

Mission Advisors Address to 2014 AGM

I want to continue from my reflections in my report and pick up on one major issue that is looming for most of us.

The engineer's reports on the state of our buildings are coming out. These will raise some real issues for us and not ones that will be easily solved. Certainly there will not be the money to bring all the buildings that we may wish to up to the required standard and it's likely some very difficult decisions will have to be made. One thing is sure things will not be the same – they can't be. Another thing is that we really need to engage with is,

- what is God asking of us here?
- What is He calling us to?
- What are His plans for our region, city, communities and not assume that we know.

In our three major urban areas, Oamaru, Dunedin and Invercargill, we will have to look at the whole urban area not just individual congregations. Rural congregations will also have issues that arise from building reports. We will need to ask questions like,

- What is God's mission in this place?
- What is our part in that?
- Who are we and what are we being called to be?
- Then the question of what resources do we need.

The questions of buildings must be approached from this perspective. We must start with where God is at work, not our building. What is going to best support His mission.

I am sure that these questions will reach far beyond our buildings and will demand of us a complete rethink of who we are as God's people in this place at this time. It is obvious that we cannot continue as we are. Our present institutional structures simply aren't up to the task anymore.

I don't have the answers but I am confident that God does and as Presbyterians we seek to discern the mind of God together.

Perhaps in our urban areas it will mean fewer church buildings, perhaps it may mean offloading everything and building something new in strategic locations.

I don't know.

In rural communities maybe it will mean letting go our buildings and developing a network of house churches.

- What might all this mean for ministry provision?
- Maybe a more ministry resource approach directed to teams in various locations?
- Maybe it is expanding our concept of ministry to embrace other expressions of ministry and church that as yet we don't see?

These are big questions and ones I don't have the answers to. But again I am convinced that God does and that if together we take to time to seek Him humbly and as free from our own agendas as possible, He will continue to take us on a journey of discovery and change.

'Unless the Lord builds the house the labourers labour in vain.'

Or to change the metaphor, the pillar of cloud and fire has lifted and we need to pack up our tents and set out. If we don't we'll end up rotting in the desert as God moves on. We have a great thing to offer –

- reconciliation with the Creator of all, a reconciliation that initiates with Him and to which He calls, indeed commands His followers to take into the world. With His grace we are able.

Let's be humble and admit that on our own we haven't a hope of doing this but with Him, all things are possible.

Thank you again for the privilege of serving you and to those who have invited me into your midst and opened your hearts and homes to me, my grateful thanks. You are a huge inspiration and encouragement.

Bruce Fraser
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