

All Followers of Jesus Are Ministers
Mission Advisor 2007 Annual Report to the Synod of Otago and Southland

This is my second report to the Synod and again I would like to express my thanks for the on going support I have received from staff, committees, parishes and people of the Synod. It is a joy and a privilege to work among you. The kindness and hospitality shown when I am on the road is greatly appreciated; the trust shown as you have shared your confidences, troubles and joys is both humbling and gratifying. As I pray for you, I thank God for you. I also record my thanks to Beverley for her support and encouragement.

I wish to express my thanks to the Executive for the confidence shown in me by re-appointing me. It is good to be able to look forward with some degree of certainty.

It is perhaps timely for me to lay out what it is that I hope to achieve while in this role of Advisor. First, I am an advisor. It is not my role to instruct parishes what they must do. It is not for me to tell a parish that they need to close, amalgamate or form some particular combination. Neither is it my role to tell a parish what form of ministry it should take up nor to criticise it's theological position. I am there to facilitate a process where by a parish seeks the mind of God for it's mission and future.

Having said that there are some basic principles I seek to promote within this context.

1. All followers of Jesus are ministers of the Gospel
2. All followers of Jesus have a contribution they make to God's mission in their location
3. The extension of the Kingdom of God is the prime work of the church.

The ministry of word and sacrament is a blessing, but if this traditional form of ministry is not an option for any parish, it need not mean that they have no future as a witnessing community. There are other permissible forms of ministry – and importantly, there is the priesthood of all believers.

What does it mean to be the priests in our communities, what does it mean in practical terms to be the body of Christ – to be Jesus – in our context?

Small congregations don't need large resources or costly programmes to reach their community. Understanding who they are in Christ and living that out in the various organisations and places to which they belong is a most effective way of reaching neighbours. Big is not always best!

Within our tradition we have an enormous strength – Eldership. I have a passion to help others see this real gift and hence help elders come to a greater understanding of what they have been called to, and so become truly the spiritual leaders of their people. I have a passion to work with elders to help them re-discover their calling. I seek always to promote better understanding and sense of team between ministers of word and sacrament and elders.

What would I like to see when my time as the Synod's Mission Advisor comes to an end?

- Parishes all round the Synod, no matter their size, who have a greater sense of purpose, greater sense of mission to their community and living as Jesus in their communities;
- Expressing that witness in cultural ways appropriate to their setting;
- People who have a greater sense of their relationship with Jesus that reflects in the way their lives are lived;
- An eldership that has a deeper understanding of their leadership role and providing strong sensitive leadership as a team;
- Help ministers of word and sacrament see themselves as elders in a team with other elders;
- To see the valuable resource we have in those trained in the ministry of word and sacrament being better able to use their gifts as key resource people in their area.

These are long term objectives that will take time to achieve and I am aware that it may take greater time than I have. It is my pleasure to work with such great people, thank you for the privilege.

Bruce Fraser
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