



Synod of Otago & Southland

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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Greetings from Covid-19 level 2.

I wanted to write to you as Moderator of Synod to firstly encourage you and secondly update you on some of the Synod goings on.

We are currently facing interesting times and each of us as individuals and as church fellowships had to adjust to the alert levels and their impacts. Synod has had to adjust too, including lots of Zoom meetings. For me personally as a farmer much is continuing as normal, and as a family we are so privileged to be able to still work pretty much as usual. Having said that, we did struggle to get stock away and winter looks like it will be a long and testing one. I missed catching up with people in person... I believe God's plan is for us to be relational.

I also know that for many of you this will be a painful time when the unknown is very much at the forefront of our minds. Can I encourage you with a very small but very powerful reminder that is found in **John 16:33**: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have **trouble**. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Be encouraged when we trust in Jesus, he will give us peace and he will overcome whatever we may be struggling with.

Updates

I want to update you on a few things that would have been discussed at our AGM which was postponed:

Synod AGM – You will be aware that the Synod AGM was postponed due to Covid-19 lockdown. If the need to have one later in the year arose, we were going to do that. However, there is no business, other than receiving some courtesy reports that requires an AGM, so these are attached for your information. **We will not now be holding a 2020 AGM.** The 2021 AGM is scheduled for Saturday 17 April 2021. Venue and whether the AGM will start on Friday night 16 April are yet to be confirmed. We will circulate that information when it is available.

Funding – Executive after much prayer and due diligence decided to proceed with the funding round for this year. There had been robust discussion to possibly relook at the applications given the Covid-19 situation; but following the process of due diligence, Executive believed that the best benefit for our parishes was to proceed and give the money now as per the recommendations from the Funding Committees. To be able to do that

Executive met as a Commission of Synod to approve these applications. This was done because of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding Covid19; to comply with the requirements of the Trust Board Act; and as many of the applications were for expenses already incurred. The decisions were made under the provisions of the motion approved by the Synod at its 2019 AGM, giving the Executive power to act as a Commission of Synod if required.

Future Applications - The Otago Foundation Trust Board has indicated that due to the impact of Covid-19 there will be a significant drop in income available to Synod for distribution for the next financial year. It is still important that you continue to apply to Synod. If you are applying, it is well worth a phone call to Fergus our Executive Officer. He is only too happy to give you assistance. Having said that you will understand that the smaller sum available will impact on how much can be distributed. The other factor that you need to be aware of is that it is highly likely that any money given will only be for one year.

Bequest – We are very grateful to have received notification of a Bequest. At this stage Executive are working through a process of due diligence regarding this. Rest assured that there will be more on this as further information comes to hand.

Synod's Home Premises - The lease on the current premises that is Synod's home comes up for renewal periodically. The next renewal date was 1 February 2021. Following discussions with the Trust Board, and thanks to their support, the lease is being extended for another year, to February 2022.

The Executive had been exploring possible ways forward. We set some very clear criteria that we would like any proposal to meet. We have paused those discussions. The pause, together with the subsequent lease extension, gives us opportunity to assess the wider implications of Covid19 to our parishes and people. We will continue to communicate any updates.

Executive - I want to assure you that we have an amazing Executive. These men and women are extremely dedicated to the tasks set before them. They are volunteers. Often much that they deal with is extremely confidential and so I say to you "encourage these men and women whenever you can." I believe that we have a very competent Executive who only have at their heart a desire to serve God by adhering to the founding documents with an eye to the future, being aware of the plans and mission of our parishes. But most of all seeking God's direction by his Spirit's leading in all that they do. Please keep them in your prayers as they keep you in theirs.

Please make this letter available to your congregation, so that everyone is kept up to date. Should you have any questions or comments about the above or related matters, do not hesitate to contact the Executive or its Co-Conveners through our Executive Officer Fergus.

Blessings.

Mark Heslip

Moderator of Synod