a direction, but this does not constrain the ways we will be church in the future. It is not the place of this Strategic Directions paper to include these underpinnings, so a discussion of our missional theology and history is attached at Appendix 3.

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3 Roxburgh, Alan J and Romanuk, F; *The Missional Leader. Equipping your Church to reach a changing world.* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco



# THE MISSION OF THE PCANZ

Since 1995 our Mission has been described as having five faces:

*The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand believes it is called by God to work with others to make Jesus Christ known-*

THROUGH  
PROCLAMATION  
OF THE GOSPEL

THROUGH  
THE NURTURE  
AND TEACHING  
OF PEOPLE IN THE  
CHRISTIAN FAITH

THROUGH  
RESPONSE TO  
HUMAN NEED  
IN LOVING  
SERVICE

THROUGH  
SEEKING TO  
TRANSFORM  
SOCIETY

THROUGH  
CARE FOR  
THE CREATION

The above reordering of the five faces puts the proclamation of the Gospel and discipleship at the top of the list, reflecting Biblical priority. The local church, is the agent of mission and PCANZ has an important role in developing and sustaining healthy congregations for mission. The Healthy Congregations model<sup>1</sup> has been endorsed by successive General Assemblies of the PCANZ since 1995 and we again affirm its relevance in our current context.

# OUR CONTEXT

The Presbyterian Church<sup>1</sup> reached its highest membership in about 1961 with just over 90,000 members. Its membership today is around 29,000. While membership numbers have dropped by over 60 percent, the number of parishes have stayed near the same as the 1961 levels. Until recently, the same could have been also said for the number of presbyteries.

Most Presbyterian parishes are small and have a small membership. Seventy-five percent of parishes have attendances of less than 100, but only 39 percent of our members attend those churches. On the other hand, one in five Presbyterians will worship in a church with over 300 members.

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1 A statistical overview of PCANZ can be found at Appendix 2

Union parishes are on average smaller than Presbyterian ones. On average there will be 66 at worship, compared with 94 at an average Presbyterian Church. While 28 percent of parishes are Union churches, only 12 percent of people worship there.

Larger Churches are more likely to have multiple worship activities and this involvement follows through to attendance. The larger a Church, the greater the proportion of the roll attend worship.

Adult baptisms have declined by 20 percent, the baptism of children by 30 percent and confirmations and professions of faith by 40 percent. These figures would be worse if it were not for the ethnic congregations, from where the greatest increase has come in recent years.

Of the 29,000 adults at worship, 40 percent are over 65. It is clear that the decline in attendance can only continue to escalate over the next decade. This level of loss is likely to have severe effects, particularly on our smaller to medium-sized congregations.

Immigration patterns of the last 20 years have had significant impact on the life and character of our Church. If it was not for the fact that a significant number of new members of the PCANZ came from Korea and Taiwan (and a smaller number from South Africa) then the decline in Church attendance would be even more acute.

Some evidence we have suggests that churches which grew from Pacific migration in the 60s and 70s are really struggling to maintain their ministry with the next generation. This presents





its own unique challenge as issues of language, cultural identity and missional understandings are grappled with. Both Pacific and Asian congregations have identified the 1.5 generation (children of immigrants) as being the area of greatest concern.

Despite the stories which the figures above tell, parishes appear to be showing some remarkable resilience in terms of their financial resources. Between 2001 and 2007 congregational offerings have risen by \$2.8 million to \$26.4 million, an increase of over 10 percent. Money given for capital and invested funds increased by almost 20 percent to over \$9 million, total receipts increased by over 15 percent to just over \$50 million and investment funds held by parishes jumped from \$59 million in 2000 to \$89.5 million six years later – more than a 40 percent increase. Our storehouses are full.

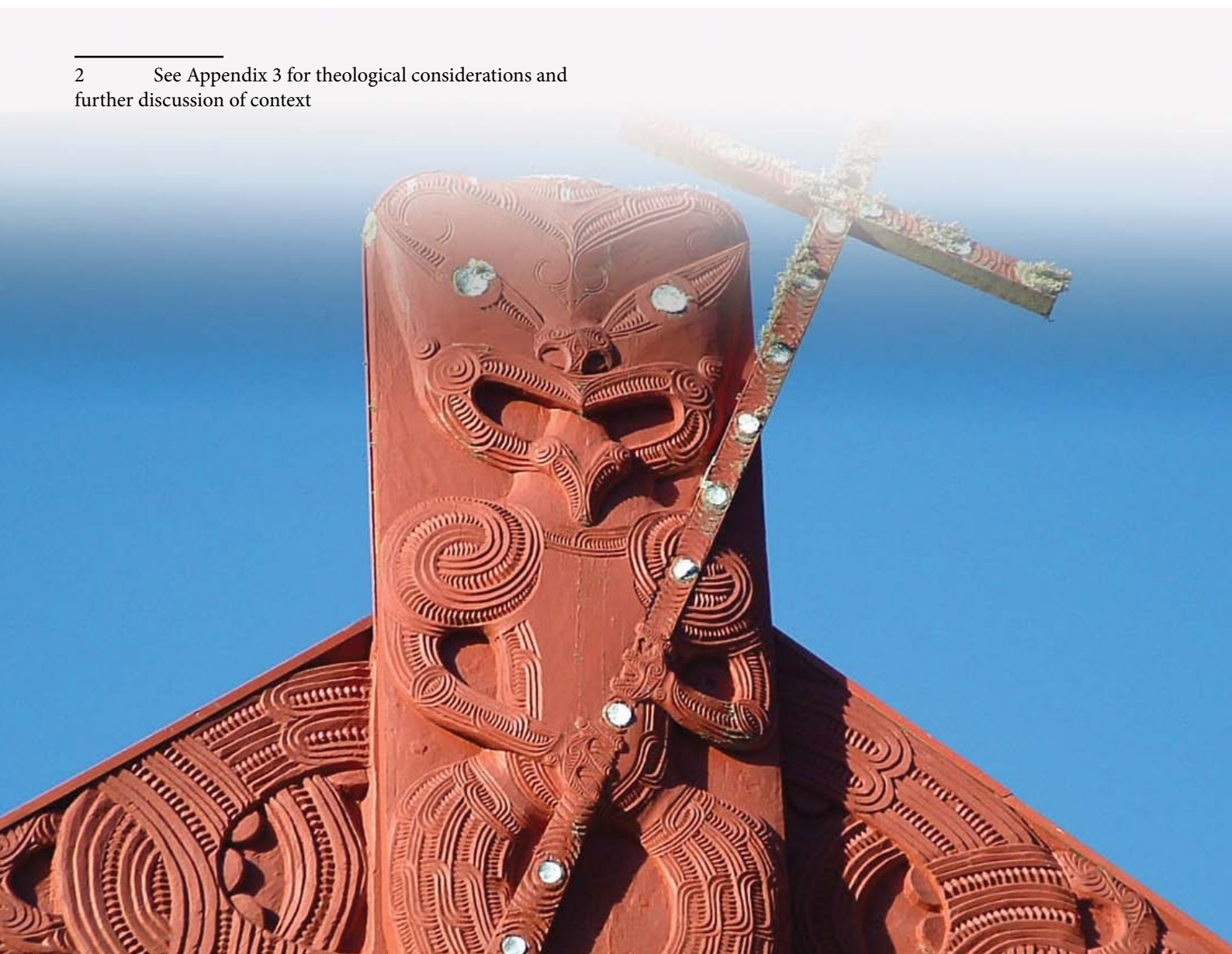
Our society has changed<sup>2</sup>. Not only that, but every aspect of the world around us has changed. We live in a global village and are bombarded by information. Confronted with change, which is bewildering in its pace, we recognise that change is inevitable. We look for models and structures that will give us a road map – a guide.

Census figures are very soon likely to show that fewer than 50 percent of New Zealanders claim any religious affiliation. The Church has a unique role – in the hurts and hopes of the community, offering purpose and grace through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In our new context, the mission of the Church becomes even more important.

Unfortunately the rate of change on the outside is greater than the rate of change on the inside. What has worked in the past will be no guide to the future. What is the Spirit saying to the Church? To PCANZ? To each congregation?

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2 See Appendix 3 for theological considerations and further discussion of context



# VISION

So imagine the PCANZ as a growing, united and vibrant movement of people who have been saved by faith in Jesus Christ and are wholeheartedly committed to following Him, empowered by the Holy Spirit. As a consequence we see the good news of Jesus heard and new believers disciplined so that individual's lives are transformed, relationships are restored and strengthened, the vulnerable are served, and the Kingdom of God is evident within society and creation.

We believe this paper contains the direction for us to become this type of Church.

While this strategy paper deals with institutional change, it cannot be stated too strongly that the most fundamental requirement for growth in a church is spiritual vitality. Fruitfulness is a result of faith in God, abiding in Christ, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. We should be humbled by the awareness that Jesus said that without Him we cannot do anything (John 15:5) but also greatly encouraged by the fact that with Him anything is possible. Of greatest importance is a commitment to deepen our relationship with God at all levels of the life of the Church, and to serve out of that relationship.

(This paper uses a number of terms and speaks about structure. For definitions of these, please see Appendix 4)

## DIRECTION MISSION CLARITY (to ensure at every level of the Church we are clear about our mission)

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE	TOOLS AVAILABLE (HOW)	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	WHEN
Affirm the five faces of mission as outlined on page 2 of the 2011 strategic directions paper	Communication strategy	Moderator, AES; Comms staff;	Now and at every opportunity
Parishes are equipped for evangelism in our context	Discuss the theology and practise of evangelism	Moderator; regional bodies	Now and at every opportunity
Affirm the role of the local church as agent of God's mission	Communication strategy	Moderator; AES; Comms staff	Now and at every opportunity
Reaffirm that the purpose of the regional and national courts of the Church is to support the mission of the local church	Communication strategy	Moderator; AES; Comms staff	Now and at every opportunity
National ministries prepare an annual plan which is consistent with PCANZ strategic direction		AES	February each year
Determine what services; ministries; support etc will be provided by the national Church to ensure that we are equipping the local church in achieving its mission	The annual parish report to the regional body <sup>7</sup>	Templates – AES COA	On-going
To determine what services; ministries; support etc will be provided by the national Church to ensure that we are equipping the regional court in achieving its mission	An annual regional body report to COA/GA <sup>8</sup>	Templates – AES COA	On-going

## DIRECTION MISSION EFFECTIVENESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE	TOOLS AVAILABLE (HOW)	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	WHEN
Each parish develop a mission plan with an emphasis on growth in terms of spiritual maturity and numbers	Guidelines available on PCANZ website <sup>9</sup>	Guidelines - AES Process and missional thinking – regional bodies	Ongoing and reviewed annually
New congregations are planted where there is mission potential	Process of discernment	Congregations; regional bodies and PressGo AES	On-going
Each regional body develop a strategic plan	Guidelines available on PCANZ website Develop resources for use in reporting	Guidelines and resources - AES Process and missional thinking - Moderator	2012 and review regularly
Parishes and regional bodies report on how they are doing in achieving their mission	Active and honest engagement with reports so we can support and encourage each other in our mission together	Whichever court of Church is being reported to	From GA12



## DIRECTION LEADERSHIP

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE	TOOLS AVAILABLE (HOW)	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	WHEN
Develop a biblical theology of leadership and help develop a Church-wide culture of respect for those with the spiritual gift of leadership and an attitude allowing leaders to lead.	KCML to bring together comment and produce a paper for wider consultation with aim of bringing recommendation to GA	KCML	Aim of adoption by GA14
Without neglecting other aspects of leadership training, emphasise training in effective missional thinking and practice.	Provide training for ordained and other leaders within the Church	Regional bodies, KCML	Ongoing
Efficient transition to larger presbyteries	Strategic leadership essential	Presbyteries; COA and Presbytery Reform Team	Ongoing
Leaders are affirmed and supported	Mission/strategic plans include support, encouragement and pastoral care of leaders	All levels	Ongoing



## DIRECTION BEING ONE BODY

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE	TOOLS AVAILABLE (HOW)	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	WHEN
Clarification about what it means to be Presbyterian at every level of the Church	KCML to bring together scholarly comment and produce a paper for wider consultation with aim of bringing recommendation to CA B.O.O.  Based on our understanding on what it means to be Presbyterian and the policies found in BOO, congregations and regional bodies are encouraged to determine their mission and order their life around that	KCML	Report to GA14
Acknowledge the diverse nature of the PCANZ	Effective consultation precedes decision making, ensuring decisions are open and transparent	Everyone	On-going
As part of the global Church we will willingly collaborate with other churches, denominations and other Christian organisations to accomplish the mission of God	Maintain, and review existing partnerships and be open to fostering new relationships	Parishes, regional bodies, Moderator; AES; National service team	On-going
A culture of trust, respect and unity within the PCANZ	Through all entities talking to each other	COA will model this as the way we will work together and everyone will take responsibility for this at every level of the Church.	On-going
Good relationships between members of the Presbyterian family in NZ to achieve mission	PSNZ and church schools through PresCare; Synod of Otago and Southland; through membership on COA and other subcommittees; co-operative ventures through UCANZ; Presbyterian Women; KCML; CPT	AES	On-going
General Assembly will be a celebration of our life and work together – vision, inspirational and business	Balance of vision, inspirational and business	Moderator: Business Committee; AES; COA	2012 and on-going

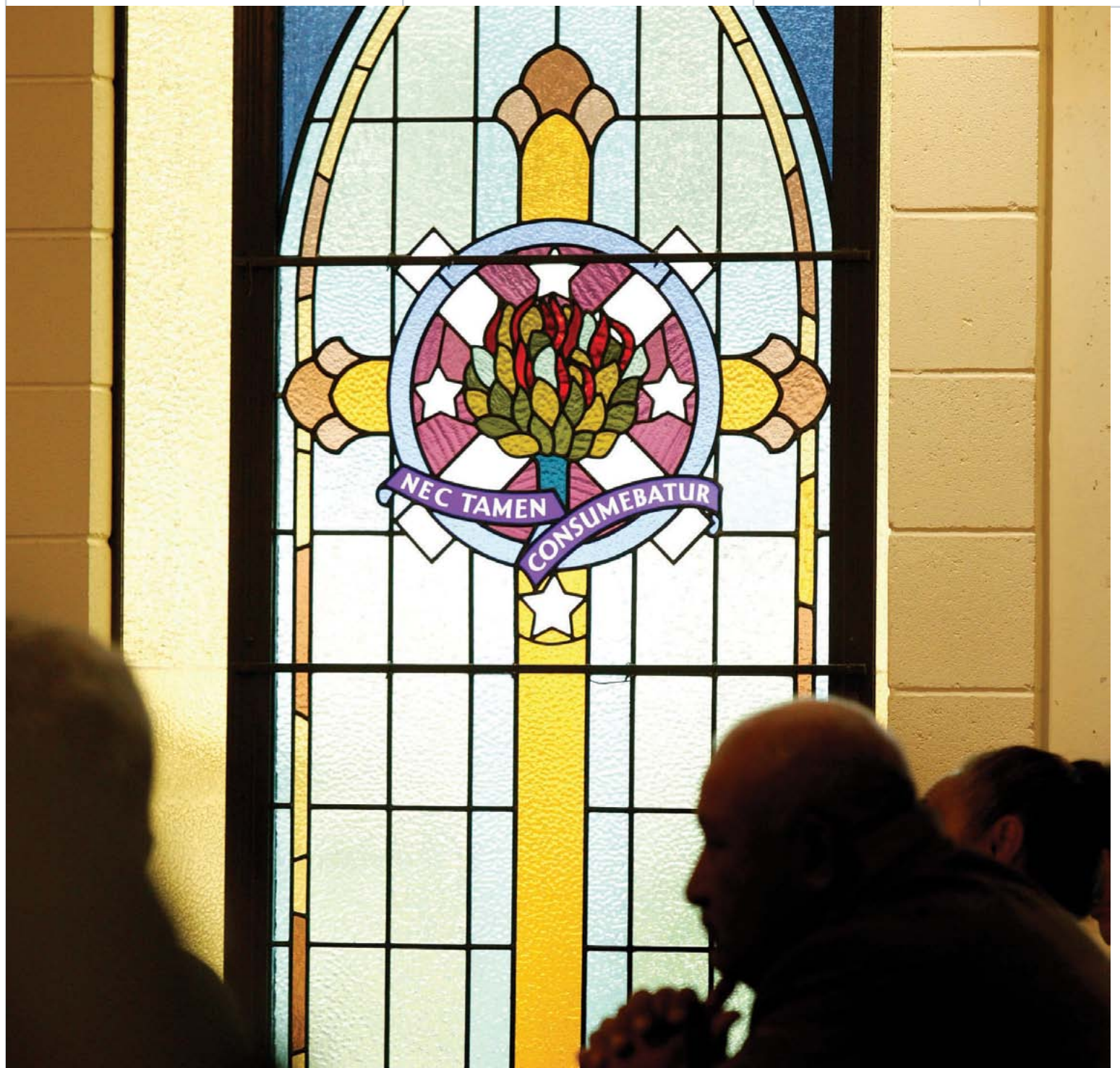
## DIRECTION DELEGATING AUTHORITY (permission-giving, freedom, diversity)

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE	TOOLS AVAILABLE (HOW)	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	WHEN
Within the bounds established by the national Church, give parishes and regional bodies freedom to pursue their mission/ strategic plan and mission as they see fit.	Book of Order and statutory provisions as established by GA from time to time	Boundaries are the decisions of GA	On-going



## DIRECTION FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE	TOOLS AVAILABLE (HOW)	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	WHEN
In consultation with both the regional bodies and local cChurches, develop a means by which money is raised to facilitate the life and mission of the national Church and the regional bodies.		COA set up workgroup and report to March 2012 for reporting to GA12	GA12 and on-going
Seed funding for mission initiatives (part of AA?)	e.g. PressGo, Presbyterian Foundation	Moderator, AES Resource	On-going





# FINAL COMMENTS

In enabling each congregation to identify and live its unique mission, the most important thing the institution of PCANZ can do is effectively “get out of the way”. In reality there are a plethora of guidelines for most situations, but congregations need to discern firstly what God is doing in their community or context and then determine how they will be Church – to the people inside as well as outside their doors.

The role of the re-shaped and strengthened Presbyteries is crucial in this and their sense of regional mission will help inform the discernment of the congregations who comprise each presbytery. With many tools available to them they can help challenge and provoke attitudinal change so that each congregation truly lives out the mission of PCANZ to make Jesus Christ known.

Clearly identifying our mission and emphasising the role of the Moderator as mission leader of the PCANZ is a key strategy in mission.

It is important to note that missional engagement will grow the impact of each congregation, but growth of the Body of Christ can only come from an increase in the number of believers (some of whom may well include some of the people reached in mission). Therefore we can not be ashamed of the Gospel (Romans 1:16 and 1 Peter 3:15) as it is this Gospel of mercy, of grace and reconciliation that which makes the Church unique.

Recognising this, and that it is God’s mission, not ours, that we participate in, we acknowledge that God will give the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6) if we play our part in preparing the way for the work of the Holy Spirit.

# APPENDIX 1 - HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

## THE HEALTH OF A CONGREGATION IS REFLECTED IN THE QUALITY OF FOUR SETS OF RELATIONSHIPS:

- *with God*
- *with the wider environment*
- *with the wider Church, and*
- *within its own life*

## A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD WILL BE REFLECTED IN:

- *Worship that is true to God, is enhancing of life, promotes growth in faith, is relevant to the cultures and contexts in which we live, and is inviting to people unfamiliar with church.*
- *A lively faith. Healthy congregations tend to have a higher proportion of attendees growing in their faith or experiencing moments of conversion or faith commitment. Among attendees there is strong and healthy devotional activity, such as prayer and Bible reading.*

## A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WIDER ENVIRONMENT IS SHOWN BY:

- *An outward focus among leaders and attendees in their concern for evangelism and serving others.*
- *There is a readiness to discuss matters of faith with others; to act with Christ where there is a need, and to invite others to church; and*
- *The congregation behaves as good stewards of creation and works with others for justice and peace; being with those with whom Jesus identifies.*

## A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WIDER CHURCH:

- *Links the local church regionally, nationally and beyond; and*
- *The congregation participates in mission and activity at each level.*

## A HEALTHY CONGREGATION'S INTERNAL LIFE WILL BE CHARACTERISED BY SEVERAL INDICATORS:

- *A sense of direction. Attendees perceive their congregation as having a definite sense of direction and purpose.*
- *A strong sense of community among attendees embracing all generations, different cultures and diverse ways of being human - creating a sense of belonging, managing conflict, and working towards reconciliation, healing, and renewal. High levels of involvement in small congregational groups will be evident, along with participation in activities in other communities and settings.*
- *An involving leadership. The leadership has a strong sense of vision for the mission of the congregation, to which attendees are committed. Leadership is inspiring and purposeful yet puts a priority on listening to attendees' ideas and encouraging them to discover their gifts and use them. Those with roles receive adequate levels of support.*
- *Newcomers and growth. Healthy congregations are more likely to be attracting and holding newcomers, retaining young adults and growing numerically. For congregations whose mission is in the contexts in which its members live and work through most of the week, the indicators of health include the outcomes of their activities and the ways the local congregation provides support.*

# APPENDIX 2 - A STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF CHURCH LIFE

## Congregation size and worship

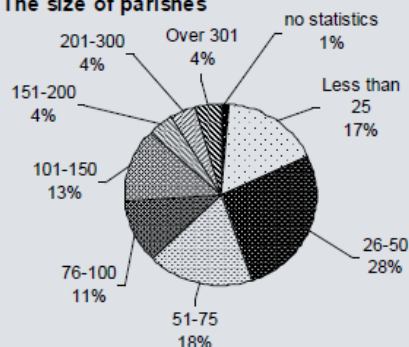
### Key findings:

- Most people worship with at least 100 others
- Larger parishes have more worship events
- As parish size increases, so does the proportion of the roll attending services

➤ On an average Sunday in June 2008, 29,372 adults and 6,302 children attended our 416 parishes. About 10% of the population is at church on any one Sunday (and 20% attend at least once a month). This suggests about 9% of worshippers are at Presbyterian churches.

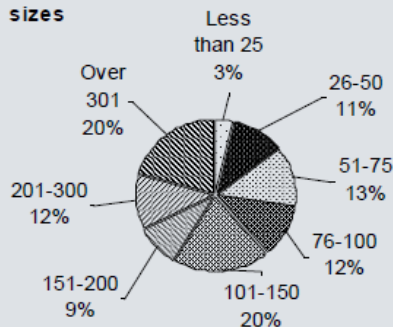
➤ Most Presbyterian parishes are small. Over 60 % of parishes have fewer than 75 at worship.

### The size of parishes



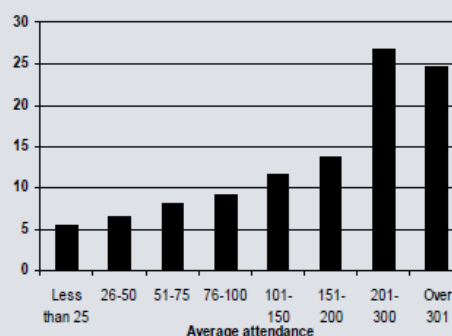
➤ Most people worship at the larger parishes. 60% of worshippers are at services with over 100 people, and over one third worship in congregations with over 200 people. Nearly one in five members worship in congregations with over 300 members.

### The proportion of members attending churches of different sizes



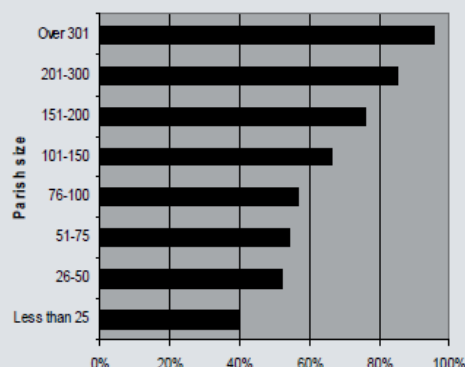
➤ Larger parishes have more worship events – in most size categories there is one worship event each month for every 10 worshippers.

### Number of worship events each month



➤ Larger churches have a higher proportion of their roll at worship on Sunday, and smallest churches have only 40% of their roll at worship.

### Attendance compared to Roll



➤ Union parishes are on average smaller than Presbyterian ones. Union parishes averaged 66 worshippers at services while Presbyterian parishes averaged 94. While 28% of parishes are union churches, only 12% of those at worship are at union services.



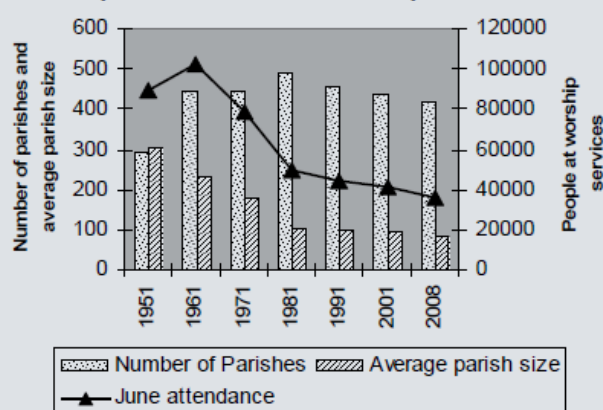
## How have parishes changed?

### Key findings:

- Parish numbers have not declined as much as have numbers of parishioners
- Large churches are less likely to decline
- Small churches find it hard to grow

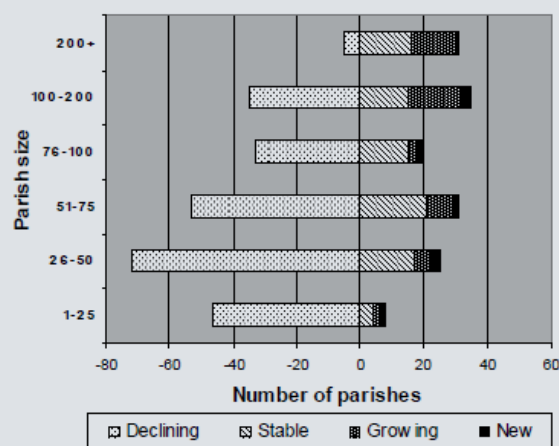
- In 2008, the average parish had 86 people at worship. In 1951, it had 308. While the number at worship has declined, the number of parishes has hardly changed.

### Fewer people in the same number of parishes means smaller parishes



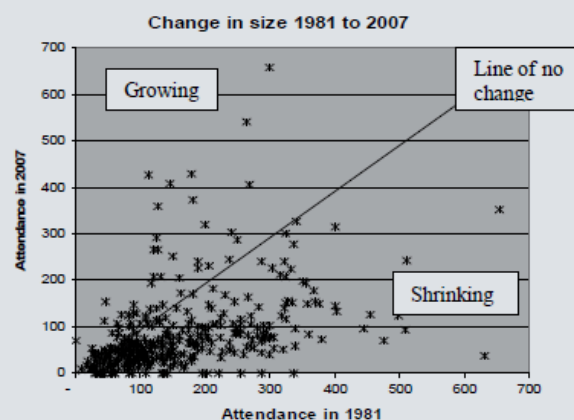
- Between 1995 and 2007, parishes of all sizes grew and parishes of all sizes declined. However, parishes with fewer than 75 at worship were the most vulnerable to decline. (Growth and decline are movements of more than 20%).

### Growth and Decline



- Churches of all sizes grew, but a higher proportion of larger churches have experienced growth. New churches come in all sizes.

- Over the last twenty-five years, some of the largest churches have become quite small, and some of the middle size churches have become the largest. However, churches with under 100 people at services have found it hard to grow dramatically.



## People facts

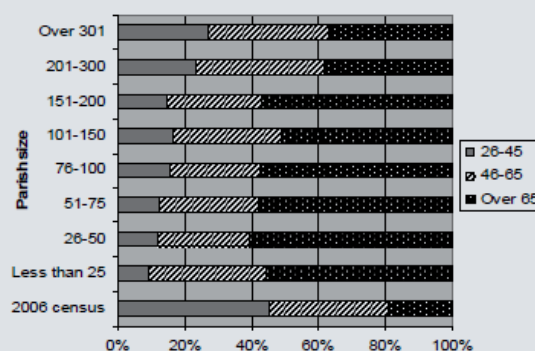
### Key findings:

- Only congregations over 200 have significantly more young adults
- There is about one child for every five adults
- 46% of parishes have no youth programme

### Adults

- All congregations have more members over 65 years old, and fewer between 25 and 45, than the country as a whole. Only congregations with over 200 at worship have a significantly younger profile.

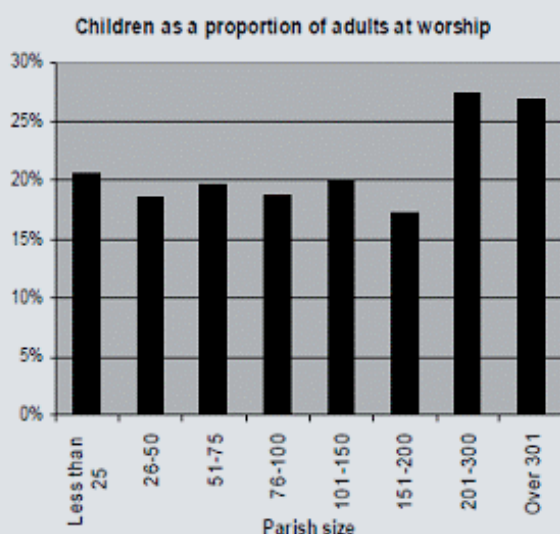
### Proportion of adults in each age group



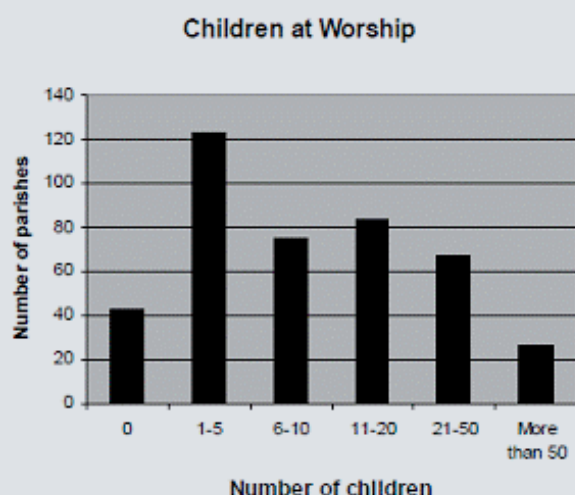
- While it varies from year to year, since 2000 about 1100 adults have been either baptised or confirmed each year. The trend since 2000 has been for this number to increase, and in 2008 there were 1495. These were split about equally between ethnic and non-ethnic congregations.

## Children

- On average, one child under 13 for every five adults attends worship. Churches with between 150 and 200 adults at services have fewest children while those over 200 have most.



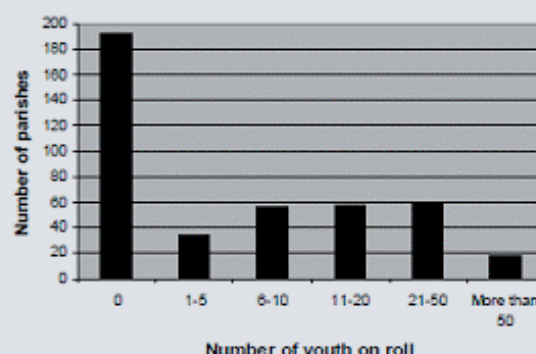
- Fifty churches recorded no children at worship. Most had less than 10, which may be too few for an effective children's programme. There were more than 50 children at 26 parishes.



## Young people aged 13-17

- 46% of parishes do not have any young people in youth programmes. Most youth groups have between 6 and 50 young people. Only 4% of parishes have large youth programmes with more than 50 on the roll.

Youth on the roll of youth programmes



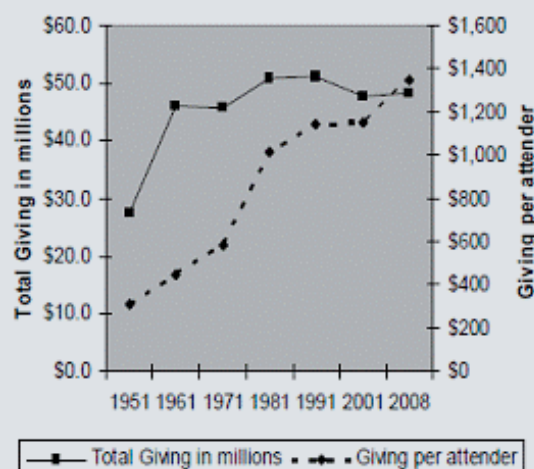
## Giving

### Key findings:

- Since 1950 giving has increased four-fold after taking into account inflation
- Large parishes are more dependent on offerings

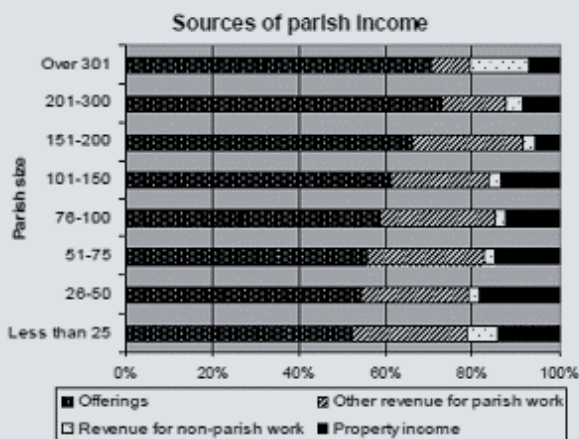
- Since 1951, giving per worshipper has increased more than four-fold (adjusting for inflation). Until 2000, the increased giving offset the loss due to declining attendance.

Giving adjusted for inflation

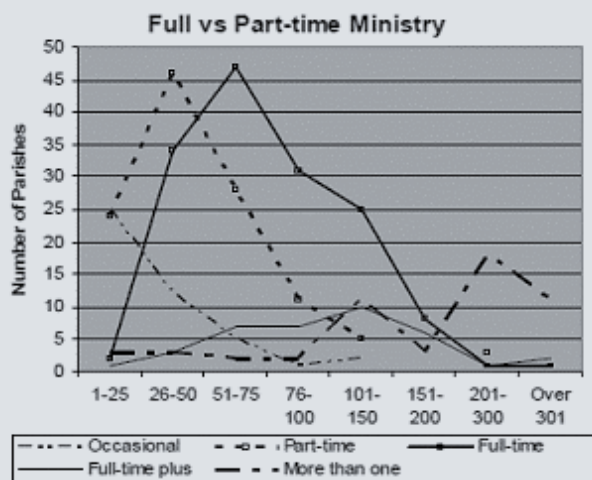


- In 2008, the average parish had \$141,000 in total revenue. While total income varied significantly by parish size, total revenue was a little less than \$2000 per adult worshipper.

- Large parishes are primarily dependent upon congregational giving and income from their parish activities. Smaller parishes raise more of their funds through revenue for non-parish work and income from investments.



- The largest expense for parishes was payment for ministry. On average this was 38% of all expenses.
- The amount each parish spent on ministry can be used as a guide to the type of ministry they had. This suggests that the smallest parishes have only occasional or part-time minister. A full-time minister is not common before a parish has over 50 worshippers, and team ministry is only dominant once parishes have over 200 worshippers.



Sources: This report is based on the annual statistics provided by the 416 parishes, and upon a linked data set of statistics from 458 parishes from 1981 to 2007 (which includes parishes which closed in that time.)  
Prepared by Dr M N Galt April 2009.

## Leadership

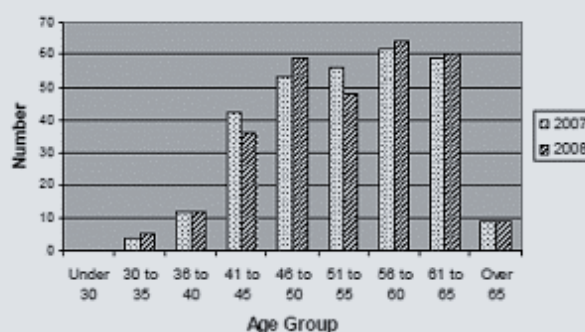
### Key findings:

- About 40% of ministers will retire in the next ten years
- The leadership burden is significantly higher in parishes with fewer than 75 at worship

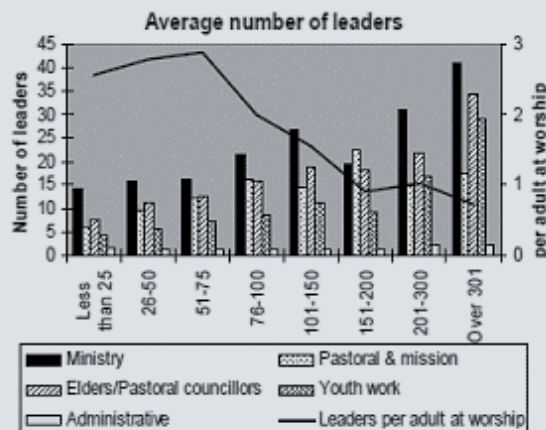
- As at June 2008, there were 291 ordained ministers. Not all of these were active in parish ministry, and some were in part-time ministry.
- The age profile of Presbyterian ministers shows that over the next four years approximately 60 ministers will reach the normal retirement age of 65, and in the next ten years approximately 40% of current ministers will retire.

Source: Beneficiary Fund annual report.

### Age Profile of Contributing Members



- Parishes were asked to say how many leaders they had (either paid or unpaid) in different areas. The smallest parish had over 2.5 leadership positions for each person at worship, whereas the largest parishes had only 0.72. This suggests the time demand on parishioners reduces as parish size increases.





# APPENDIX 3 - THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS

*By the Very Rev Dr Graham Redding*

## WHAT THE STATISTICS TELL US:

- *PCANZ membership has been in decline since the 1960s. Many of our congregations have few or no children, youth and young adults.*
- *The main exceptions to this decline have been Pacific Island and Asian congregations – what we might call the rise of “ethnic-specific” congregations as a result of immigration patterns.*
- *Of the predominantly Palagi congregations, there is a handful of strong and growing churches. Most of these would probably describe themselves as evangelical; some of these have roots in the charismatic movement of the 1960s and 1970s.*

## PUTTING THE STATISTICS IN CONTEXT

The reasons for the membership decline are many and varied, and follow patterns evident throughout the Western world. Some describe it as the collapse of Christendom. The seeds of this collapse were sown hundreds of years ago – in such periods known as the Enlightenment and the Renaissance. Globally, the numerical weight of Christianity is shifting away from the North and West towards the South and East. The Church throughout the Western world neither commands the respect and loyalty, nor exercises the influence that it did just a few generations ago.

New Zealand society has changed considerably during this time. It is much more pluralistic (ethnically, culturally and religiously). Whilst there is openness to spirituality, there is resistance to organised religion and the Church as an institution. This is more than indifference; increasingly, the Church encounters hostility and cynicism. Meanwhile, those who are drawn to Christianity and the Church often bring with them a consumer mindset. In this post-Christendom setting, denominational labels count for little. Many Christians will stay in one church only for as long as they feel their needs are being met, and then they will move on. It's called church grazing. Many drop out of church altogether.

The ecclesiastical landscape in NZ is vastly different to what it was 40 or 50 years ago. The decline of the mainline churches has been partially offset by a proliferation of independent churches, many of which associate themselves with the Pentecostal movement. These churches have not had much of an impact on secular New Zealand. Their membership consists largely of former members (and their offspring) of the mainline churches. Meanwhile the percentage of people describing themselves as Christian in the census continues to fall.

It is difficult to quantify the effect of the 1960s charismatic movement and doctrinal controversies on church membership, but anecdotal evidence suggests that at least part of the decline may be attributed to these phenomena. However, other factors were at work too. For example, with the majority of its churches being in rural and provincial areas, the Presbyterian Church has been hit hard by urbanisation. Our denomination has suffered more than most in this regard.

## GOING DEEPER

The complex array of factors noted above should caution us against thinking that if we just do 'a, b and c' then the institutional decline of recent decades might be reversed. Moreover, we have to contend with the fact that, for all the Church benefited under Christendom, there were also many distortions in the Christendom model of being church. Not only is there no going back; it is also highly debatable that we should even try to do so. Indeed, it is entirely possible that church growth, conceived in terms of organisational growth, is not something that God is especially concerned about. After all, a small dose of highly flavoured salt is more effective than a mountain of flavourless salt. Whilst strategic plans have their place, we must be mindful of their limitations. The *Missio Dei* cannot be reduced to a series of organisational values, goals, outcomes and performance measures. Nor can the Kingdom of God be reduced to a preoccupation with congregational growth.

Looking at the PCANZ today there are some obvious problems associated with institutional decline and aging membership. These include the burden of maintaining plant and buildings, a loss of ministry, leadership and administrative capacity, financial constraints, and the struggle to engage with surrounding communities in meaningful ways. In many congregations where there is a struggle simply to survive as a church, morale and confidence is low. Many churches are simply tired.

These are largely organisational problems. Some of them require organisational responses, such as the freeing up of resources to support new mission projects, which the PressGo initiative represents. But there is more to it than this. Indeed, it could be said that equally problematic for the Church are the following (less obvious) factors:

- *Biblical and theological illiteracy*
- *Historical amnesia and a loss of institutional memory*
- *Cultural conformity*
- *The increasing banality and trivialisation of worship*
- *A loss of confidence in the Gospel of Jesus Christ*
- *A muting of the more radical and costly demands of discipleship*
- *A diminished sense of the priesthood of all believers*
- *The displacement of biblical models of ministry and leadership by corporate models*

Pursuing church growth while ignoring these sorts of deeper concerns can become a something of a red herring. A discerning eye is necessary when it comes to talking about congregational growth as a strategic goal. Not all growth is of God.

Moreover, there is a need to distinguish between change and reform. The Reformation motto, “Always reformed and being reformed” suggests that the Church does not reform itself through a series of innovative changes; rather, it is in the process of being reformed by the Spirit in accordance with Scripture. Change and innovation for their own sake engender weariness and confusion. Seventy years ago, TS Eliot had this to say about the Church’s tendency to lurch from one experimental change to the next:

- *The endless cycle of idea and action,*
- *Endless invention, endless experiment,*
- *Brings knowledge of speech, but not of silence;*
- *Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.*
- *All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,*
- *All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,*
- *But nearness to death no nearer to God.*

Which is the prior question? Is it, “What needs to change in order to grow the Presbyterian Church?” (A pragmatic, organisational question.) Or is it, “Based on our reading of both Scripture and context, what kind of Church is God calling into being?” (A theological, missional question.)

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul describes the church in terms of a community entrusted by God with a ministry of reconciliation. This ministry is grounded in the activity of One who has already reconciled the world to God, not counting their trespasses against them. In Christ there is reconciliation with God, with the created order and between people. This reconciliation is not to be equated with mere co-existence and the absence of conflict; rather, it involves a deep, reconciling union that is nothing short of a new creation.

*What would a Church look like, that saw itself not as a religious organisation which exists to meet the spiritual needs of its members, but rather as the first fruits of a new reconciled and reconciling humanity? What would its worship look like? What sort of presence in the community would it lead to? What kinds of commitments and habits of faith would it engender? How would it order its life?*

To a certain extent, the answers to these questions will relate to our context. However, there are some biblical norms which we can affirm regardless of context. For example, the shaping of our common life through attention to God’s Word and the act of breaking bread together (cf. Luke 24:13-35 & Acts 2:42); and a way of being-in-community that counters the myriad forms of oppression, division and hostility that characterize the world at large (cf. Galatians 3:27-28).

The two-fold tragedy is that: (1) churches are easily distracted from the core tasks of attending to God’s Word and breaking bread together; and (2) they often perpetuate rather than counter the myriad forms of oppression, division and hostility that characterize the world at large. The history of church schism and division does not make for edifying reading.

## **THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME**

As Christendom fades and PCANZ membership declines we are seeing a reconfiguration of church life. In urban areas some large, multi-staff churches have emerged, and some of these are forming missional hubs out of nearby, struggling churches which might otherwise close down. Examples; East Taieri in Dunedin, Hornby in Christchurch, Knox in Lower Hutt and St John’s in Rotorua. These churches, and others such as St Columba in Auckland, St Peter’s in Tauranga, St Alban’s in Palmerston North, St Andrew’s in Mt Maunganui, St John’s in Wellington and St Andrew’s in Whangarei, are becoming known as churches with a strong regional (not just local) presence.

Many people are drawn to these churches because of their strength, vitality, programmes and resources. But not everyone is, and it would be a mistake to gear ministry recruitment and training strategies entirely around this one model of church. Many people prefer the intimacy of a local community or suburban church where everyone is known and has a part to play. Whilst many of these churches struggle numerically, many are also healthy. Examples; Massey-Riverhead in Auckland, St Heliers in Auckland, St Stephen’s in Christchurch, St Margaret’s in Christchurch, Somervell in Auckland, Wadestown in Wellington,



Kaikorai Valley in Dunedin, and Flagstaff-Wakari in Dunedin. Many of these churches have innovative community ministries, and some are pioneering new ways of engaging their communities in worship. Three Dunedin examples stand out - B@tch (part of Highgate), and StudentSoul (linked with Leith Valley), and Blue Lagoon (formerly St David's, North East Valley).

Still other people in urban areas seek out a church that has a distinctive liturgical style, theological emphasis or congregational ethos. Examples; St Luke's in Auckland, St Andrew's on the Terrace in Wellington, and Knox in Dunedin.

Ethnic-specific congregations (mostly Pacific Island and Asian) also feature prominently in the urban church landscape, especially in Auckland and Wellington. They play an important role in maintaining a sense of identity and belonging for migrant groups. Their challenge going forward is how they minister to, and accommodate their New Zealand-born offspring, many of whom do not identify with the migrant sub-culture of their parents.

Many parishes are becoming more multicultural, reflecting the increasingly multicultural makeup of their communities. Most dramatic example; Balmoral in Auckland, where the minister, Chong Woo Kim, took on a dwindling European congregation, which is now seeing significant growth as it transforms into a multicultural parish with many nationalities represented.

The majority of churches in the PCANZ are still situated outside the main cities in provincial towns and rural areas. Some are flourishing (for example, Waipu, Cromwell, St Andrew's in Geraldine, Te Anau, Knox in Waitara, St Andrew's in Waipukurau), but most are struggling. Whilst it is difficult to justify the continued existence of many of these small and struggling churches on economic grounds, the significance of their presence to the fabric of their local communities cannot be overlooked. The Synod of Otago and Southland is taking a lead in exploring new ways of being church in rural areas. On the provincial town front, Timaru is taking a lead in exploring the possibility of its Presbyterian churches joining together to form one parish. This could well provide a model for other towns and regions to follow.

About 20 percent of PCANZ congregations are United churches and Cooperative Ventures. The vast majority of these were formed during the church union movement of the 1970s, which brought together Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans and Churches of Christ. Forty years on, most of these churches are struggling numerically and many of them feel a lack of identity – they neither constitute a denomination of their own nor identify any longer with any one of their “parent” denominations.

Te Aka Puaho constitutes a unique situation. Whilst it has an urban presence in Auckland and Wellington, its main presence is in rural Bay of Plenty, around Whakatane. It is Tuhoe-based. Te Maungarongo marae in Ohope constitutes a key geographical reference point for the history of bicultural relations in the PCANZ. The ministry needs of Te Aka Puaho parishes are met by Amorangi (non-stipendiary ordained ministers), who are trained at Te Wānanga-a-Rangi. Largely through the vision and efforts of Wayne Te Kaawa, Te Wānanga-a-Rangi is being revitalized, with a significant flow-on effect for Te Aka Puaho. An encouraging advance in bicultural relations was represented recently in the signing of a covenant between Te Wānanga-a-Rangi and the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership.

Noting the above and looking ahead, three things are becoming clear:

1. Whilst the attractional model of church will continue to work to some degree (because of the demand for what many churches offer in terms of their worship and activities/programmes), the post-Christendom context suggests that this will not be enough, and indeed begs the question of an alternative-looking ecclesiology. Many churches will discover their future is in the transition from being a “settled church” to a church as a movement – that is, going to where people are rather than waiting for people to come to them. This could be defined geographically, in terms of planting churches in new subdivisions (for example, Bethlehem, Papamoa). It could also be understood in two other ways: Firstly, through a rediscovery that the priesthood of all believers is worked out in secular vocations and occupations (not only in serving on church committees and duty rosters); and secondly in terms of churches establishing and encouraging innovative ministries of hope and reconciliation (these will include, but not be confined to, chaplaincies). Here the emphasis will shift from running congregations to building communities, and from faith as security to faith as risk.

2. The traditional parish church model that presumes the existence of one full-time stipendiary ministry serving the spiritual needs of its members will become the exception rather than the rule. Also on the way out will be the Christendom tendency to drive a wedge between clergy (the paid “professionals”) and laity (the long-suffering “amateurs”). Instead, there will be a recovery of the biblical portrayal of the *kleros* (clergy) as part of (not apart from) the *laos* (whole people of God), with ministry belonging to the latter by virtue of their baptism. Equipping for ministry needs to take this baptismal implication and reality into account.

3. The revitalization of worship and a recovery of the joys and demands of discipleship and being-in-community will be integral, not incidental, to the revitalization of the Church’s mission. Thus understood, mission is not only about what we do; more importantly, it’s about who we are (in Christ). The revitalization of worship will involve more than making it intergenerational and user friendly; it will involve a recovery of biblical patterns and principles, and allowing these to shape and inform our contextual practices.

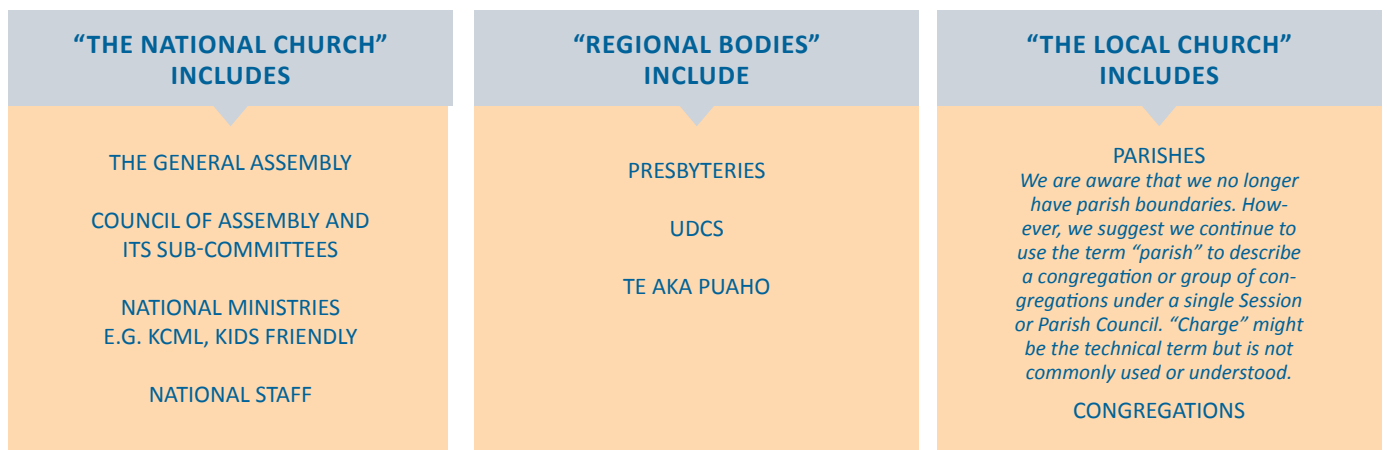
Underpinning the above will be some guiding principles, which could be expressed in the following terms:

- 1. The triune God is the agent of mission and transformation, not the Church.***
- 2. The future of the PCANZ will rely as much on our willingness to be re-evangelized with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it will on our appropriation of organisational principles and Church growth strategies.***
- 3. Decisions that are informed by the logic of the Cross may not be the same as those that are informed by sociological projections and cost-benefit analyses.***
- 4. The Missio Dei is as messy and unpredictable as it is expansive. Strategic thinking must be harnessed to prayerful discernment lest we fail to hear what the Spirit is saying to us.***
- 5. Reforming and renewing the PCANZ for mission should not be reduced to an endless diet of change and innovation.***



# APPENDIX 4 - TERMINOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

A multiplicity of terms have developed for different parts of the Church. In this paper we are using the following terms and we recommend that these terms be adopted for wider use so as to produce some consistency and a common language. The terms primarily reflect the three levels of Church life.



## STRUCTURE

- Parishes are responsible to the regional body of which they are a part.
- All regional bodies are responsible to the General Assembly, or between Assemblies, to the Council of Assembly (CoA).
- All Council of Assembly sub-committees and work groups are responsible to the General Assembly, or between Assemblies, to the Council of Assembly.
- All sub-committees of Council of Assembly sub-committees are responsible to the relevant CoA sub-committee.
- All national staff and national ministries are responsible to the Assembly Executive Secretary.
- The AES is responsible to the Assembly (or Council of Assembly).
- The Council of Assembly is responsible to the General Assembly.
- The Nominating Committee is responsible to the General Assembly but sits alongside the rest of the structure.

There are organisations that are part of the "Presbyterian family" but are not accountable to the General Assembly and are therefore not part of the Church structure but do report to the General Assembly:

- *Presbyterian Support NZ*
- *Church schools*
- *APW*
- *PSDS*
- *CPT (including the Beneficiary Fund Committee)*
- *Council of Knox College and Salmond College*





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