

Is It The Mission of Jesus or Me?

Synod Mission Advisor's Address Synod Annual Meeting 2006.

In presenting this report I wish to record my thanks for the support and encouragement I have received since I took up this position last July. John for your mentoring and friendship, Fergus for your support and willingness to listen, Heather Mc., for help in the do's and don'ts of Synod and PCANZ life, and the office staff for acceptance in their midst.

I especially wish to pay tribute to

- the parishes who have called me to help, who have shown trust by the quality of your sharing as we have worked together,
- To parish leaders and elders who have honoured me with your confidences as we have sort to support each other in ministry
- And to those who have opened their homes and provided hospitality to me while I have been with you.

To travel this beautiful part of New Zealand and to work with such genuine people who are showing that they have a real concern to want to reach out to their communities with the love of Jesus, makes this a most rewarding mission to be involved in.

This is not an easy task we are all engaged in. As I say in my report we really need to engage in a serious discussion.

Is it the mission of Jesus, or is it me! Is it Jesus, or the PCANZ!

It is time for us to take seriously the Scriptural understanding of the priesthood of all believers and to look more to the extension of the Kingdom of God and less to propping up the institution to which we belong. The institution only has validity in so far as it exists to extend the Kingdom. We can not, indeed we must not, exist for our own sake.

Synod, as an organisation has made significant moves to encourage mission thinking. There is still a way to go—some areas within Synod more than others. Encouragingly there is a growing, what I would call 'a holy desperation' in some parishes—a realisation that we have been in denial for a long time and it's nearly to late. But, Jesus is in the resurrection business! Most congregations do not wish to fade away but reach their communities with the love of Jesus. However the current institutional framework often proves less helpful to engaging with new forms and concepts in ministry.

Others have lost the will and the energy to face the fundamental changes needed to refocus for mission.

In many cases we need to plant a church within an existing church. Something that is new and different that grows up within—a seedling that is sheltered by the mature trees until as it grows toward maturity itself, while it in turn sheltering new growth. Every structure has it's own life cycle. We are an organism first—the body of Christ—and an organisation second which supports that body. We seem to often confuse the two.

In our wider community Jesus is 'cool' but the institution of the church is not. Yet there is a longing for spiritual reality.

People came—and still come—asking Jesus' disciples if they could meet Him. His reply is timely for us. He said, "The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory. ²⁴ The truth is, a kernel of wheat must be planted in the soil. Unless it dies it will be alone—a single seed. But its death will produce many new kernels—a plentiful harvest of new lives. ²⁵ Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who despise their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ All those who want to be my disciples must come and follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And if they follow me, the Father will honour them." (John 12: 23-26 NLT)

Bruce Fraser
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