

Study Leave Report

Southland Presbytery since 1990 – Survival v. Mission or Procrastination Unto Death

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As I am currently in the midst of writing my thesis for Masters of Ministry I have been reading the minutes of Southland Presbytery for the past 20 years, over the past two weeks while I have been in Dunedin on Study Leave. The reason I chose to read the minutes of Southland Presbytery for the recent history was because no-one has written about this since Rev Crawford Madill's book 'Part of a Miracle' was published in 1990. His book follows on from 'The Flame Unquenched' written by Georgina McDonald published in 1956, which chronicles the first 100 years of the Southland Presbytery.

My thesis is titled, 'Multi-Parish Ministry for Southland Presbyterian Congregations'. The thesis includes a discussion on what Multi-Parish Ministry is, how this is currently being provided for ten Southland congregations by Resource Ministers, a look back at the establishment of parishes in Southland and the decline of these. I will hopefully prove the hypothesis that the best way forward for Presbyterian congregations in Southland would be the formation of a Southland Regional Parish.

This proposal is currently in development and since the review of the Southland Regional Resource Ministry is to hopefully be worked towards in some form or other.

Interestingly, in my research at the Presbyterian Church Archives Centre at the Knox Centre in Dunedin, I have discovered that this plan to re-arrange Southland parishes is not a totally new idea and that something similar was proposed in 1996. Even as far back as 1993, the need was identified by the Ministry Committee of Southland Presbytery, for a 'Parish Mission Consultant' to be employed by the Presbytery¹ at

¹ Southland Presbytery minutes. July 1993

one third of stipend, to work for Presbytery Committees, Special Committees and Commissions, Quinquennial Visitations, provide Resource Advice, planning assistance and be called upon in crisis situations². The Parish Mission Consultant was charged with the duty of delivering the mission packages: 'From Maintenance to Mission', 'Gossiping the Gospel', 'Four Faces of Mission', 'Who Ministers Where?' and Growth Evangelism projects³, to encourage members of parishes to actively undertake these projects, to suggest initiatives and provide links for parishes as they seek to fulfil their mission⁴. This role was advertised in the Presbytery Notices in November 1993, following Appendixes 3i, 3ii and 3iii on the need for a Parish Mission Consultant. These appendices outlined the comparison between a Consultancy to a Director/Supervisor, the list of consultancy type work that was in hand or had been requested and the Presbytery tasks that would be involved in the role. Rev Ron Townsend was the only applicant for the job, and the Board of Nomination agreed that he was suitable for the job to commence in March 1994.

The Presbytery applied for funding for the role from the Synod of Otago and Southland to the tune of \$5700, which included a travel allowance of 763km per annum, with parishes using his services paying the travel costs for his visits. However, it is unclear whether this role was ever established as there do not appear to be any further references to the role and there are no reports to Presbytery from this Parish Mission Consultant and the work being undertaken, though the Presbytery minutes record Rev Townsend resigning from the role in May 1994, due to a lack of confidence in Presbytery but the resignation was withdrawn after mediation⁵. Funding was provided by the Synod and the Adam Hamilton Fund in August 1994, with there being no levy for parishes. The role was to be reviewed in December 1994, but Rev Townsend resigns in September 1994⁶.

By 1996, numerous reports^{7 8 9} express great concern concerning the future of Southland Presbytery¹⁰. Some parishes with ministers, such as in Otautau, who

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. November 1993. Advertisement in Presbytery Notices, following Appendixes 3i, 3ii and 3iii on the need for a Parish Mission Consultant.

⁵ Ibid. May 1994

⁶ Ibid. September 1994

⁷ Ibid. Ministry Committee report, November 1995

were saying they could no longer afford to support them, due to falling membership numbers¹¹. Because many parishes were employing lay pastors on short-term contracts¹² and eight parishes were identified as suffering hardship¹³, it was requested by Limestone Parish that a forum be held, not just for Western Southland parishes, but for all Southland Presbytery to examine the future of the Presbytery¹⁴ and that a letter be sent to all Presbyterians in Southland outlining the concerns being encountered. Plans for the merger of several parishes with others, with there to be no vacancies filled until this had been achieved, were suggested. An amendment to these proposals allowed for parishes to fill their vacancies, but a full review of Parish boundaries, Parish building requirements and future membership trends, and present and future requirements for Ministry, was to be carried out¹⁵. July 1996, saw proposals for various option for West valley-yoked parishes and for Central Southland as clusters of parishes.

In February 1996, a report from the Futures Work Group urged parishes and the presbytery to realise that ‘they should no longer expect society to follow the Gospel and come to church’¹⁶, but they should feel empowered to undertake a mission approach, to avoid a maintenance model, rather re-program for mission, but to realise that it would take time to restructure.¹⁷ Some suggested ideas for restructuring of parishes and their neighbours found the most enthusiasm for the grouping of Central Southland parishes. At meetings held on 4th and 5th December, 1996, 4th and 10th February, 1997 (convened by Alan Paulin), parishes of Western and Central Southland discussed their various needs and possible ways of having them met alongside options for amalgamation and co-operation between parishes. Parishes of Eastern and Southern Southland also looked at their options and possibilities for the future¹⁸.

⁸ Ibid. Joint Regional Committee (JRC) report, November 1995

⁹ Ibid. St. Stephens Vacancy report, February 1996

¹⁰ Ibid. Business Committee report, Addendum A, March 1996

¹¹ Ibid. JRC report, March 1996

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid. Ministry Committee report, November 1995

¹⁴ Ibid. Letter tabled from Limestone Plains parish, October 1995

¹⁵ Southland Presbytery Minutes, April 1996, with various options included for ways ahead for the future.

¹⁶ Ibid, 4 February 1997

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

A positive outcome of discussions was an initial step towards the amalgamation of the Merrivale/Waiau and Tuatapere/Orepuki parishes from 21 February 1997. From March 1997 became known as the Waiau Valley parish, with a service of Inauguration held on 29th June at Orawia Church. Otautau/Waiono parish employed a part-time Lay Supply minister (Mrs Judith Day), as well as Summer Supply, and Limestone Plains undertook to have worship held in three locations on a rotational basis, to replace the need for a service in each location every week¹⁹.

By May 1997 a plan emerged to establish a circuit amongst the parishes of Western Southland that would be facilitated by both Lay and Ordained Ministry to provide support and leadership, with due consideration for each parishes needs, keeping in mind the risk of rushing into something without an agreed process. This ministry model, to be called the Longwood Circuit, would recognise the various characteristics that could be provided by the Ministers involved. At this time the parishes of Wallacetown and St. Stephens had met and decided not to link together and each then sought to fill their vacancies²⁰.

A comprehensive Report from the Futures Committee to the Southland Presbytery, dated 30 June 1997, outlines the task of the committee, the meetings held, the propositions and outcomes. It was 'generally agreed that the present situation is not tenable'²¹ and eight themes were identified as follows:

- a) clergy and lay people working together in leadership
- b) a mission focus rather than a chaplaincy model of ministry
- c) a desire to be active in and relevant to our local community
- d) work to meet the needs of people under forty
- e) a range of worship styles, with all including some contemporary music
- f) the congregation as the key missional unit but several are likely to be grouped for administrative purposes and served by a ministry team of lay and ordained people, some paid full time, some part time and some voluntary

¹⁹ Ibid, Neil Cowie, Presbytery Facilitator. Report on Progress on future in Far West of Presbytery, May 1997

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. Allan Paulin, Convenor. Futures Committee Report to Southland Presbytery. 30 June 1997.

- g) Minister's leadership seen as enablers and co-ordinators, sharing in innovation, rather than figureheads
- h) denominational linkage is less important than congregational home.²²

The report also expressed a considerable degree of frustration, mainly due to there being little inclination or commitment by congregations to these bold future options, but preferring to only put in place cosmetic changes. The comment made was: 'If this conservatism remains, the few options available will reduce to none at all'²³.

Each of the regions were given a programme of steps towards progress to implement and concluded with the final statement, 'We have been in these discussions many time before. DO IT NOW!'²⁴ As the situation had reached a critical stage it was strongly recommended that Presbytery act accordingly. This report appears to have presented to Presbytery at the same time as the following report from the Ministry Committee.

The Ministry Committee Report of August 1997, discussed issues relating to ministry and restructuring in the Southland Presbytery, covering the topics:

- 1) The Roots of the PCANZ as a reformed Church
- 2) The PCANZ's philosophy of Ministry
- 3) The Presbyterian Form of Church Government, As It Relates to the Ordained Ministry
- 4) Some Issues Affecting the Church/Presbytery At This Time:
 - The Decline of Denominationalism and the Coming Revival
 - The Problems of the PCANZ
 - What Value is the Ordained Minister?
 - The Right to Call
 - The Role of Interim Moderators When It is No Longer an Interim?
5. Recommendation for Federal Model of Ministry
 - What it means to by a 'Federal' Model of Ministry?,
 - Why is this model being proposed?,

²² Ibid. These bullet points are taken from the Alan Paulin report from the Futures Committee.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

- How should we go about implementing such a change?
6. Minister At Large in the Presbytery²⁵.

This was followed in September 1997 by the Ministry Committee Special Report which explored the following topics:

- (1) How do the proposals in the futures report fit in with the proposed federal model in the ministry committee report?, with a better definition of the term 'Federal' and what groupings of parishes do we envisage?;
- (2) How will a Federal Model provide a fairer distribution of lay and ordained Ministry Resources across the Presbytery and how will it enable Presbytery to better fulfil its responsibility to [provide ministry to every part of the Presbytery?;]
- (3) Giving further consideration to the implementation of such a proposal; a further look at the audit and how will these proposals further a Mission Focus?²⁶

The recommendations from this report included the implementation of a complete re-structuring of all parishes into viable and appropriate groupings, to be phased in one group at a time, with Presbytery employing a suitable person for 3 years full-time, possibly funded by the Synod of Otago and Southland Mission and Evangelism Fund and PSDS (Presbyterian Savings and Development) to oversee the undertaking of these recommendations²⁷. Southland Presbytery adopted these recommendations on September 2nd, 1997. A job description for the Oversight of Rearrangement of Parishes in Southland Presbytery, as developed, was presented in December 1997, along with the terms of call for the role as a part-time or full-time position. The position was advertised, but remained vacant.

By June 1998, it became clear that nothing would happen if Presbytery continued to wait for the right person to apply to take on the role of overseeing the rearrangement of the parishes. The Convenor of the Sub-Committee to fill the role of Parish Arrangement Oversight, commented that the present parish system was

²⁵ Ibid. Rev. David Gordon, Convenor. Ministry Committee Report. August 1997

²⁶ Ibid. September 1997

²⁷ Ibid.

unworkable and a cluster system would be better. He pointed out that in order to achieve change there were three alternatives: a) the worst method, to do it ourselves and take many years, b) the best method, to do it ourselves soon with a minimum of fuss, and c) the realistic way, to employ someone to do the task²⁸.

A ‘Report on Progress on Future in West of the Presbytery’ received by Southland Presbytery from Rev. Neil Cowie, Presbytery Facilitator, in December 1998, that asks: ‘What is going to happen in the Parishes of Limestone Plains, Riverton, Otautau and Waiau Valley? Only God knows and the leaders are trying to discern His plans’²⁹ It lists the meetings that had been held and the discussions that had taken place and makes the general assessment that ‘each parish has got over the emotional turmoil of instability and uncertainty of the past, to become now more practical and focussed on mission’. At a meeting held on 8 November ’98 Presbytery decided to move forward in considering a Longwood Parish to embrace all four parishes, with each parish appointing two ‘committee’ representatives to meet in 1999, to consider proposals on working together, and produce a ‘Longwood Newsletter’ to communicate between parishes.³⁰ This was followed by a meeting on 3 April 1999.

During this period the following parishes were vacant and looking for ministry alternatives to calling a full-time Ordained Minister. At the time these parishes were using various forms of leadership as follows:

- Mossburn – part-time lay supply
- Otautau/Waiono Union – part-time Methodist lay supply, Presbyterian pulpit supply and summer supply and some Ordained Ministry supply at Ohai/Nightcaps
- Waiau Valley – part-time lay supply
- Riverton Union – Methodist Minister
- Limestone Plains – part-time Local Limited Minister
- Wallacetown – vacant, lay leadership, seeking Ordained Minister, filled Jan. ‘99

²⁸ Ibid. Rev. Clive Haliday. 2 June 1998

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

- St. Stephens – Vacant then Full-time Ordained Minister, Dec. '98
- St Pauls – part-time lay supply
- Bluff Co-operating – Methodist ministry supply with lay (and some Ordained) pulpit supply
- Oban – Pulpit Supply, lay and Ordained.³¹

Woodlands and Oteramika/Kennington, also indicated they can no longer sustain full-time Ordained ministry and some others, St Pauls, Knox and St Andrews, indicated that situation was rapidly approaching for them as well. This prompted a discussion paper from Allan Paulin, Co-Director Southern South Island Mission Resource Team, in September 2001, which contends that Southland Presbytery needs to make some difficult strategic decisions³². He identifies Invercargill and its surrounds as having 16 parishes, a much larger number than seems necessary and suggests that 8 parishes would be a much more workable number. He also points out that of the 27 parishes in the Presbytery only one lived within its non-capital income in the last financial year. He goes on to suggest some workable amalgamations and groupings (similar to the grouping or federal model previous suggested for rural parishes) of city congregations, with reference to some of the possible links with those rural parishes close to the city. He urges the Presbytery 'to act NOW as the potential to fill vacancies is limited and parishes may fall over with consequent frustration, hurt and loss'.³³.

The Report of the Joint Regional Committee (JRC) of the Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand (UCANZ), for October 2002, notes that in three of the western parishes (Riverton, Limestone Plains and Otautau/Waiono) there are still ongoing discussions regarding co-operation between them, with the sharing of ministry resources and collaboration on training for lay leaders.³⁴

At a meeting held 2 December 2003, between the Mission Committee and Rev John Daniels, Synod Mission Advisor, discussed models of church for those parishes

³¹ Ibid. Vacancy Reports to Southland Presbytery for 1997/1998

³² Ibid. Allan Paulin. Report to Southland Presbytery, September 2001

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. Southland Presbytery Minutes. October 2002

unable to sustain an Ordained Ministry. These models included: House Church, for small numbers, supported by a mentor and resource minister; Local Ministry Teams (LMT), where there were people able to take on various roles, supported by a Resource Minister; or a combination of these with a Resource Minister working with a number of parishes, who could be assisted by the Mission Resource Committee of Synod to undertake a strategic review of what resourcing each parish would require for their mission and future plans.³⁵

In July 2004, Rev. Dr. Simon Rae presented report to Presbytery entitled ‘An Uncalled-for Report from the Moderator’. In it, he states that the Presbytery is in a near-terminal crisis, or ‘melt-down’. He goes on to say that the Presbytery is unable to function as it should to sustain the values Assembly has identified, of safe ministry, healthy congregations and mission orientation (as opposed to survival strategies). He points out that the workloads on Ministers, Presbytery Elders and Presbytery Committees are too heavy, with multiple responsibilities for many people. He highlights a radical unwillingness to change, risk co-operation or share power, especially with reference to the Allan Paulin plan, which was ignored, allowing parishes to just do their own thing, without stable Ordained Ministry, and a lack of personnel for Visitations and Boards of Nomination. Ignoring Risk Management Processes could lead to abuse (and litigation) as statutory requirements of a duty of care are being neglected. This being evident in the making of appointments and provision of supervision. He calls for parishes to be linked in Mission Units to call a full-time Nationally Ordained Minister (NOM) for each unit. There should be one Parish Council for each unit, to develop a mission strategy plan that uses their shared resources. This proposal would see parishes move away from historic territorial boundaries towards dynamic, viable, community facing mission units with strong lay leadership and stable Ordained Ministry. This would allow parishes to get to know each other, to act immediately, to sustain appropriate staffing³⁶. Some suggestions he made towards which parishes would be in each unit were similar to the plan proposed by Allan Paulin.

³⁵ Ibid. Keith Cameron, Convenor. Mission Committee Report, December 2003

³⁶ Ibid. Rev Dr Simon Rae, Moderator Southland Presbytery. 22 July 2004

In November 2004, parishes reported to the Mission and Ministry Committee, on the proposed clustering of parishes, with some expressing concerns, such as: more meetings, the need for evangelical outreach and ministry appointment processes. Presbytery voted to hold its meetings bi-monthly (March, May, July, September and November) with the clusters meeting on the other months of the year (February, April, June, August, October and December). Each of the seven clusters (with Te Anau to stand alone) were to meet early in 2005, to appoint a facilitator to organise meetings. This new arrangement was also seen as a way of relieving the workload of Interim Moderators, who for some were working with up to four parishes. They would now be supported by ministers in each cluster,³⁷ as there was to be at least one Ordained Minister in each cluster. This model also allowed for the inclusion of parishes in Co-operative Ventures, though it did not address the distances to be travelled by some parishes, such as Mossburn, Waiau Valley and Oban, whose leaders expressed their unwillingness to attend most of the meetings. However, it was generally felt that this model of strategic planning would be a positive step towards a healthy Presbytery,³⁸ as was proposed by the Reform Group of Assembly in its paper on Healthy Congregations.³⁹

At this time terms of appointment had been adopted for the setting up of a Local Ministry Team and this was then actively undertaken by Knox parish. However, this model also saw the requirement to have in place a Resource Minister for each team, putting further pressure on the limited number of ministers available for this role. Therefore at the February 2005 meeting of the Mission and Ministry Committee, ways of providing Resource ministry were suggested: 1) for a NOM to be provided with 15% stipend for working with one LMT, 2) for Presbytery to appoint a Resource Minister for up to five LMT's with each providing 20% of stipend, 3) for Presbytery to appoint a Resource Minister to coach and mentor LMT's (like a Rural Chaplain), 4) for suitable retired ministers to be considered as a Resource Minister for a LMT, 5) for a NOM within the LMT's parishes cluster, to be contracted for percentage of stipend for the role of Resource Minister within the cluster. At this meeting the role of a Parish Enabler was also developed and proposed as a person who might work

³⁷ Ibid. Rev Neville Jackson, Convenor. Southland Presbytery minutes December 2004

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

across 4-5 parishes with each providing a percentage of stipend.⁴⁰ In July 2005, St Paul's parish also indicate their intention to form a Local Ministry Team.⁴¹

Another strategy adopted by the Presbytery to reduce the workload for Interim Moderators was to appoint an Elder to Moderate Session meetings, to save them from having to moderate every meeting. Traditionally Interim Moderators, while being Minister in another parish, also chaired Session and Congregational Meetings, conducted weddings, funerals and sacraments, in the absence of Ordained clergy in the vacant parish they were Interim Moderator for. This new role of Moderating Elder was instigated on the understanding that the Moderating Elder would seek advice and guidance from NOM's when needed and make it known to whom parishioners could approach in matters of complaint.⁴² This role was then adopted by Oban, Limestone Plains, Mossburn, Wallacetown and St Stephen's as well as Woodlands, Oteramika/Kennington, PIC (Pacific Island Church), Richmond Grove and Toitois. The committee also made allowance for the short-term appointment of Lay Ministers (six months at a time) to alleviate the lack of LOM's and NOM's, especially as there now was not an Ordained Minister in each of the cluster groups. This dearth of clergy was also making it difficult to find appropriate Resource Ministers for LMT's, and expressed that some members of LMT's might benefit from attending courses provided by Knox School of Ministry and that if they do so this be recognised as Continuing Ministry Formation.⁴³ Alongside these proposals there was also highlighted the need for Elders to be trained and Commissioned to conduct Baptisms as well as the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Following on from the Synod Review of Presbyteries in April 2006, the Mission and Ministry Committee prepared a report on the Revised Functions of Congregational Clusters and the Cluster make-up was revised as well. Key roles of the cluster group were defined, the parishes in each cluster identified along with key personnel in each cluster.

⁴⁰ Ibid. February 2005

⁴¹ Ibid. Craig Stoneman, Nola Stuart, Board of Discernment report, July 2005.

⁴² Ibid. Alastair Taylor, Convenor. Mission and Ministry Committee report, October 2005

⁴³ Ibid.

I was personally involved as the APW (Association of Presbyterian Women) representative to Presbytery, beginning in February 2003, then later as a member of the Presbytery Executive and Convenor of the Administration Committee. I can recall that with regard to the cluster groupings of parishes, the bi-monthly meetings became more and more difficult to plan, with fewer and fewer representatives attending⁴⁴. Within a year or so, support for this model diminished to the point that it was no longer tenable, with communication being parishes cited as one of the difficulties⁴⁵. This then left a significant vacuum of ministry oversight for a significant number of vacant parishes. Ten parishes in the Presbytery were identified as having an Interim Moderator; three had established Local Ministry Teams over a number of years since 2005, two with a Resource Minister and one still looking for a RM, two with Lay Supply ministers, Interim Moderators were responsible for three parishes and one parish was a Co-operating Venture under Presbyterian oversight. Four parishes were identified as remote and unable to be linked or supported by a neighbouring parish⁴⁶.

The first Local Ministry Team was commissioned in June 2005 at Knox Presbyterian Church in Invercargill. They appointed Rev. Roy McKenzie, a retired NOM from Gore, as their Resource Minister, who has since resigned from that role, now undertaken by Rev John Coutts from Edendale.⁴⁷ This was closely followed by the commissioning of a Local Ministry Team at St Paul's, Invercargill, and then St. Stephen's.⁴⁸

In December 2007 it was identified that there were twelve parishes in the previous Southland Presbytery that were classed as being vacant and being led by lay members, with oversight by Interim Moderators. This situation had come about during the preceding ten years when congregation numbers were in decline, finances were insufficient to employ an Ordained Minister and ministers were reluctant to accept a call to rural parishes in Southland. Four streams of ministry

⁴⁴ By June 2007 there is no longer any mention of cluster group meetings or activities noted in Presbytery Minutes.

⁴⁵ Southland Presbytery minutes, March 2006

⁴⁶ Ibid. June 2007

⁴⁷ The events in this paragraph are described in the Southland Presbytery minutes of 2005, accessed at the Presbyterian Archives in Dunedin.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

have been identified by the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand⁴⁹, Nationally Ordained Minister (NOM), Locally Ordained Ministry (LOM), Local Ministry Team (LMT) and Amorangi (or Maori Minister), and these were being developed at this time. The third stream was identified as the preferred option for many parishes who then proceeded to commission a team of lay leaders as a LMT, to take responsibility for key roles in the church, such as Worship Leader, Mission Leader, Pastoral Care Leader and sometimes other roles such as Administrator or Pastor.

While the requirement for these Lay Teams is for them to have a Resource Minister⁵⁰, it was identified that there were very few Ordained Ministers in Southland available, or willing to move to Southland, who could undertake this role. A small group of Presbytery members met to write a job description and set up a Ministry Settlement Board, convened by Rev. Ian Crawford for a role initially described as a Presbytery Ministry Enabler, who would work 50% time for St. Paul's Church and 50% for five other parishes; being Wallacetown, Knox, Otautua/Waiono, St. Stephens and Limestone Plains.⁵¹ A meeting was held at St. Paul' Church on 9 August 2008 to discuss issues relating to ministry, support for parishes with LMT's, Pastoral Assistants or Lay Assistants, at which the need for Resource Ministry was confirmed.⁵² The position was advertised in National publications, in Spanz and PCANZ website, but there were no applicants, which was not surprising as very few would have a concept of what the role entailed. It was reported by the Ministry Settlement Board in July 2009 that 17 people had been approached.⁵³

As it became clear that someone was needed to undertake this role, sooner, rather than later, it was thought that someone already resident in Southland might be able to take on the role. At the time, I was a Locally Ordained Minister (LOM), and I was in a situation when my employment status could change. Rev. Ian Crawford was in the same position. We came together to make a proposal. We were interviewed by the Ministry Settlement Board on 29 October 2009. Therefore Presbytery decided the two of us could take on the role, jointly, of Resource Ministers for Southland

⁴⁹ PCANZ Book of Order, Guide for Ministry Settlement Boards, pg 11

⁵⁰ Ibid. Chapter 9.23, 9.24, 9.25, 9.26, 9.27, 9.28, 9.29, 9.30, 10.18 & 10.19

[Http://presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/for_parishes/Book_of_Order_2010_corrected_March_2011.pdf](http://presbyterian.org.nz/sites/default/files/for_parishes/Book_of_Order_2010_corrected_March_2011.pdf)

⁵¹ Minutes of the Southland Presbytery for February 2008

⁵² Minutes of the Southland Presbytery for September 2008

⁵³ Minutes of the Southland Presbytery for July 2009

parishes that did not have a minister. This also enabled all those Ministers in Southland who were Interim Moderators of those parishes, not seeking to fill their vacancy, to be discharged of this responsibility.

All parishes without an Ordained Minister were invited to commit to this initiative and a rationale of contribution towards the funding was calculated. An application to the Synod of Otago and Southland to gain major funding for three years of the project was sent, with an affirmative outcome. After a meeting with parish representatives in November 2009⁵⁴ nine of the twelve possible parishes committed to the partnership proposal and, after two more meetings, agreed to proceed with Rev. Ian Crawford supplying quarter time and myself half-time, for a period of three years, with annual reviews. We were duly inducted in a Service of Induction on 2 February, 2010, at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Invercargill for a three year term.

The member parishes of the Southland Regional Resource Ministry are: Oban (Stewart Island), Bluff Greenhills Co-operating, St. Paul's, St. Stephen's, Wallacetown, Limestone Plains, Otautau-Waiono, Waiau Valley and Mossburn. These range from Tuatapere in the West, to Mossburn in the North of Southland, to Bluff, south of Invercargill and Stewart Island. The furthest distance from Invercargill is to Mossburn, of 100kms, with Tuatapere almost as far and to get to Stewart Island there is the need to cross Foveaux Strait by air or ferry. St Paul's and St Stephens are city parishes and Wallacetown is nearby. Those parishes opting out were; Knox, Oteramika-Kennington and Woodlands. However, if their current arrangements are not sustainable, due to a lack of Ordained Ministers to be Interim Moderators or Resource Ministers, they may well have no option in the future and joining the Regional Resource Ministry could be their only choice.

When Rev Crawford and I were commissioned to this new role⁵⁵, there was no job description and no outline of expectations, which was yet to be written. Parishes were asked what they thought the role entailed and what their specific ministry needs were. Some of the roles that were identified were:

- Taking services of worship, as and when able, on a pulpit supply roster
- Pastoral care, supervision and support of Local Ministry Team members and

⁵⁴ Minutes of the meeting of the Southland Presbytery for November 2009

⁵⁵ Ibid. February 2009

- members of Parish Council lead parishes.
- Training for Team members, especially for Licensed Communion and Baptism Elders and for those with specific responsibilities
- Providing resources, educational opportunities and networking

This role was assessed informally after one year at the first Annual Meeting of the Regional Resource Ministry⁵⁶, where it was endorsed, with encouragement to continue providing ministry to those parishes involved. After three years a review was undertaken on behalf of the Reviews Workgroup of the Southern Presbytery by Rev Andrew Scott in February 2013, and presented to Presbytery Council in October 2013⁵⁷. This review failed to acknowledge the reality people were living with in remote, small rural parishes and in fact seemed to ask the wrong questions, concluding with the assumption that parishioners were not getting ‘value for money’. The review was retrospective and lacked vision, expressing no hope for the future discouraging the vision of a Regional Parish for Southland. On receipt of this review report Presbytery decided ‘that the SRRM would continue until 30 June 2014, pursuant to some financial confirmation that we can afford it’⁵⁸. Two representatives of Presbytery commissioned to meet with Congregations served by the Regional Resource Ministry, conducted a whistle-stop tour in November 2013 and formulated yet another report⁵⁹. However, this report also fails to address the situation with any sense of authority.

The report recommends that Presbytery Council ‘must work towards some form of alternative ministry, dream up something new or leave them [parishes] to their own devices’⁶⁰. The report refers to congregations and cell groups, whereas most of the congregations are parishes and the cell-groups are congregations. For Presbytery Council to leave these parishes to their own devices is an abdication of the role of Presbytery, who would be failing to fulfil General Assembly’s mandate as detailed in the Book of Order Chapter 5 on the establishment and dissolution of parishes, with particular reference to parishes with less than 40 members⁶¹.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Report to Presbytery, March 2011

⁵⁷ Southern Presbytery minutes, October 2013

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Reg Weeks and Zona Pearce, ‘Report to Presbytery Council on Congregations served by the Regional Resource Ministry. December 2013

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ PCANZ Book of Order, Chapter 5.

Therefore I urge Presbytery Council to think not so much of what can be done today, or of what has been done in the past, but to journey into the future with God, into what is yet unknown.

APPENDIX

PCANZ Book of Order

5.4 Application to form a new congregation

(1) Any group of persons may apply to a presbytery to form a new congregation or to be recognised as a congregation. (2) A presbytery may form a new congregation or recognise a group of persons as a congregation either on the application of a group of persons or on its own initiative.

5.5 Matters to be investigated before forming a new congregation

(1) If an application is made to a presbytery to form a new congregation or to recognise an existing group of persons as a congregation, or, if a presbytery is considering taking the initiative to do so, the presbytery must give notice to any neighbouring congregation or congregations and investigate all matters relevant to the application or consideration, including the following: (a) the reasons and circumstances which have led to the application, if any, (b) whether the members and associate members of the proposed congregation can comply with section 2, (c) whether there are any existing congregations including those congregations operating under the Act of Commitment which can accommodate the needs of the applicants, (d) whether any neighbouring congregation has any objection, and (e) the resources which the applicants will supply to support the life of the congregation.

5.6 Establishment of a co-operative venture

A presbytery may, in accordance with the Act of Commitment, establish a congregation as a co-operative venture, provided it complies with the procedures agreed by the General Assembly and the other parties to the Act of Commitment.

Such a Co-operative Venture must comply with the Procedures for Cooperative Ventures.

5.7 Procedures to be followed before deciding whether to form a new congregation

- (1) If a neighbouring congregation objects to the formation of a new congregation, the presbytery must have regard to those objections before making a decision.
- (2) The presbytery must hear any person who wishes to be heard on the matter.
- (3) Before making a decision, a presbytery must consider (a) all relevant information obtained in the course of making its investigations under section 5, (b) any objections or submissions made to it about the matter, and (c) any other matter which the presbytery considers relevant to the application.
- (4) If a decision is likely to affect adversely the applicant or any other person or congregation, the presbytery must advise the relevant persons or congregation and give them an opportunity to be heard or make written submissions.
- (5) A presbytery must make its final decision at a meeting of the presbytery.

5.8 Implication of decision to form a new congregation

A new congregation formed in accordance with this chapter is entitled to one of the forms of ministry settlement set out in chapter 10.

5.9 Dissolution of a congregation

(1) A church council may apply to its presbytery to dissolve the congregation, after gaining the approval of at least two-thirds of the members of the congregation present at a duly-called meeting of the congregation.

(2) A second congregational meeting must then be held with a commission of the presbytery to discuss the consequences of dissolution and to provide congregational members with an opportunity for expressing their concerns and hopes should a decision to be dissolved be finalised. (3) At the conclusion of this meeting, a final congregational decision may be made to dissolve. Such a decision must gain the approval of at least two thirds of the members of the congregation present at a duly called meeting of the congregation. (4) In a situation where the second congregational meeting fails to gain the required two-thirds support for dissolution, the presbytery must determine whether or not to initiate the procedure to dissolve the congregation under section 10.

5.10 Dissolution of a congregation on the initiative of presbytery

(1) A presbytery must appoint a commission to review the future of a congregation, with the options of continuing its mission, renewing its life and mission, or if need be, dissolution, where: (a) the total number of adults attending public worship falls below an average of 40 per week for 12 consecutive months; and/or (b) the presbytery has reason to believe that a congregation is no longer fulfilling the expectations for mission contained in section 2.

(2) The presbytery commission for such processes will comprise no more than 5 members, including persons particularly suited for appointment, having regard to:

(a) The nature of the congregation under review (b) An understanding of contemporary theological and mission practice (c) The legal and administrative requirements of the Book of Order. The majority of members should be members of presbytery.

(3) The role of the presbytery commission is to enhance the mission of the Church by engaging with a congregation to discern how its life and mission fulfils the functions of a congregation as described in section 5.2 of the Book of Order. It will do this by: (a) informing the congregation that a review is being undertaken (b) state at a congregational meeting the possible outcomes of the review process (c) set a state at which the congregation will report to the commission (d) make a determination as described in section (6)

- (4) A presbytery commission appointed under this section must require the church council to call a congregational meeting in accordance with section 3. The meeting must be chaired by a member of the commission.
- (5) The purpose of the meeting called in accordance with subsection 4 is to inform the congregation that a review of the congregation's future has been initiated by the presbytery, and that one option being considered in the review is the dissolution of the congregation. The reasons for the review must be given. The commission must ask the congregation to give a report as to its life and work in fulfilling its functions under section 2. This report may be in both verbal and written forms and must be presented to the commission within three months of the congregational meeting.
- (6) In its consideration of the report, the commission must decide on one of these three options: (a) that the congregation is fulfilling the functions as set out in section 2 and it should be encouraged to continue in its life and mission (b) that, although some of the functions in section 2 are being met but the viability of the congregation is marginal, the presbytery will work closely with the church council to find creative ways to stimulate its life and mission, and a further review should be undertaken within a defined period (c) that the congregation should be dissolved, and the presbytery ensure the continued pastoral care of the people of the congregation.
- 5.10A Right of appeal in relation to decision to dissolve a congregation
- (1) In the event of an appeal where a presbytery commission has decided that a congregation should be dissolved under section 10(6) (c), the presbytery commission must inform the Council of Assembly. The Council must appoint a Congregation Evaluation Commission, which will act as a Commission of the General Assembly. This Congregational Evaluation Commission shall receive the report of the presbytery commission, together with any written submission by the congregation opposing the presbytery commission's decision to dissolve the congregation. (2) The Congregation Evaluation Commission will be appointed by the Council of Assembly and will be convened by a person from the panel of Assembly Judicial Commission members. The commission will comprise between three and five members, including persons particular suited for appointment having regard to 1. an understanding of contemporary theological and mission practice 2. the legal and administrative requirements of the Book of Order. The commission may be a standing commission of the Church and will retain the right to co-opt an extra member particularly suited for appointment having regard to the nature of the

congregation under review. (3) In considering the material provided under subsection (1) the Congregation Evaluation Commission must follow the appeal process provided in Chapter 14.23. (4) After considering the material and following the appeal process provided in Chapter 14.23, the Congregation Evaluation Commission must determine whether the dissolution of the congregation will proceed, and make any other decisions regarding the future of the congregation that it deems necessary. (5) The decision of the Congregation Evaluation Commission is final.

5.10B Failure of congregation to co-operate over dissolution process

Should a church council fail to call a congregational meeting in accordance with the presbytery's requirement under section 10(4), or should the congregation fail to report to the presbytery commission on the required date, or fail to make a submission to the Congregation Evaluation Commission, then these failures shall not invalidate the deliberations of the presbytery commission and Congregation Evaluation Commission.

5.11 Responsibilities of presbytery if a congregation is dissolved

If the presbytery decides to dissolve a congregation, it must (a) terminate the pastoral tie between the congregation and its minister, and (b) deal with the property and finances of the congregation as required by chapter 16.

5.12 Right of appeal in relation to decision to form a congregation

(1) There is a right of appeal to the General Assembly against a decision of a presbytery to form a congregation.

(2) An applicant under section 4 may appeal to the General Assembly against a decision of a presbytery not to form a congregation.

5.13 Reporting to the General Assembly

A presbytery must report to the General Assembly when it establishes a new congregation or co-operative venture, or when it dissolves a congregation.