

## **Mission Advisor Report for 2014 Synod AGM**

We make assumptions and I have come to wonder if some of those assumptions are the reality. What do I mean?

We are the Church; we are the Body of Christ; Jesus is head of His church; it is His not ours. I think that these are things with which we would all agree. These are assumptions. From what I observe I have found myself thinking that we cannot assume these statements as being anything more than words on paper.

It seems to me that in our conversations the institution of the church and its preservation are the prime motivators for much of our energy.

In 2011 I reflected on how I had been so moved seeing the destruction of churches in Christchurch following their earthquake and that as a result of that reflection wondered if God was saying to us that it is time to move on from the past. We need to move on from what served us well in the past and change in the new situations in which we now find ourselves. Folks, it can no longer be the same. New Zealand is a very different country than it was 30 years ago and changing rapidly. We only have to look at the 2013 census figures on religious affiliation to see that.

We are caught in a place where we are not sure what to do. When a computer is in that place it reverts to its default setting. So do we. With the computer we have to change the default and I don't know about you, but I always find that a challenge simply because I don't understand the inner workings of a computer. I need someone who really knows how to do that. The default settings we have as a church need to be changed. We assume we know who we are. We assume Jesus is at the heart of all we do but I am not at all sure that is the reality. Jesus says that, 'Apart from Me you can do nothing.' (John 15:5) In the same passage He also calls for us to abide, remain in Him. I am often left with the impression that we treat Jesus as some spectator not having been invited into what we are doing. Do we consciously seek His mind when we meet? Do we take space and time to listen?

This is going to be crucial as we face the issues related to mission and engineers' reports. This will not be an easy time for many but it is a time for us to really engage with the Head of the Church – Jesus, as to His desires and plans for us. What might we look like, how are we to engage in the work He has for us? After all He has already said what that work is. 'You will do the same things I have been doing and greater things because I am going to the Father.' It's not what is it we are to do but how to do it. It will mean some fairly fundamental changes in our thinking and the way we go about being church.

This is a God given opportunity. The pillar of cloud and fire has lifted and we now have to pack up and move on. Some things will be left behind, other things needed, the destination unknown, the journey of unknown length, but always the cloud and fire will lead as God has always done for His people.

God bless us on this journey.