

## **Consultation on the Review and Development of Southern Presbytery 2018**

### **A discussion document for Southern Presbytery, its members, workgroups and churches**

**prepared by the  
Presbytery Review and Development Workgroup.**

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#### ***SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY***

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ), within the universal church of Jesus Christ, exists to make Jesus Christ known

As Southern Presbytery our vision is for vibrant communities of faith in the south. We will do this by supporting and enabling communities of faith in their worship, pastoral life and mission.

We believe we make Jesus Christ known by proclaiming and modelling the Gospel, nurturing and teaching people within the Christian faith, responding to human need in loving service and seeking to transform society and caring for creation.

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#### ***WHY PRESBYTERY?***

We believe that after a long history of self-disclosure, as testified in the Scriptures, in Jesus Christ God encounters us in a definitive act of self-revelation and reconciliation. In Christ the forgiveness and cosmic purposes of God are made known. In Jesus Christ, God's liberating reign has come near. (Mark 1<sup>15</sup>) The blind see, the deaf hear, the sick are healed, the dead are raised, and good news is proclaimed to the poor. (Luke 7<sup>22</sup>) This is the Good News we exist to serve and which calls people to the faith and discipleship of Christ. (Matt 28<sup>19</sup>)

Christ's people become the church - a sign of God's liberating reign and a foretaste of God's new creation.

Over the centuries Christians have held one another accountable to this calling in different ways. As Christians in the reformed tradition our polity<sup>1</sup> is Presbyterian. We believe this apostolic calling to faithful proclamation and community identity is grounded in Jesus Christ and expressed through the unity and diversity of the whole church which we share by the Spirit, rather than centred in one person, or in a series of individual communities.

The Presbytery is the regional expression of communal life and our collective accountability to one another. As a worshipping and praying community, we ordain ministers of word and sacrament, we articulate our shared mission in the Spirit, we oversee and enable the worship, life, and mission of the faith communities in our midst, and we exercise pastoral care for leadership within the Presbytery.

As such Presbytery must never be separated from the local Church, must always arise out of and serve the local Church, and must exercise its oversight in love and trust, which has its foundation in the reconciliatory work of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. Ideally Presbytery provides a structural support, like a trellis, enabling both direction and freedom to flourish, neither strangling nor letting the plant grow aimlessly.

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<sup>1</sup> **Ecclesiastical polity** is the operational and governance structure of a church or of a Christian denomination. It also denotes the ministerial structure of a church and the authority relationships between churches. Polity relates closely to ecclesiology, the study of doctrine and theology relating to church organization.

As the regional body of the Church, Presbytery is directly responsible to the General Assembly, the highest court of the Church and is another expression of our mutuality of belonging and accountability.

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## **OUR STORY**

In southern New Zealand the Presbyterian Otago Church Settlement fostered a comprehensive vision of Christian life. This was expressed through commitment to universal education, the founding of schools, the university, and the Theological Hall in Dunedin, the early development of Social Services, vigorous advocacy on public issues and active involvement in global mission, alongside a commitment to comprehensive pastoral coverage of the whole region and personal spiritual vitality nurtured in various movements for revival or renewal through the years. Our story is not without faults, but is one that displays again and again the generosity, compassion, and strength of faith of many who have gone before us.

Initially the church that developed under the Otago Church Settlement was completely independent of the Presbyterian Church north of the Waitaki River. However in 1901 the two churches joined to form the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. The six southern presbyteries came under the oversight of the General Assembly of the PCNZ but retained a separate fellowship within the Synod of Otago and Southland which for historical and legal reasons continued to operate as a property owning and funding distribution body. See the history [here](#). In recognition of partnership with tangata whenua and a revived commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand in 1991 became the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

In this story there is much to celebrate and be thankful for. But there is also much that is changing. In 2011, the now five Presbyteries in Otago and Southland, as part of the national restructure of Presbyteries, combined into one Southern Presbytery.

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## **WHERE WE ARE NOW**

Proactively, this change arose out of a desire to increase capacity around required functions of a presbytery and to pool resources for a strengthened mission. Reactively, it sought to respond to a lack of human resourcing in smaller Presbyteries, a number of declining parishes and reducing numbers of ordained ministers alongside an increasing number of parishes without settled ministry. The larger Presbytery has eased some of these issues while others remain or take on new facets. Often a high workload is placed on an increasingly fewer number of people. Over half of our parishes do not have settled ministry. There can sometimes be suspicion or lack of trust within Presbytery in the changing context and this is often exacerbated by perceived communication difficulties. Resource Groups are still finding their place in the structure and some are not functioning as well as they could.

These changes reflect the constant change in society today. Fewer people affiliate as Christian, while the Church is often seen as irrelevant or from a bygone era. Many of our parishes are ageing and declining in numbers. Without placing blame or passing judgement, this is the reality we now live in. Consequently, even as we honour the past, we are entering a new chapter in our story which calls for significant change in our structures and way of life.

But the news is not all doom and gloom! We are a resurrection people empowered by God's living Spirit. As some congregations decline or close, others remain healthy and some are growing, and there are increasing opportunities for new missional ventures or church planting. Therefore, as Southern Presbytery we move forward with a sense of hope in the God whose Kingdom has already come near!

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**As we have discussed how we can best be a Presbytery that serves God in every way, the following statements of responsibility have emerged.**

Together in Christ, every ministry is part of Presbytery and Presbytery is part of every ministry. In seeking to be a Presbytery that supports/upholds/follows our vision of being vibrant communities of faith in the south, we hold the following to be core values in our living and teaching.

We reflect the unity of God and the reconciliation of Christ in creation. As God loves the world so we are to live in love.

We care for each other and hold each other accountable to the Gospel

We value our belonging together and respect our diversity within it

We bear one another's burdens and share one another's joys

We share resources for ministry and mission

We are to enable the inclusion of all groups of people

**To enable Presbytery to be effective four areas of relationship are required:**

We are to provide leadership

We are to be pastoral

We are to encourage mission

We are to ensure appropriate procedures to comply with the expectations of the church and wider society

**We have identified our need to focus on the following areas:**

Honouring and reclaiming our Reformed and Presbyterian heritage of working together

Prayerfully seeking to continually be reforming in the Spirit as we interact with our changing society

Focusing on seeing existing and new faith communities thrive, rather than merely keeping buildings open

Actively seeking to pass on the good news as inherited from previous generations and diverse cultures

Encouraging new initiatives in appropriate mission to all generations

Having the courage to plant new congregations and experiment with new styles of church that engage with today's New Zealanders

Encouraging networks between congregations, presbyteries other denominations, and outside agencies

Continuing to articulate our partnership with Synod so that systems and structures are not overly burdensome

Empowering local Resource Groups to function well in order to improve communication, trust, and networking within Presbytery

Taking seriously our bi-cultural identity and the increasing cultural diversity in the church, seeking ways for our life to be shaped by one another

## OUR WAY FORWARD

We would appreciate your thoughts on this paper as a foundation document for review and development of the Presbytery. The next step is to explore ways in which we can implement change where it is needed and support that which is functioning well.

Once the Presbytery Review and Development Group have received this feedback we will work on practical and cultural changes that we hope will build a increasingly vibrant and relevant Presbytery to the south. This then will come back to you for your responses and suggestions. We plan to present this next stage at the full Presbytery meeting at the end of April.

**We have some questions for you:** *please click and type in the box*

<b>What do you like and/or value in this document?</b>
<b>What do you not like about this document?</b>

**We have identified four areas of responsibility for Presbytery – pastoral, leadership, mission and compliance. In each of these areas what, in light of this document, would it look like when the Presbytery is fully supporting vibrant communities of faith in the south?**

**Pastoral:** to be connected, supported, getting to know each other better

**Leadership:** cultivating trust, enabling vision, encouraging and empowering leadership at all levels

**Mission:** encouraging, resourcing, sharing ways we articulate our faith for the building up of the body of Christ

**Compliance:** Procedures to comply with the expectations of the church and wider society ensuring the safety of our churches and our people, conduit for our relationships with and responsibilities to national church, the state and other partners.

**Any other comments:**

Please indicate if you have replied as:

Parish	Presbytery workgroup	Presbytery member	Resource Group
Individual member of congregation	Presbytery Partner	Other	

Thank you for taking the time to respond to these questions. Please return to:

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By 16 April 2018 midday