

Report: Synod Life Committee

Since the 2013 Annual Meeting, the committee has met twice in Dunedin. The Executive has met seven times, including three meetings with the Otago Foundation Trust Board and two conference calls. In addition, we corresponded by email when the need arose. It has been another busy mission focused, forward looking year that we believe will bear good fruit for the church in the Synod area, now and in the future.

Annual Financial Statements

The audited financial statements and notes are presented for approval.

In the General Funds Statement of Financial Performance Cash expenses in total decreased this year mainly due to having no Youth Advisor for most of the year and committee costs being much lower than last year.

In the Trust Funds Statement of Financial Performance Samstock was underwritten to \$5,000 from the Jubilee Fund and we received \$2,705 back from the previous year's underwriting of the event. \$1,750 of allocations not fully used up were returned to Synod by the beneficiaries so that money has helped to increase the money available for allocation this year. Income and expenses for the Rural Conference and the Transformers Camp are shown along with future money spent on Elders' Resources.

Auditors for the 2014 Financial Year

We recommend that the Synod appoint the same auditors as the Otago Foundation Trust Board, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), Dunedin.

2014 Budget

The following General Funds budget is presented for approval:

	2013 Actual	2014 Budget
Income		
OFTB – Refund Expenses	192,029	236,650
Synod Allocations for Synod Staff	195,913	289,000
Refunds and other Income	885	3,300
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	388,827	528,950
Expenses		
General Administration:		
Accounting Assistance to Parishes	4,950	6,500
Annual Meeting Expenses	9,954	12,750
Audit Fees	4,042	4,500
Insurance	6,073	3,500
Postage, Stationery etc	430	1,300
Rent	21,736	36,500
Salaries and Expenses	269,536	371,000
Sundry Costs	5,606	8,400
Telephone Tolls etc	4,251	5,000

Treasurer's Fees	2,140	2,500
Website Fees	992	1,000
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	329,710	452,950
Committees of Synod:		
Ecclesiastical Fund	859	1,550
Educational Fund	1,797	3,200
Executive	13,193	22,800
Ministry Resource	10,920	24,000
Mission & Evangelism	2,236	3,600
Moderator	955	2,000
National Commitments	484	950
Property Commission	656	2,900
Synod Life	2,902	4,000
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	34,002	65,000
Other		
PCANZ	15,579	11,000
Depreciation	15,353	15,000
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Total Expenses	394,644	543,950
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Nett Surplus/(Deficit) For Year	(5,817)	(15,000)
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The budget includes an allowance for increases in costs as well as known planned additional expenditure. Budgets are a best estimate at the time and circumstances can change during the year. The Ministry Resource figure assumes allocating the maximum \$20,000 which they rarely do. Where there has been one off costs in 2013 that are not expected to be repeated in 2014 allowance has been made for these. Salaries and Expenses are up to allow a full year for a full time Youth Advisor. Previously Stephanie Redhead was only part time. Both Synod Life and Presbytery Council wanted a full time appointment. The office rent has increased due to renting the whole floor and the rent has been reviewed after three years. Committee costs are budgeted to increase as we hope to have all the vacancies filled so will increase travel costs. The Executive is budgeting for further legal costs as the Synod Regulations are rewritten and advice from the Structural Engineer is sought on structural matters. PCANZ expenses this year will not include hosting Council of Assembly in Dunedin as we have been doing this every second year.

Otago Foundation Trust Board Financial Statements

The Board kindly provides financial statements for Synod's information, and we annually send greetings and an appreciation for the work the Trustees and staff do to earn the net income that is available to the Synod to spend. They continue to be excellent stewards of the resources entrusted to them especially in these more difficult economic times. This year the income available for distribution was up almost \$420,000 compared to last year.

Joint Meetings of the Executive and the Otago Foundation Trust Board

For a number of years the Executive and Trust Board have met several times a year to inform each other of what they have been doing, what plans they have and discuss any matters of mutual interest. These are very pleasant, amicable meetings and we conclude by having lunch together. Relationships between the two groups are excellent which makes the work of both groups and their interactions run smoothly.

Economic Outlook for 2014 Calendar Year

The Trust Board have advised us that income available for distribution by Synod is likely to be down on what they have achieved this year by about \$275,000. This is due to low interest income and small increases in costs. Economic conditions continue to remain uncertain. Please be aware that this directly impacts on what we may be able to allocate to applicants next year!

Moderator Designate

From the initial round of nominations for Moderator Designate from parishes there were five nominations received. When the nominees were approached none were willing to accept nomination. Several other prospective candidates were approached by the Nominating Committee and as a result of that the name of the Rev John Daniel is being brought to the AGM as the nominee for Moderator Designate. His profile is at the end of this report.

2015 Annual Meeting

The recommended date for the 2015 meeting is Saturday 18th April, which does not clash with Easter or Anzac Day ... or duck shooting opening day!

Retirements from Synod Committees

No committee Conveners are due to retire this year.

We thank those retiring committee members who have concluded their appointment terms or have resigned during their terms, for their valuable service to the Synod. We appreciate the time and effort that goes into serving the Synod and are very grateful for their contributions.

Educational Fund: Trevor McKinlay.

Mission & Evangelism: Joy Flett, Jane Green.

Ministry Resource: David Mackie.

Nominating Committee: Reg Weeks

Synod Life: Gillian Vine.

College Fund Applications

No applications received this year.

Insurance

As you are aware, this year the PCANZ have changed Brokers and set up a new structure to administer insurance matters. For a first year with a change of broker it seems to have gone quite well. As the new structure and broker have a first full year to settle into the new arrangements it is expected insurance matters will

continue to improve for parishes. Fergus Sime is the Synod representative on the new PCANZ Insurance Work Group

Synod Earthquake Prone Building Policy

Our policy was prepared with advice from Graham McDougall (Structural Engineer) and other people with some knowledge about these matters and was made on assumptions about what local councils, the Royal Commission on the Canterbury Earthquake and Government might eventually decide.

Since then, and still now, various matters are still coalescing into something we can all work with. In that regard we are aware that local councils are looking more favourably on timelines to get reports prepared, and get structural strengthening and repair work done. **As a result we will be looking to amend our policy when these matters are more certain.** We are still waiting for the Government to decide what laws will be implemented as a result of the Royal Commission's recommendations. In the meantime we encourage parishes to get reports done and consider the implications of those reports for the future mission of the parish and discuss these matters with Synod and Presbytery before making decisions. This policy was developed primarily to assist parishes to meet their legal obligations and to help further God's mission through the use of buildings in the Synod area. We are trying to help not hinder! We hope the structural reports may help crystalize difficult decisions.

Process for dealing with the consequences of Structural Engineer's Reports

It has become clear that Synod and Presbytery will need to have a more proactive role in helping parishes come to decisions about future property issues. We are currently working with Presbytery on this matter. This has included a meeting with the Southland people Presbytery appointed at their last AGM to assist the former Southland Presbytery parishes with these issues. Some parishes need assistance in defining their mission and future plans, some need help with leadership around making major property decisions, while others need technical advice and support. All need our prayerful support as they make these decisions.

It is important to remember that all significant property decisions are made by all three levels of the church and that each level requires full information and sufficient time to make those decisions. Decisions are not automatically rubber stamped especially in this new post Christchurch earthquake environment where many parishes will need to consider the future of their buildings. Synod and Presbytery may need to make strategic decisions over wider areas as well as on a parish by parish basis. Our primary goal is to help parishes make the best decisions for the future mission of God's kingdom in their area. We are looking for creative solutions born out of prayerful discernment to the challenges we face, and we are well aware some policies of the past have not worked well. Our prayer is that as a result of these challenges we can end up with a stronger Presbyterian church in Otago and Southland advancing God's kingdom. All properties were purchased and buildings built on them to further the mission of

the church in their area. The buildings were designed to meet the present and predicted future mission needs of the parishes at the time they were built, in some cases over 100 years ago. Our mission environment has changed since then so it is appropriate to review the parish's mission in the light of the current and predicted future context. As a result of that review the parish can then work out what buildings will be appropriate to carry out the current and predicted future mission. Synod and Presbytery have formal processes in place to process property applications and these may stay the same, but are likely to be enhanced by a group of people helping parishes work through the issues prior to formal decisions being made. Please contact our Executive Officer Fergus Sime to discuss matters at an early stage and seek his advice on related process matters.

Synod Website

The website is running very well. Much information can be found on it. Contact Bruce Fraser if you have any problems or want to put something on it. The address is: www.synod.org.nz

Parish Financial Audits/Reviews

During the year a firm of Auckland Chartered Accountants that specialise in not for profit audits was drawn to Fergus's attention as a cost effective solution for parishes. The principal is a Christian and his work was highly recommended. Fergus published the availability of this firm to all parishes and campsites and one Campsite Committee took up the opportunity. He will be promoting this opportunity again in June but if you need an auditor please contact Fergus. If enough parishes are interested the firm may send someone down to do auditing in our area. If you know of other suitably qualified individuals or audit firms that would be interested in such work please contact Fergus. We do not want to rule out local people to do this work.

New Financial Reporting Standards

Brendan Sweeney, PCANZ Financial Manager, met with Fergus, Zona Pearce and Alan Judge on two occasions to brief us on these new standards. All parishes will have to comply with these and prepare their annual financial statements in accordance with these rules. We are awaiting more information. When that happens we will contact parishes to see if you would like assistance in preparing these reports and related matters. We may need to consider extending the service Synod provides parishes free of charge where the Otago Foundation Trust Board staff provide an accounting service. You will be hearing more from us about this in the near future.

Campsites

Together with Presbytery, we are in the process of working out how best to support campsites now there is one Presbytery covering the same area as Synod.

Synod Mission Advisor

The Executive receives regular reports from Bruce about the work he is carrying out and hears many very good reports from individuals and parishes about how helpful his work has been. Bruce is appointed to work with parishes, so please take the opportunity to make use of his expertise.

Synod Regional Youth Co-ordinator

Brad Kelderman was appointed last year and has started work with enthusiasm! If your parish has any youth matters it wants to discuss please contact him. He is only too pleased to help. We decided to invite Presbytery to appoint a representative to our Appointments Committee. Rev. Andrew Scott proved an invaluable appointee with his extensive knowledge of youth work.

Synod Kids Friendly Advisor

Cheryl Harray has had a very good year working with parishes and other groups. She is very keen to help with any children's work. Please contact her if you need her services.

Samstock Music Festival

We agreed to be this Christian music festival's parent organisation for three years with a review to take place after the third year's festival. Because of the change of Youth Advisor we decided to extend the period by one year so Brad could attend a festival then be part of a review. This year's festival appeared to be successful. A review will be done shortly before a decision is made as to whether we will be its parent organisation in the future.

Resource Group Visits by Moderator & other Synod People

We have attended some meetings during the year and have circulated all group leaders this year offering our services. We do encourage Resource Groups to invite Synod representatives to resource your groups on a regular basis. We look forward to being of assistance in mission in this way.

Synod Representation on national church bodies

Our representatives as associate members on the Council of Assembly, and the Council's two subcommittees, continue to provide useful input and feedback. The representatives are: Lyn Murray (Council of Assembly), the Rev Ken Harray (Leadership Sub committee) although he has resigned and we are seeking a replacement, Fergus Sime (Resource Subcommittee). Lyn Murray is our associate representative on the Church Property Trustees and their Farm Committee.

Hosting Council of Assembly

For a number of years now Synod has hosted the Council of Assembly November meeting every second year in Dunedin so Council members can see first hand the national church enterprises that are in the Synod area. We find the time very valuable and we believe the Council does too. We did this again in November. The Executive members shared a meal with and made a presentation to the Council which was well received.

Press Go

During the year we had two helpful meetings with members of their group. We look forward to continuing to work with them.

Visit to Synod by Moderator of PCANZ

We were very pleased that the Right Rev. Ray Coster took time to meet with the Synod Executive. This meeting was most appreciated and helps communication with the PCANZ.

150th Anniversary of Synod 2016

We will be 150 years old in two years time!! We are working on what we should we do to celebrate, but if you have ideas please let Fergus know. Yvonne Wilkie has been commissioned to write a history of Synod, particularly on the period since the last history was written in 1991. General Assembly 2016 will be held in Dunedin to acknowledge this. Professor Alan Torrance has accepted our invitation to be the guest speaker at our AGM. A Kid's Friendly party sounds like a fun idea, especially if we could have haggis on the menu!! Capital fundraising is a possibility. We could have a longer AGM say a 2 – 3 day conference looking at the past (Presbyterian heritage especially in the Synod region) and visioning forward in mission. A committee will be formed after the AGM to progress the ideas for this celebration.

Synod Regulation Review

Our Lawyers, Frazer Barton & Helen Scott are well underway with this task. The matter needs careful consideration so it will take some time before a draft is available for comment by Synod members. They are trying to deal with problem areas in current regulations so that there might be fewer problems in future.

Role of Synod and the Southern Presbytery

The relationship continues to work well. The Presbytery Moderator and Executive Officer are ex-officio members of the Synod Executive, Synod Life and Ministry Resource Committees and the Synod Moderator and Executive Officer are ex-officio member of the Presbytery Council. This is proving a valuable link. Some joint groupings may be the best way forward in the future for some matters such as Campsite oversight and support, and strategic property reviews as a result of the Structural Engineer's reports.

Thanks to Committee Members

I would like to thank all members of the Executive and Synod Life Committees for their contributions to the work of the committees this year. There are plenty of challenges and mission opportunities ahead of us as we look to the future development of the Presbyterian Church in the Synod area. Please continue to pray for the work of all Synod Committees, as we need God's guidance for the work ahead.

In conclusion, I would like to especially thank Fergus Sime once again for the willing and efficient way he does his job, including the preparation of this report. I reiterate the comments I made last year in that we are most fortunate to have

someone as well versed in, and passionate about, the work of the Synod. This is reflected in the amount of time he spends on the phone, replying to emails, the visits he makes and the visitors he gets in the Office, dealing with the many issues which arise in the Synod area.

D Lyn Murray
Convener