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The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand: A Brief History

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A settler church

Unlike the Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches, the Scottish Churches did not send missionaries to New Zealand. Presbyterianism arrived only after colonisation had begun, and then only as a church for settlers. As Peter Matheson says of the Presbyterian Church, "it was quite simply described by contemporaries as 'the Scotch Kirk', a transplantation of Scottish religion and culture, a 'fragment' from the other side of the world. It came by courtesy of the Industrial Revolution and the British Empire, and by the push-pull motivation of all emigrations."[1]

The first minister, the Rev John McFarlane, was among a contingent of Scots who landed in Wellington on 20 February 1840, two weeks after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. He held his first service a few days later on the foreshore at Petone, but then had to wait four years before he had a church building. This was a simple wooden structure on Wellington's Lambton Quay in which he held services in English, Gaelic and Māori . McFarlane's concerns about the treatment of Māori found little support and, with his health deteriorating, he returned to Scotland in 1844.

Part of the Free Church movement

In 1843, 450 evangelical ministers (out of 1200 in total) broke away from the Church of Scotland and formed the Free Church of Scotland. They defied the patronage system by which landowners appointed ministers, and argued for the right of congregations to do the appointing. This split became known as the Disruption.

The Disruption was not only about the rights of congregations to appoint their own ministers. It also represented the rise of the middle class in a spirit of progress and self-determination. It was accompanied by missionary outreach, evangelical revival and social activism. Many churches became highly organised in relation to the provision of pastoral care, prayer, evangelism, education fundraising, charitable work and political advocacy. Spiritual renewal and social service went hand in hand. Elders, deacons, home missioners and "lady visitors" all had a prominent role to play. The Free Church empowered the laity.

Most of the Scottish settlers that arrived in New Zealand were of the Free Church variety. The hub of the Free Church was in Dunedin. It was founded in 1848 by the Rev Thomas Burns and William Cargill as a Free Church settlement – the only one in the world to become a city. One-eighth of the proceeds of land sales went to religious and educational uses. The founders had a vision of creating a covenanted society, a "Geneva of the Antipodes".

Although this vision was not achieved, the Presbyterian influence on the Otago-Southland settlement was very strong. As in Scotland, education was given priority. The establishment of the first university in New Zealand at Dunedin in 1869, with the Rev Thomas Burns (Founding Minister of First Church of Otago) as its first Chancellor and its first four chairs supported from Presbyterian endowments, was an indication of this Presbyterian emphasis on learning.

[1] *Presbyterians in Aotearoa*, p. 21

Consistent with the Free Church's empowerment of the laity and the encouragement it gave to Christian service in secular occupations, many Presbyterian settlers and migrants came to feature prominently in commerce, industry, education, politics, public service and the professions. Typical among these was Sir George Troup (1863-1941), an elder in the Presbyterian Church, an architect by profession (included among his designs is the Dunedin Railway Station), and Mayor of Wellington. Troup was a founding figure in the Presbyterian Bible Class movement and the Wellington Boys Institute, and a supporter of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He epitomised the value that early Presbyterians placed on the virtues of self-discipline, frugality, education, family life, hard work, duty to church and society, and charitable works, all of which were believed to be inspired and nourished by worship and faith.

However, as Peter Matheson notes, "The heritage which the Free Church transmitted to Aotearoa New Zealand was no unmixed blessing. Together with its strong Biblical and personal faith, its self-sufficiency and adaptability, its respect for family and duty, its readiness to take risks, and its generous evangelicalism, it brought a set of somewhat unreflected middle-class values, of paternalist attitudes to women and working-class people and a degree of cultural and moral narrowness. The dream of a covenanted society which it sought to transplant to New Zealand was in uneasy tension with its individualistic piety and work-ethic, and may have represented a nostalgic concern for a simpler, rural or small-town world in which the Church still held centre stage, a world which in fact, was rapidly disappearing, even in Scotland. One can imagine few varieties of Christianity less fitted to discern, far less relate to, the values of the tangata whenua, the Māori people of New Zealand, to the rivers and the mountains, the lands and islands of the Pacific."[2]

For the good of society

Colonial New Zealand society suffered many social problems. Among other things, church and community leaders were concerned about levels of prostitution, gambling and drunkenness. The use and abuse of alcohol was widespread, most visibly among the itinerant communities of men who worked the country's agricultural, maritime and industrial frontiers. It was often said that the main causes of death in colonial New Zealand were "drink, drowning, and drowning while drunk". Many Presbyterians advocated for prohibition and signed up to the temperance movement. Most Presbyterian churches substituted grape juice for wine at Communion. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), established in 1885, was an important voice in the temperance campaign. Women were widely thought to be among the worst affected by alcohol, in an era when they were largely dependent on men for money to sustain the home and family. The WCTU campaigned strongly for women's political rights, helping New Zealand women win the vote in 1893.

One of the hallmarks of the Presbyterian Church in the colonial era was its concern for the poor and disadvantaged. Duncan McPherson, an elder, was appointed as Presbyterian City Missioner in Auckland in 1884, a ministry he served in for 30 years, distributing food and clothing to the destitute. He was a chaplain to the prison, to general and psychiatric hospitals and to seafarers.

[2] *Presbyterians in Aotearoa*, p. 21

The commencement of deaconess work by Sister Christabel in St Andrew's, Dunedin, in 1901, initiated a very important expression of ministry among the young, the needy and the aged. The work of the Presbyterian Social Service Associations, which have developed as Presbyterian Support into the largest non-governmental social agency in the country, in their origin expressed the concern which Presbyterians have had to help those in need.

In 1888, the Rev Rutherford Waddell of St Andrew's, Dunedin, spoke out publicly against the exploitation of cheap female labour and, together with the editor of the Otago Daily Times, called for a royal commission on "sweated labour". Its recommendations provided some of the bases for labour reforms that won admiration from around the world.

Speaking in 1927 on "The Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Life of New Zealand", D.C. Herron made the bold claim that "no section of the Christian Church is making a greater contribution to the spiritual, moral and intellectual life of the Dominion." Herron identified four aspects which he saw as central to Presbyterian success: the contribution of ministers, the work of the laity, influence on society and achievements in education.

A national church

While most New Zealand Presbyterians were Free Church adherents, differences emerged during attempts to create a national church. The first General Assembly of regional presbyteries (courts) was held in 1862, but the Otago and Southland presbyteries stayed away. The southerners feared they would lose their endowments and identity in a national church and formed their own synod (council) in 1866 – the Synod of Otago and Southland. This split Presbyterians into a northern church above the Waitaki River and a southern church below it.

A second attempt at union succeeded after parties agreed the Synod of Otago and Southland could remain part of the new church structure and keep its endowments. The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand came into being on 31 October 1901. The name Aotearoa was added in 1991 to acknowledge the church's affinity to the tangata whenua.

Mission activity

In 1861 gold was discovered in Central Otago, and within a couple of years the population of Otago had doubled. Dunedin Presbytery, while anxious about the threat of a new materialist spirit, was quickly alert to the need to provide services and pastoral assistance on the goldfields. Ministers regularly made the arduous journey to conduct impromptu services in the open, in tents, or in any convenient building. Lay people were active too, setting up Bible classes and debating societies. Of special interest was the quite unexpected new ministry to the Chinese. By 1867 more than a thousand Chinese had arrived to work the goldfields, and in 1868 the Synod of Otago and Southland approved a new mission to them, spearheaded by the Rev Alexander Don.

Auckland Presbyterians had an early contact with the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) and took the lead in developing a missionary movement there. Extensive missionary activity in South China and the Punjab, in India, followed. The latter was especially notable. The 1907 General Assembly's foreign missions report drew attention to India's need, and in 1908 a medical graduate, W.J. Porteous, was sent to the Punjab to begin New Zealand Presbyterian work. Other evangelists and missionaries followed. Closely related to their evangelistic work was the establishment of schools and hospitals.

In more recent times the emphasis has shifted from supporting overseas missionaries to being in partnership with overseas churches – for example, the Church of North India and the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. At the same time, there has been a move away from having a small number of nationally coordinated mission commitments to the facilitation of multiple mission partnerships and activities at congregational level.

Around the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century, new emphasis was placed on ministering to Māori. In 1905 the church founded Turakina Māori Girls' College at Marton. In 1918 John Laughton opened a school at Rua Kēnana's settlement at Maungapōhatu, the first of six Laughton set up in the Urewera region on the East Coast of the North Island around Whakatane. The ministry was boosted by the ordination of the first Māori ministers, Timu Tioke in 1931 and Hemi Pōtatau in 1933.

In the 1930s and 40s, moves toward autonomy and partnership were reflected within the Presbyterian mission to Māori . Approval was given in 1943 to set up Hinota Māori , a Māori Synod, which took over from the annual council of mission workers the task of coordinating mission activity. At the inauguration of Te Hinota Māori at Ohope in 1945, the Rev Hemi Pōtatau was elected Moderator. Full synodical powers were granted to Te Hinota (now known as Te Aka Puaho) in 1955. A year earlier, in 1954, a Māori theological college, Te Wananga a Rangi, had been opened in Whakatane, the purpose of which was to "provide a well trained ministry for the Māori Synod without separating the candidates from their home environment."[3] This model of training continues today.

Relations with other churches

During the 1940s support for ecumenism (cooperation between Christian churches) increased. The Presbyterian Church was a founding member of the National Council of Churches in 1941 and Presbyterians were active in the council's leadership. The move towards church unity (begun in the 1940s) peaked in the 1970s when a plan for union was considered by the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Associated Churches of Christ denominations. Even though the plan did not win the necessary level of official support to proceed, many congregations got caught up in the spirit of ecumenism and decided to merge anyway. Thus was born the Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand (UCANZ), a network of "Cooperative Ventures" supported by their respective denominations or "Partner Churches". Around 20% of Presbyterian churches nationwide became Cooperative Ventures. Whilst many of these Cooperative Ventures valued the diversity of ecclesial traditions which they embodied, others felt that they were getting pulled in different directions by the Partner Churches,

[3] *Presbyterians in Aotearoa*, p. 138

which seemed to be having less and less to do with one another as time went by. In recent years a number of Cooperative Ventures have decided to opt out of UCANZ and to reinstate their original denominational affiliations.

In 1969 the majority of the New Zealand Congregational (Pacific Island) Church joined the Presbyterian Church, bringing a large number of Pacific Islanders into the church. Many of these Pacific Island churches (mostly Samoan) grew and flourished in the 1970s and 80s, as an increasing number of Pacific Islander people made New Zealand their home. Most of them were (and still are) based in Auckland, was rapidly becoming a city with the world's largest Polynesian population. In 1996 a Pacific Islands Synod was established, consisting of several fono or constituent Pacific Island groups: Samoan, Niuean, Cook Island, Tokelauan and Tuvaluan. A proposal is being brought to the 2012 General Assembly to grant the Pacific Islands Synod the full powers of a presbytery, in much the same manner as Te Aka Puaho. This year (2012), a Pacifika Misionare position was established. The Rev Don Ikitoelagi has been appointed to fill the position.

Just as many Pacific Islander people have made New Zealand their home in recent decades, so too have many people from countries in Asia. This has led to many ethnic-specific Asian congregations being established, mainly in urban centres, some of which are of Presbyterian background and ethos. This year the Rev Han Kyoung Gyun was appointed to the position of Asian Ministries Coordinator. His primary role is to help integrate Asian congregations into the Presbyterian Church and to work particularly with the 1.5 generation young people. He is supported by CWM and his home church, the Presbyterian Church of Korea.

The PCANZ is a member of the World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Pacific Conference of Churches and Christian Conference of Asia. It has constructive working relationships with a growing number of Presbyterian churches in Asia and the Pacific.

Growth, renewal, revival … and decline

For the first few decades of its existence, the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand experienced significant growth. In 1906, a mere 66 years after the first Presbyterian service was held in Petone, 23% of New Zealanders (203,600) identified themselves as Presbyterian. A quarter of those regularly attended church, a higher total than the Anglican Church – New Zealand's largest denomination. The church was strongest in rural and provincial areas, particularly in the Scots-settlement heartland of Southland and Otago, where about 50% of the population identified themselves as Presbyterian.

This growth was not sustained during the first half of the twentieth century, due largely to the impact of two World Wars and the Great Depression on church attendance. The Church was faced immediately after World War II with an increasing birth rate and assisted migration, the growth of suburbs, the move from post-war economic austerity and rationing into a period of economic growth and vitality. It recognised in 1946 the "urgent need for a nationwide policy of planned church extension and development." In 1949, the General Assembly established the New Life Movement, the purpose of which was a "re-vitalising of the inner life of the Church through aggressive congregational evangelism,

through emphasis on stewardship of time, abilities and money, and through a bold policy of church extension and development at home, and reconstruction abroad." Over the next ten years, sixty-six new parishes were established.

Allan Davidson notes that "the New Life Movement created a mood of optimism, giving a renewed sense of mission, encouraging lay participation, stimulating youth work and challenging people to consider voluntary or full time service in the Church."[4] He further notes that "the National Council of Churches' invitation to Billy Graham to conduct an evangelistic crusade in 1959 represented the high tide of the New Life Movement." The crusade had a big impact. "For Presbyterians this was seen in the largest ever increase in Church members by 'profession of faith'."

Church membership peaked in the early 1960s. In 1960, Presbyterian Church membership stood at 85,000 people, with over half a million people under the Church's pastoral care. By 1988, the Church had suffered a 24% decline in membership and a 54% decline in church attendance. This decline has continued through to the current day. In 2008, church membership had fallen to 29,300. By this time the church was also ageing, with a much higher proportion of older members; nearly 50% of parishes had no programmes for youth. If it were not for the rise of ethnic-specific churches arising from Pacific Island and Asian immigration patterns since the 1980s, these statistics would look even more grim.

The charismatic renewal movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s had both an energising and a divisive effect on the Church. Churches that embraced the movement lost people who favoured a more traditional and thoughtful approach to faith and worship; churches that regarded it with suspicion lost people (including many youth and young adults) who had experienced personal spiritual renewal, often through their attendance of evangelistic rallies and revivalist meetings. The ranks of many new independent churches around that time were swelled by former Presbyterians.

There were other factors at work too. In 1967, the Principal of the Theological Hall, Professor Lloyd Geering, was tried for heresy at the General Assembly after he publicly questioned whether belief in the resurrection necessitated belief in the actual physical resurrection of the man, Jesus of Nazareth, and whether human beings have an immortal soul. In one sense, Geering was merely popularising in the New Zealand context theological debates that had been taking place for several decades overseas, particularly in Great Britain, Europe and North America. But in another sense, to have the Principal of the Church's Theological Hall publicly question some of the central tenets of the Christian faith was a serious matter.

At the same time as the General Assembly decided that the charge of heresy had not been proven, it went to some lengths to affirm and clarify the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, including belief in the physical resurrection. But this could not stem the flow of people from the Presbyterian Church who were dismayed that someone in Professor Geering's position could seemingly get away with such "heretical teaching". Nor could it persuade people who were sympathetic to Geering's views, and

[4] *Presbyterians in Aotearoa*, p. 124

who felt that the trial for heresy betrayed an inquisitorial spirit that undermined free speech, independent thought and academic freedom, to stay.

A third decisive factor in the decline of the Presbyterian Church was a sociological one. It had to do with the changing nature of New Zealand society. Although many of New Zealand's early settlers brought with them patterns of faith and religious activity from their home countries, many of them also saw an opportunity to create a society that would be free from the religious conflict and church dominance experienced back home. From the outset, New Zealand resisted the notion of having a national or "establishment" church like the Church of England. It prided itself on being a secular nation.

Not that it was entirely secular, of course. By virtue of its colonisation, New Zealand was part of western civilisation that owed much to its Judeo-Christian heritage. It was part of Christendom. Its public holidays of Christmas and Easter were the major Christian festivals of the same name. Christian rituals were part and parcel of public life. Sunday was generally regarded as a day for Sabbath observance. The Church was regarded as a moral compass for the nation, and it was called upon to offer support when the nation went to war. And New Zealand shared western civilisation's debt to Christendom for much of its musical, literary and artistic cultural heritage.

As New Zealand became more secular so its ties to Christendom loosened. This process accelerated during the 1960s. The affluence enjoyed by the post-War Baby Boomer generation meant more disposable income and more lifestyle options, including travel, weekends at the bach, and entertainment. The advent of the television had a massive impact on the attendance at evening church services. Also in the 1960s there arose an anti-establishment mood among young people, as evidenced by the hippie and protest movements of that era, and the Church was deemed by many to be part of the establishment. Increasingly, at both personal and public levels, the Church was being perceived as irrelevant and out of touch with the modern world.

The Presbyterian Church in New Zealand has not been alone in suffering this steep and prolonged decline. Globally there has been a marked shift in the Church's centre of gravity in recent decades from the north/west towards the south/east. Generally speaking, the Church globally is experiencing decline in many parts of Europe and North America, and growth in many parts of Asia, Africa and South America.

How should we interpret this phenomenon? Is decline to be equated with failure, and growth with success? To what extent are patterns of growth and decline related to the work of the Spirit, reforming the Church for life in a new era? What other factors do we need to take into account? And what does all this mean for the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand? These are questions that are very much to the fore. The realities of institutional decline have hit the Presbyterian Church hard. Many of our churches have prayed and worked tirelessly for little gain. Their future is uncertain. They are weary and confused. While there are pockets of growth, renewal and revitalisation, the overall pattern of decline appears to be constant and to mirror what is happening throughout the western world.

On a national level, the effects of institutional decline are evident in falling finances and the consequent need to restructure. The many committees that used to resource and oversee the work of the Presbyterian Church nationally and internationally have been reduced to just two: the Leadership Subcommittee and the Resource Subcommittee. The Assembly Office is only a fraction of the size it once was. In recent years the National Mission Office has been disestablished and the Global Mission Office has been reduced to one person.

The reduced capacity of presbyteries is being addressed via a process of merger. The Bay of Plenty and Waikato presbyteries have merged to form the Kaimai Presbytery. The South Auckland, Auckland, North Shore and Northland presbyteries have merged to form the Northern Presbytery. The Southland, Central Otago, Clutha, Mataura, Dunedin and North Otago presbyteries have merged to form the Southern Presbytery. Other mergers in the upper South Island and lower North Island are pending.

Nationwide, the Presbyterian Church has lots of money tied up in land and buildings and investments, but it often struggles to find enough money to support mission initiatives. In 2008, the General Assembly set up Press Go to create a mechanism for collectively funding growth ideas. It works by parishes with surplus funds placing them in a central fund for distribution to churches that wish to launch approved community-oriented projects. More about Press Go can be found on the PCANZ web site.

Theological unity and diversity

Ministers and elders in the PCANZ are required to subscribe (agree) to the following Formula (statement):

"I believe in the Word of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and the fundamental doctrines of Christian Faith contained in the Kupu Whakapono and Commentary, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and other subordinate standards of this Church. I accept that liberty of conviction is recognised in this Church but only on such points as do not enter into the fundamental doctrines of Christian faith contained in the Scriptures and subordinate standards. I acknowledge the Presbyterian government of this Church to be agreeable to the Word of God and promise to submit to it. I promise to observe the order and administration of public worship as allowed in this Church."

Several things are worth noting about this statement:

1. The Bible is regarded as the supreme rule of faith and life and the supreme standard of the Church;
2. The Presbyterian Church has two subordinate standards: (1) The Westminster Confession of Faith (as interpreted by the Declaratory Act of 1892-93) and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; and (2) Kupu Whakapono. These are deemed to contain the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.
3. Kupu Whakapono is a contemporary Confession of Faith approved by the 2010 General Assembly as a new subordinate standard to stand alongside the Westminster Confession of Faith. It is appended to this document – page 17.

4. Liberty of conviction on doctrinal matters is permitted in accordance with the Declaratory Act of 1892-93, which says: "This Church disclaims intolerant or persecuting principles, and does not consider her office-bearers, in subscribing the Confession (and now also Kupu Whakapono), committed to any principles inconsistent with liberty of conscience and the right of private judgement." And: "While diversity of opinion is recognised in this Church on such points in the Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith therein set forth, the Church retains full authority to determine, in any case which may arise, what points fall within this description, and thus to guard against any abuse of this liberty to the detriment of sound doctrine or to the injury of her unity and peace."
5. According to the Book of Order, "the Church itself has the right, in dependence on the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, to formulate, interpret or modify its subordinate standards, always in agreement with its supreme standard and the fundamental doctrines of the Reformed Faith contained in its subordinate standards. The Church itself will be the sole judge whether this formulation, interpretation or modification is in agreement with its supreme standard."

The Presbyterian Church in this country has often been described as a "broad church", insofar as it accommodates a diversity of opinion on many theological issues. However, occasionally the General Assembly has deemed it necessary to regulate on issues of polity with theological implications. In recent years these have comprised: (1) affirming the ordination of women; (2) allowing Ministers liberty of conscience on the issue of infant baptism, while at the same time requiring them to make infant baptism available in their churches upon request; (3) prohibiting people assuming positions of leadership in the church if they are in intimate sexual relationships other than monogamous, heterosexual marriage.

The Presbyterian Church has a Doctrine Reference Group to which doctrinal issues can be referred. For many years it also had (in partnership with the Methodist Church, and Churches of Christ) a Public Questions Committee that formulated responses on behalf of the Church to ethical and moral issues of the day. Since this committee was disestablished about ten years ago, the Presbyterian Church has lacked a coordinated voice on public issues.

In the 1990s, largely in response to the heated and protracted debate at that time in the Presbyterian Church on the issue of the ordination of gays and lesbians, a group of evangelical ministers formed Presbyterian AFFIRM, a network for Action, Faith, Fellowship, Intercession, Renewal and Mission. A National Association of Presbyterian Evangelical Churches (NAPEC) was also set up. The AFFIRM network had a decisive influence on the eventual decision by the PCANZ not to permit the ordination of gays and lesbians. It continues to remain vigilant on moral and doctrinal issues, seeking to influence opinion via newsletters, conferences, publications, pre-Assembly gatherings and press releases.

The changing face of ordination

One effect of institutional decline in recent decades has been the inability of many churches to afford a stipendary ministry, especially in rural areas. In the 1990s, when this problem was becoming acute, the Church responded in two ways. The first thing it did was make provision for what it called "lay

administration of the sacraments." Under this provision, presbyteries can train and authorise certain elders to administer the sacraments of baptism and communion in parishes that do not have an ordained minister. The authorisation is subject to annual review.

The second thing the Church did (in 2002) was develop four strands of ordained ministry:

1. National Ordained Ministry: This is the traditional model of ordained ministry. Nationally ordained ministers (NOMs) have been assessed and trained nationally, and are available for call to any Presbyterian church or Cooperative Venture in the country.
2. Local Ordained Ministry: A Local Ordained Minister (LOM) is likely to have already been ordained as an elder in the parish where they serve. LOMs have the same responsibilities and standing as NOMs, but they are not available for a call to another parish without going through National Assessment and being trained for national ordained ministry. The training for LOMs is *in situ* and is tailored to meet individual needs. A learning agreement is entered into between the LOM and the presbytery. It will usually include some Diploma-level theological study (in contrast to the Degree-level study required of NOMs).
3. Local Ministry Teams: With Local Ministry Teams (LMTs) the tasks of ordained ministry are shared between a team of people (usually elders) trained and authorised by the presbytery.
4. Amorangi: This is a non-stipendary form of ordained ministry designed specifically to meet to the needs of Te Aka Puaho (the Māori Synod). Amorangi undertake their training through Te Wananga a Rangi in Whakatane. No formal theological qualification is required.

The ordination of women

Compared with some other denominations, Presbyterians were slow in giving women representation at all levels of church government. Although the possibility of women being admitted to both the eldership and ministry was raised at the General Assembly in 1926, it was not until 1955 that final approval was given to accepting women elders. The first Presbyterian woman minister in New Zealand (Margaret Reid Martin) was not ordained until 1965.

Denied representation in church courts, Presbyterian women prior to 1955 tended to get involved in missionary work, not only supporting it through the Presbyterian Women's Mission Union (PWMU), but also serving actively in the mission field. Women missionaries were given responsibility and status in their work that was denied them within the Church.

In 1901, as a result of the needs of the poor and the aged in his Dunedin parish, the Rev Rutherford Waddell saw the need for a trained and consecrated woman to assist him in ministry. So he wrote to the Deaconess Training Institute in Melbourne for a suitable person. This led to the establishment of a Deaconess Order, and two years later, in 1903, a Deaconess Training House in Dunedin was opened. Its students were single women. By 1947, the deaconess course covered three years and had two courses of study: the General Course and the Advanced Course. The latter involved theological training and could culminate in a Bachelor of Divinity Degree through the Theological Hall at Knox College in Dunedin. Deaconesses were trained for social service, missionary service, teaching and nursing.

Following the decision to ordain women as elders and ministers, demand for training in the Deaconess Order declined, and in 1975 the Deaconess Order was terminated. Deaconesses were offered the choice of being ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, or of resuming lay status while continuing in their employment.

Despite many women training for the ministry over the last forty-five years, and some of them being appointed to significant leadership positions, including the highest office of Moderator of the General Assembly, resistance to the ordination of women has persisted in many congregations. Even today, some churches will not consider appointing a woman to a senior ministry position, although this will seldom be admitted publicly. Pacific Island and Asian congregations tend to be more conservative on this issue than their Māori and Pakeha counterparts.

Many women in ministry have brought a more intuitive, creative and pastoral model of ministry and leadership to the Presbyterian Church. Many have called for the use of gender-inclusive language in worship. Some have called for a more radical analysis of the Church as one of the main sources of discrimination against women in society. Whilst the Church has not always welcomed this sort of analysis and scrutiny, it has moved steadily towards a mode of being that is more affirming and inclusive of women in ministry. And it has said that such things as inclusive language in worship *are* important. To that end, the 2010 General Assembly instructed the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership to produce a study resource for the Church on this issue.

The Association of Presbyterian Women

In addition to the PWMU, which provided a support network for overseas missionaries, the Presbyterian Church also had a network of Women's Fellowship groups. In 1963, following years of consultation between the leaders of both movements, a new organisation was formed: The Association of Presbyterian Women (APW). As Jim Veitch comments, "The APW was for years a lively movement. It continued to provide leadership opportunities and brought women together for fellowship and solidarity, although support and interest in overseas missions fluctuated."[5]

As the years passed, however, the APW struggled to attract younger women. This was due, in large measure, to the move in New Zealand society towards double income families. Working wives and mothers no longer had the time to devote to voluntary associations like the APW. Nor did they identify with its causes and ways of doing things. They looked for fellowship through other forums.

Despite becoming an ageing movement, the APW has continued to exercise considerable influence both inside and outside the Church. The Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing in September 1996 gave the opportunity to take the APW into a wider arena. Then President, Jane Prichard was keen to apply for observer status for the APW at the conference. So began an exciting new chapter in the life of the APW. Nongovernmental women had been so effective at Beijing that the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) changed the rules to provide for a special consultative status category for

[5] *Presbyterians in Aotearoa*, p. 147

national organisations. Having been an observer at Beijing, the APW had the prerequisite to make an application for special status. In 1998 the Nelson-based APW Executive asked Jane to go to New York when the application was considered. Because of the APW's numerous mission projects over the last hundred years, it was well known by many ECOSOC member states, which applauded its efforts and supported its successful application. The APW ECOSOC remains a pillar of the organisation and a conduit for international dialogue.

Another highlight of Jane Prichard's Presidency was the inauguration in March 1996 of the Bridgebuilders Network. This new network came out of the Bridge Builders Pacific Basin Consultation held in Auckland and convened by the APW Executive. Women leaders from 16 churches in Asia and the Pacific gathered for the first international meeting ever held by the APW. Its overarching purpose was to take immediate action to implement the "Platform for Action" agreed at the Beijing Conference to promote "increased linkages between networks and organisations" by a "consistent flow of information among all concerned". Bridgebuilders has been a wonderfully empowering support to a large ethnically diverse body of Christian women standing together in solidarity. In 2011, Jane Prichard took up the Presidency of Bridgebuilders International, which lasts until 2014, when the 7th Consultation will be held in New Zealand.

Ministries among children and youth

Consistent with its commitment to education, the Presbyterian Church has long been known for its children and youth ministries. Throughout much of the twentieth century the Sunday School and Bible Class movements were very strong.

The foundations for the Bible Class movement can be traced back to Sir George Troup who, in 1888 at St John's in Wellington, advocated "the cooperative method" – the sharing of leadership among young people themselves, rather than being in the role of students in the minister's bible class. Troup's vision was for a "four square" balance of the spiritual, mental, physical and social. For many young people, Bible Class became their life outside work and study. In 1901, a national camp was organised at Titahi Bay in Wellington and a national movement launched a year later. Bible Study was at the heart of the movement, and Easter and summer Camps a key feature. By 1903 there were 85 classes and some 2000 members. The growth of the movement was phenomenal, and it spawned many of the future leaders of New Zealand Presbyterianism.

However, like so many movements started around this time, things changed dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century. John Roxborogh comments: "Formally the Bible Class movement came to an end at a meeting in Blenheim in March 1972. For some years it had been combined with the Methodist movement. Tensions over style, organisational philosophy, social and evangelistic attitudes and theology came to a tipping point when neither ecumenically nor denominationally was there the leadership available among youth themselves or from the church capable of generating a new vision."[6]

[6] http://roxborogh.com/REFORMED/BibleClassMovement.htm

The end of the national Bible Class movement did not mean an end to local Bible classes and youth ministries. These continued. Some presbyteries took up the responsibility of organising regional Easter camps. But numbers were decreasing, reflecting the decline in the Church generally. Youth ministry around the country became fragmented. The Church responded by appointing a succession of National Youth Coordinators and, in some parts of the country, Presbytery Youth Coordinators. Then, around 2002, Presbyterian Youth Ministries (PYM) was formed, and an office established in Wellington. PYM supports youth leaders through networking, resourcing, training and advocacy. In recent years it has run successful national annual events such as Connect and Going Further. The current Director of PYM is Carlton Johnstone.

Another key initiative in recent years has been Kids Friendly. Started by Jill Kaiser with some funding from the Council for World Missions (CWM), Kids Friendly is an initiative that recognises the vital contribution children and families make to healthy congregations and aims to equip churches to intentionally minister to children and families. The Kids Friendly Coaches offers advice, training, coaching and "best practice" resources to all Presbyterian and Uniting churches.

More information about PYM and Kids Friendly can be found on the PCANZ web site.

Finally under this section, mention must be made of the 13 Presbyterian Church Schools scattered around the country: St Kentigern and St Cuthbert's in Auckland, Iona in Havelock North, Lindisfarne in Hastings, Turakina Maori Girls College in Marton, Solway in Masterton, St Orans in Lower Hutt, Queen Margaret and Scots in Wellington, St Andrew's and Rangi Ruru in Christchurch, and Columba and John McGlashan in Dunedin. A 14th school, St David's, is due to be opened in Auckland in 2014. Some of these schools are fully independent and full-fee-paying; others are integrated, which means they receive partial state funding. Each school has developed in its own way. Some have close relationships with their presbyteries and with the Presbyterian Church in general; others have just a loose association with the Church. They tend to interpret their special Christian character in different ways. For some it means integrating chaplaincy and religious education into every level of school life; for others it means partial chaplaincy and limited religious education.

In 2010, the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, recognising the need for a greater degree of cohesion among these schools, established a resource office, the purpose of which is to:

1. Serve and strengthen the relationship between the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and those church schools which are affiliated to and associated with it;
2. Develop and coordinate the provision of resources in keeping with the Christian and Presbyterian/Reformed character of those schools;
3. Provide support and encouragement to those engaged in the provision of Religious Education and Chaplaincy in Presbyterian Church Schools;
4. Engage with the leaders of Presbyterian Church Schools about what it means to have this special character.

Theological education and ministry formation

When the Presbyterian Church was established in this country it was committed to maintaining the Scottish emphasis on a well educated ministry. Ministers were expected to be well versed in the biblical languages and theology and to have a broad and liberal education. They were also expected to be capable preachers. Their education and training was organised around these priorities.

The first Presbyterian ministers in this country were brought out from Scotland and Ireland. But as the Church grew, so the need for home-grown ministers became great. The Theological Hall at Knox College in Dunedin was opened in 1870. For most of its 126-year history, it taught a three-year Bachelor of Divinity degree on behalf of the University of Otago, and supplemented its divinity papers with vocational papers and practical training requirements. The B.D. was a post-graduate degree – students were expected to already have attained an undergraduate degree in another academic discipline.

From the 1970s onwards, as the Church became more diverse and multi-cultural, so it had to accommodate the fact that not all its ministry students were suited to the level and model of academic study required at B.D. level. So the Theological Hall offered more training options, including a Bachelor of Theology and a Hall Diploma. But the basic model of training remained much the same.

In 1996 the University of Otago decided to establish its own Theology faculty rather than rely on the Theological Hall to teach the B.D. and B.Theol on its behalf. This led to a major overhaul of theological education and ministry formation in the Presbyterian Church. The Theological Hall was disestablished and a new School of Ministry established in its stead, opening in 1997. Presbyterian ministry students were given the option of completing a foundational theology degree at one of several approved tertiary providers (Otago University, Auckland University, Laidlaw College and Carey Baptist College), before studying for a two-year Ministry Diploma at the School of Ministry in Dunedin. The Ministry Diploma focused entirely on the vocational skills and competencies required for ministry. It consisted of a blend of papers and field experiences.

The School of Ministry lasted ten years before there was another major review that resulted in it being formed into the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership in 2007. The Knox Centre still offers a two-year Ministry Diploma, but the structure and content of that Diploma is different to that which was offered by the School of Ministry. It is based on an action-reflection model of learning in a parish setting. Instead of ministry students having to shift to Dunedin to undertake their ordination studies, they can be trained as ministry interns in their home Presbyteries. 70% of their time is spent gaining hands-on ministry experience under the direction and supervision of a mentoring minister, and 30% of their time is spent attending block courses at the Knox Centre, completing assignments and reflecting on what they are doing. The academic component of the Ministry Diploma consists of seven papers: Worship; Preaching; Pastoral Care; Leadership; Mission; Theological Reflection; and Presbyterian and Reformed Christianity.

In addition to training people for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, the Knox Centre offers training on eldership and leadership and other aspects of ministry. In recent years it has produced an eldership handbook and a leadership handbook, and is soon to release a pastoral care handbook. This has been

made possible by the movement away from a semester-based training system for ordination and the consequent freeing up of the Knox Centre staff to serve the training needs of the Church in more diverse ways. The Knox Centre also works in partnership with Presbyterian Youth Ministries to offer a range of training opportunities for young people. These include the provision of music scholarships and theology scholarships, and the support given to annual training events such as Connect and Going Further.

The Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership has a covenant relationship with Te Wanaga a Rangi (where Amorangi ministers are trained). The covenant provides for a sharing of staff and resources. As part of their ordination training the Knox Centre's ministry interns spend several days at Te Maungarongo marae in Ohope.

Knox College in Dunedin, where the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership is located, also houses the Hewitson Library and the Presbyterian Archives Research Centre. The Hewitson Library is the Presbyterian Church's theological library. It is a public library that operates an online catalogue and a book postal system to make its books available to Presbyterian clergy around the country. The Library and Archives are in the process of being merged into a single entity called the Knox Information and Research Centre.

Kupu Whakapono (Confession of Faith)

From this land of Aotearoa New Zealand
we confess that we believe in and belong
to the one true and living God,
who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
Love before all love.

We believe in God the Father,
sovereign and holy,
Creator and nurturer of all,
Father of Jesus Christ,
sender of the Holy Spirit,
and Judge of all the earth.

We believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour,
truly human and truly divine,
who lived among us full of grace and truth.
For our sin he was crucified
and by the power of God was raised from death,
forgiving us, setting us free and bringing to birth God's new creation.
Now ascended, he calls us to repentance and faith
and restores us to God and to one another.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
the giver of life at work in all creation,
who inspired the Scriptures and makes Christ known,
who transforms hearts and minds
and gathers us into the community of Christ,
empowering the Church in worship and in mission.

We belong to this triune God,
women and men,
young and old,
from many nations,
in Christ he iwi kotahi tatou, *[we are one people]*
witnesses to God's love in word and action,
servants of reconciliation,
and stewards of creation.

As God's people,
we look forward in hope and joy
to the return of Christ,

to the new heaven and earth,
where evil and death will be no more,
justice and peace will flourish,
and we shall forever delight in the glory of God.

Kupu Whakapono is accompanied by an extensive Commentary, which also forms part of the Subordinate Standard and can be downloaded from the PCANZ web site.