

Ministry and leadership.

Terminology:

'Professional' or 'teaching elder' = 'ministry of word and sacrament'. Teaching Elder is a better term to reflect the Presbyterian understanding of the role and is in line with GA 02.056 below.

'Overseeing elder' = ruling elder. Research into eldership, commissioned by the Synod of Otago and Southland, showed that elders were unhappy with the term 'ruling' because of past experiences or perceived fear of authoritarian attitudes. 'Overseeing' sits better with Paul's comment to Timothy in 1 Tim.3:1 – *If any one sets their heart on being an overseer, they desire a good thing.*

The Elders Handbook produced by the Knox Centre makes this comment on these two eldership terms... *the oft-used distinction between "ruling elders" (elders on session) and "teaching elders" (ministers of Word and Sacrament) is both helpful and unhelpful. It is helpful in that it makes clear that while these are different roles within the leadership of the church both are needed for the governance of the church; it is unhelpful insofar as it reduces the multifaceted nature of both these ministries to just two functions: ruling and teaching.*

As Presbyterians we are well placed for seeing leadership as a team and ministry by all the people of God (the priesthood of all believers).

In 2000 the General Assembly appointed a Task group to report back in 2002 on the question of providing ministry. It was out of the report of this Task Group in 2002 that the four strands of ministry model was adopted. That report, 'Future Ministry Together' (FMT) (2002 White Book Pages F14-33 November 2002) said a number of things that are still relevant to our current situation. That report will be quoted in this paper.

In their vision at the start of the report the task group said:

In discussing the ministry of the whole people of God, the task group found itself trying to come to grips with a conundrum: that ordained ministry and leadership within the church have become inextricably linked.....In order to clear our heads we decided to envision what a mature church might look like.....

A mature church community might be one which:

- *There is a move from a community gathered round a minister to a ministering community.*
- *What is shared is not just received passively but acted on and shared again.*
- *Everyone participates in mission.*
- *Ministry responds to the context of the community and energy is released into the community at large.*
- *The demands of 21st century life are recognised and people can move in and out of participation according to energy and availability.*
- *The whole community engages with challenges as part of the journey.*

Much of the above is still relevant and although there are some signs that aspects of these points are happening, these are more the exception than the rule. The culture of the PCANZ has changed little in terms of understanding ministry and leadership. There is also a lack of understanding of Presbyterian polity in terms of leadership being collective and collegial.

Assembly decisions related to this:

Rising out of the FMT Report the 2002 Assembly made the following decisions which are far reaching though we have seen little apparent action on them.

GA2002 (02.055) That assembly affirm the ministry of the laos (the whole people of God) as the core of ministry within the Presbyterian Church, and the equipping of the laos for ministry as a priority for the church.

GA 2002 (02.056) That Assembly affirm the importance of a well trained ordained ministry of word and sacrament to resource, enable and empower the ministry of the laos.

(Ordained ministry is charged with the responsibility to be a sign of the heritage and catholicity of the church)

GA 2002 (02.165) That Assembly affirms the centrality and significance of the role of eldership and reminds Presbyteries to take up their responsibilities for the ongoing training and support of elders.

- How have we acted on these decisions and how have these decisions impacted subsequent decisions related to ministry and leadership?

These decisions, it seems to me, are key as we wrestle with the question of ministry and leadership.

This paper will suggest some thinking in relation to the implications of these decisions. Much of what follows comes from my experience of over 40 years ministry leadership within the Presbyterian family as an overseeing elder and will draw on leadership experience from local, regional and some national activities.

Ministry is for all followers of Jesus, not just a professional class. Ministry is about character – particularly the character of Jesus in the life of the follower. The professionalisation of ministry disempowers and disenfranchises the people of God. We need to help people see that ministry is not something confined or especially related to the institution of the church – ministry, like worship, from which it springs, is a heart relationship with the Lord in all areas of life. This lifestyle of worship/ministry has its meaning and power in an ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ that shows in a continuing transformation of the follower into the likeness of Christ. As this works out in the individual it will, in turn, affect the corporate body of believers.

Congregations with whom I have been working have been discovering that ministry and mission are two sides of the same coin. They have also been discovering that ministry/mission is working together in their community to continue the same work that Jesus did while he walked this earth. Each follower is gifted for ministry by the Spirit of God. Consequently, they have also discovered that a ‘successful’ church is not necessarily numerical growth. It is more a group of people whose hearts and lives are being changed into the likeness of Jesus by an ongoing relationship with Him that flows out into their host communities.

Church growth is the result of ministry/mission not the reason for it. Church growth and Kingdom growth are not the same thing. Kingdom growth is the mission call, church growth is the result – and that growth may not be in our particular congregation.

Three of the four strands of ministry adopted in 2002 do not really address the fundamental question of ministry and leadership and were in the end an endeavour to continue some form of the status quo. I can make no comment on Amorangi ministries because I have had no experience with them but having heard Wayne Te Kaawa presenting the 2013 Inaugural Lecture at the Knox centre I was left thinking that some of what he shared about Amorangi ministries has much that could help the wider church. The address will be available on the Knox Centre web site.

The FMT report says:

In every case the mission of each parish must be the first priority, not just perpetuating the status quo. Any person engaging in ministry with a congregation must focus and enable ministry of the whole congregation rather than simply becoming an agent of the congregation.

Ten years down the track would suggest that NOMs have continued largely as before (apart from changes in training), LOMs seem to be considered second best and in some cases used as a back door to becoming a NOM. LMTs are not really taken seriously and are considered very much third class even though those who work in these teams work hard and take their call seriously. There has been a serious lack of support and training. There are training opportunities about such as EIDTS and other distant learning organisations but there is also a need for other forms of training other than reading and writing assignments – more practical and interactive – and it is a positive move to see the development of internship models.

The FMT report observes that:

While ordained ministers will continue to provide core ministries of word and sacrament, the task group foresees a necessary change in focus to more regional responsibilities and the equipping of others in ministry.

This is reflected in the Assembly's decision noted above (02.056). Necessity is beginning to drive this and in the Southern Presbytery there are moves in this direction but there is a need for a different aspect to training than the assumption that a NOM will be based in one parish. The skills needed for a regional education/resourcing role are different. This is a much more itinerant than settled role.

- Does a regional role need to be a NOM?

The FMT report says:

The ministry of the whole people of God needs to be central. The ordained ministry and ministries of leadership within the church need to be focussed on enabling the ministry of the whole people of God to be faithful and effective. A shift in understanding of ministry seems to be needed in which we are likely to see less emphasis on the minister doing the ministry for the congregation. (Reflected in 02.055)

One elder said to me that they thought they were to bring the people for the professional to do the ministry! I think many people still see it that way. I also observe that some professionals like it that way as well. Is it a question of power and control? Institutionally we strongly endorse this perception.

However Presbyterianism stood against this one leader approach and worked hard to devolve power from one to the group. This led to the system of eldership and collective, collegial leadership structures at every level of the church. Hence the love (and dislike?) of Presbyterians for committees. We have lost something of the vision of our founders and, in many cases, bought into a business CEO model with an emphasis on professionalism.

- Institutionally do we need to recognise that different forms of leadership are required for different situations? Have we that degree of flexibility?

Elders, both teaching and overseeing, are ordained for life to ministry and leadership and sign the same formula of assent. However the practice of the institution is to focus leadership on the 'professional' with other elders seen as support or backup. (One Session told me that they didn't know they were able to make decisions. They thought they were there to implement the ideas of the professional.) Eldership is not appreciated nor understood for what it has to offer, both overseeing and teaching elders have little understanding of their call. We are not good at training elders. Training has almost been exclusively focused on the professional - *while the church has some traditions, practices and regulations covering the appointment of its ordained ministers, little is in place for others in pastoral ministries (FMT)*. Expectations are that the professional is the leader – some professionals are very good at this, others not, but are thrust into this role and expected to be able to carry it out. We need to understand the role of teaching elder to be that of teaching elder first and foremost. Not all teaching elders are leaders, but some overseeing elders have great leadership skills and gifts but institutional constraints and expectations may prevent or constrain their capacity to lead - *'a conundrum: that ordained ministry and leadership within the church have become inextricably linked. (FMT)*.

The FMT report raised this question of the elders role when it says:

The Reformed tradition has treasured the practise of governance by councils of elders. (02.165 Assembly's recognition of this.) This has often been expressed through the oversight of the Session and through the pastoral districts under care of particular elders. Elders have had a role with the minister in worship and sacraments. It seems timely to encourage developments to see an understanding of eldership as shared ministry with a range of 'portfolios' recognising particular elders taking responsibility for coordinating and focussing particular aspects of the congregation's ministry.

The use of the term 'Reverend' also reinforces the status nature of professional ministry. It is a title that at root means 'the revered and exalted.' Is that an appropriate title for a servant follower of Jesus? Paul used the term apostle to describe his function in the church not as a title. Is this a better option, 'Joanne Smith' the evangelist, or the pastor, or the teacher etc? Within the family of the church is it not better that all people are recognised because of what gifts/ministries they can bring without the necessity of apparent separation of some. In the wider community and other situations terms like 'Reverend' may be helpful.

In 2001 the then Assembly Equipping the Leadership Policy Group presented a report on servant mission leadership in which they said:

In the traditional model of parish ministry it is often assumed that ministers of Word and Sacraments, by virtue of their office, are the ones who bear responsibility of leadership in the church. This belief is reinforced by the oft-used distinction between clergy and laity. In Scripture, however the word laos (people 1Peter 2:9-10) designates the whole people of God without distinction, not a particular part of that people.

Just as the New Testament refrains from making the kind of distinction between clergy and laity that we make today. So it also refrains from making a distinction between the sacred and secular ministries and vocations. All are in this world and are part of it; differences are to be found in the particular functions assigned to individual persons, according to their gifts.

.....ordination in and of itself should not be equated with leadership.... Leadership is a gift and a responsibility which may be exercised by those who are not ordained but have roles conferred on them..... It may also be exercised by people who do not have a designated title or role within the parish.

In his address at the inauguration of the Southern Presbytery 2010, the then Moderator of the General Assembly, Dr. Graham Redding, said:

The traditional parish church model that presumes the existence of one full-time stipendiary ministry serving the spiritual needs of its members is already becoming the exception rather than the rule. Along with this, we must seek to eliminate the Christendom tendency to drive a wedge between clergy (the paid “professionals”) and laity (the long-suffering “amateurs”). Instead, there will and must be a recovery of the biblical portrayal of the kleros (clergy) as part of (not apart from) the laos (whole people of God), with ministry belonging to the latter by virtue of their baptism.

We want a King.

In **1 Samuel 8** the nation of Israel came to Samuel demanding a King. Samuel was upset and went to Yahweh. Yahweh responded by telling Samuel that it was not Samuel who had been rejected but the Lord Himself. Samuel was to warn the people what having a King would mean, which he did, but still the people wanted to be like everyone else and have a King. A King was someone they could see, who would tell them what to do, where to go, lead them, provide leadership in the challenges they faced. The King would carry the can – the buck would stop with him and the people would have someone to blame when things went wrong. They were prepared to give up their relationship with Yahweh as King to one of their own. Having a King would absolve them from the responsibility of seeking Yahweh (their real King) to know His mind and be guided by Him. They would abdicate this privilege and responsibility – or to pick up another Biblical image - sell their birthright.

We also ask for a King. With professional ministry we are asking to be like everyone else, to look to others to tell us which way to go, what to do, provide the vision so that we don't have to take the responsibility that comes from being part of the church of Jesus Christ who we loudly proclaim as our Head and King! Likewise when things don't turn out the way we think they should, we then have someone to blame and not take responsibility ourselves. The move to appoint the GA Moderator for a four year term to be the 'mission leader' buys into this. We will look to that person for the direction and we will complain when that person does not meet our expectations. There was a 'mission leader', called a Mission Enabler, but the task asked was beyond the ability of one person to do – the Moderator will be in the same position.

For 'protesting' Presbyterians there is a further level to this. While on the one hand we want strong leadership and direction, on the other we so often resist that leadership. We are caught between each of us wanting to do as we see fit in our own eyes and our desire to have a strong leader to tell us what to do.

- Is this because we lack recognition of the Lordship of Jesus in His church and are not prepared to submit to Him and one another?
- Is it because we see the church as ours?

The church is not about us, ministry/mission is not about us just as worship is not about us – it's all about Jesus. 'Abide in me.... (you) will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing.' The fruit is the fruit of the Spirit which is the character of Jesus in the believer's life.

"Give us a King" suits congregations because it absolves them from the responsibility for seeking God. Popular thinking has that responsibility for seeking God as being the professional priests. Somehow we think that the professional is closer to God than us others. This is incompatible with the priesthood of all believers and the understanding of the people of God being the Body of Christ.

Priesthood:

A priest is one who stands between a god and the people. One who speaks to the people on behalf of the god and to the god on behalf of the people. One who performs the rituals necessary for this relationship. In the Old Testament we see this role in the Tabernacle and Temple rituals.

1 Peter 2: 9-11. Peter says in his letter that all followers of Jesus are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God. New Testament teaching, especially in Hebrews, says that Jesus is now the High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16, 7:24-26, Romans 8:34) who intercedes on our behalf and we no longer need priests to stand between God and us. Yet in reality we still have a system that actually says there are 'priests' and they are the professionals. What's more, many of our people like it that way – 'give us a king' – and our institutional structures reinforce this perception. Yet this is at variance to what we claim to believe.

The priesthood of all believers is an important doctrine of Reformed Theology based on our understanding of the Scriptures which we claim to be the 'word of God.' Is there an understanding of what this means? Looking at the way we structure ministry would suggest that, as yet, we have little understanding of this in practise.

Both Scripture and the Assembly's decisions, as noted already, say that all people of God are called to ministry, contrary to institutional expectation and structure. We need to move ministry into a place where people are called to serve according to their ministry gifts, not simply because they have had some formal theological training, important as that is. The days when the professional and the school teacher were the most educated people in the community are well gone yet our polity still reflects that tradition.

So all followers of Jesus are priests and in that function, wherever we are, we are to stand in that place between God and those who, as yet, are not reconciled to Him in Christ Jesus. Wherever we are we are to intercede for them and share in word and deed the gospel of that reconciliation. We are also to act as priests to one another in the family of God standing together in our own trials, supporting and interceding, showing agape in word and deed, being counter cultural to the prevailing culture. It seems to me that there is little understanding of this. There is little understanding about what it means to be the Body of Christ. It concerns me that in the growing move towards a more formal liturgy there is a corresponding move towards the professional taking on a more priestly role that is more common to Anglican and Roman Catholic believers. These are some of the things that our forebears were at pains to get away from! It works against an understanding of the priesthood of all believers and what it means to be the Body of Christ.

The Body of Christ: 1 Cor. 12:27, Romans 12: 4-6a. John 14:11 -12, 15:5. In the New Testament the people of God are the Body of Christ.

In John 14:12 Jesus makes this extraordinary claim, 'I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in Me will do the same works I have been doing. (They) will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.' Does Jesus mean that as an individual believer I should expect to do greater things than he did - His stories, His teaching, His miracles of healing, deliverance, raising the dead, His calls for justice, His inclusiveness of the outcasts, His anger at the religious establishment who had people in bondage? I think not – but as a collective body of people walking with Him, filled with His Spirit, we should expect to see this work of Jesus being continued on in our communities through His people. This surely is part of what being the Body of Christ is about. The communities in which we find ourselves have the right, if they only knew, to expect to see through the followers of Jesus the same things happening as if Jesus Himself were walking their streets. Certainly the church throughout the ages, and in various

parts of the world in our time, would support this. Even our own Presbyterian history would support this as these 'works' are not foreign to our heritage even in this day.

Paul, in various places (Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians and Peter), all suggest that every follower of Jesus is called to ministry and are given gifts to both build the fellowship to maturity and proclaim the Kingdom in the world through word and action.

- Have we have become so 'sophisticated' and 'educated' that we have talked ourselves out of these possibilities?

Yet where the Kingdom is being advanced, both today and in the past, this has been part of the package of the ministry of the whole people of God, each according to the gifts given by the Spirit.

In Paul's Corinthian teaching on communion he makes the point that, 'Anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgement on (themselves.) That is why many among you are weak and sick and a number of you have fallen asleep.' (1 Cor.11:29-30). I wonder if what Paul is meaning here is that when we share in this meal together one aspect of it is recognising that together we are the Body of Christ and we know from medical science that the primary healer of the body is the body. By fulfilling our collective 'body' role with the gifts that have been given, we are called upon to heal, build up and encourage one another. A study of the 'one another' passages is most revealing. So therefore the work of the people of God is to be Jesus both within the fellowship and beyond the fellowship. He has given all that is needed.

We cannot do 'mission/ministry' apart from Jesus. (In fact I'm not sure we 'do' ministry/mission so much as we are mission/ministry because of the Holy Spirit within.) Jesus says in John 15:5 that we need to abide in Him because, 'Apart from me you can do nothing.' This centrality of Jesus is also a plank in our reformed tradition. It seems to me that much of our time and energy is spent trying to keep the institutional forms of the church functioning believing that if we get that right the rest will follow. We talk about economies of scale, about how large a group needs to be to be considered a 'viable' church. Jesus took 12 and through them changed the world. Have we have lost sight of the Kingdom in our concern to perpetuate the Presbyterian Church?

"Lay".

There is no such thing as 'lay.' We need to find better terminology than the divide between 'clergy' and 'lay', 'ordained' and everyone else. As a footnote in the Elders Handbook says: *The title 'lay preacher' is unfortunate insofar as it perpetuates a distinction between 'clergy' and 'laity' that is both unbiblical and unhelpful. Properly understood, the New Testament word 'laos' refers to the whole people of God, including, not apart from the clergy.*

All elders are 'ordained' but does our language and practise reflect that? Eg. Now that some elders can be authorised to lead the sacraments of communion and baptism it would seem that the term 'ministry of word and sacrament' can no longer be the confined to the professional. Some theologians also make the case that all followers of Jesus are 'ordained' by nature of their baptism. I refer back to Graham Redding's words at the inauguration of Southern Presbytery referred to earlier.

- Does our language and practice support this divide?

Leadership:

God gives different ministries to His church – leadership is one but God calls us always to work in community. There are many other gifts including compassion, healing, discernment, other languages, etc. These are to build up the body of Christ, and be tools in the demonstration and proclamation of the Kingdom. Not everyone has the same 'charismata.' The gifts listed in the NT are indicative.

Five-Fold ministry of Ephesians 4.

Paul sets out five ministries of leadership for the building up of the saints to maturity. These are not all the same person although some people will show attributes of more than one.

Apostle: 'one who is sent.' A pioneer, entrepreneur, church planter. Pioneer's new missional works and oversees their development, looks to the frontier. The apostle is the entrepreneur of the faith, the one who sees the future, and often lives in the reality of that future that others cannot see. They can be seen as dreamers, or they can come across as being blunt and dogmatic, or as people who are not really on the same planet as us, away in some little world of their own, not practical (how wrong!). They're visionaries. If we don't understand their ministry we are inclined to simply dismiss them and/or shut them down because we are made uncomfortable through our lack of understanding. They go quiet and/or leave in frustration. We have missed the opportunity to hear the voice of God calling us onward. Their dream may be 5, 10 or 15 years down the track but we need to listen now so we can start walking in that direction. As one apostle-type told me, "It's like I can see over the horizon; in fact, I am already there!" This guy was forced to leave his leadership role because the denomination of which he was a part didn't understand this ministry and simply couldn't cope with him.

Prophet: = 'one who knows, a seer.' Visionary, questioner, disturber of the peace. One who proclaims God's utterances. Discerns the spiritual realities in a given situation and communicates them in a timely and appropriate way to further the mission of God's people. The prophet questions the status quo. They are uncomfortable people to have in our midst, often seen as hard and judgmental. So we shut them down. Prophets weren't popular in the Bible, either. By not understanding, mentoring and listening, we are likely to miss the voice of God in our midst to our detriment. A prophet-type I know was banned from preaching in his own church even while he was itinerating throughout New Zealand. His home church found his words too uncomfortable. Time showed he was right. Interestingly there have been calls asking, 'Where are the prophets?' as people see what is happening in society – however the prophets first and foremost call the people of God to account. They are primarily for the people of God and the track record of God's people is that we won't like what we hear! The Body of Christ itself is called to be a prophetic example to the wider community – counter cultural by nature of its relationships with each other and God

Evangelist: = 'one who recruits.' A salesperson, recruiter, bringer of good news. (both inside and outside the community of faith.) One who communicates the gospel in such a way that people respond in faith and discipleship. The evangelist is often full of enthusiasm, which can get a bit tiring for the rest. They certainly think everyone should be an evangelist just like them! Because they also challenge they are often not appreciated and the church misses the potential for people being drawn into relationship with Jesus. They may be evangelists to large public meetings (the usual perception) but more often they are one on one.

Pastor: = 'one who cares.'

Teacher: = 'one who explains.'

As we are more familiar with these two so no explanation need be given.

When we ignore, shut down or are simply ignorant of the first three ministries, we miss out, and it shows in the continued decline of the impact of the gospel in our communities. Bring back the "APEs," I say! (I recently asked a congregation to ask their elders if they were APEs or not. That started a few conversations!) With elders training seminars I have led throughout parts of the country, I examine this passage with the elders and after an exercise together we have found that in almost every Session/PC all five of these are present which has been a revelation to those taking part and been a big help in self-understanding and the understanding of others in the group. Out of some 26 Sessions only 3 did not have all 5 ministries.

There is tension within these five ministries and this can lead to conflict, so that's why Paul starts Chapter 4 with the things we hold in common. In holding to these, we can let the tensions of the diversity be creative in our midst, instead of shutting down the disturbers of the peace.

The emphasis that Paul makes here is the collaborative nature of leadership with the different perspectives that each can bring to seek the mind of God. As Presbyterians we embody this concept in our structure, but because we don't appreciate what we have been given, nor allow it or even expect it to work, we miss out on the richness that this could bring to leadership. Hence our practice and polity focuses much on the 'professional' and so excludes,

disempowers and disenfranchises others. The experience of many who are in leadership but are not 'professionals' is that they are often the subject of suspicion, not taken seriously, marginalised, ignored and in some cases abused. There seems to be a mistrust of the Spirit of God in a person if that person has not met the proscribed protocols of the institution. But it is an institution that has little flexibility in discerning the ministry variety in the call of God.

Conclusion:

Many of the debates we have had in the church over the years about leadership have centred on the perception that ministry/leadership is a position of power, influence and status and some have rightly felt excluded. We have couched the debate in different language but at heart that seems to be the root of it. Institutionally there is good cause to think that in fact power is at the heart of our structure. Undoubtedly there is power in leadership – the institutional structures concentrate it as a means of control.

- Is one of the basic fundamentals of the PCANZ mistrust: mistrust of others and even mistrust of the Spirit of God being able to actually lead His church through the collective wisdom and gifts of a people living humbly under the Lordship of Jesus?

Leadership in a collective sense can well mean that at any particular time, faced with a particular situation, different people may, and perhaps should, assume the leadership and not have the expectation that THE leader will be sufficient for all situations. My own experience makes me aware that there are times when I am not able to show leadership and need others better qualified to step in. If institutionally the 'buck stops with me' then allowing others can be very difficult especially in a culture that assumes that I am the trained professional.

We need a ministry recognition system that does not assume that all who come to have their call discerned will automatically be pastoral ministers in a parish situation. Our understanding of call, our training and our ministry options need to be much broader. Evangelists (sales people), apostles (entrepreneurs), prophets (questioners) are more likely to be itinerants than in settled ministries.

In 2001 the Church of Scotland adopted a report called 'Church without Walls'. Here's a quote:

"The Biblical description of leadership in Ephesians 4:12 includes also the apostle, the prophet and the evangelist, along with the pastor and the teacher. According to that passage it takes all five leadership roles to express the "ministry of Christ". This is a time to recover and reaffirm these other roles of leadership and break out of the reductionism of the pastor-teacher model.

The "word and sacrament"/ "pastor-teacher" emphasis belongs to the Christendom context, with the re-emphasis on these roles in the Reformation to offset the ignorance and superstition of the day. The context of the 21st century is undoubtedly missionary and post-Christendom. The assumptions that ride on the terminology will not be adequate for the future.

The church will require the pioneering gifts of the apostle ("sent out"), the building and dismantling gifts of the prophets, and the frontier-friendly gifts of the evangelist. The pastor and the teacher are no less important, but their monopoly on the term "ministry" needs to be broken. We recommend that in our time, we recognise, recruit, select and train evangelists who can help others share the Gospel with others. The same is required for those with "apostolic" (perhaps a church planting capacity) and "prophetic" gifts (perhaps an ability to encourage the church or a capacity to address the public arena in the name of Christ).

The collaborative nature of ministry begins by reclaiming these gifts as essential to the full development of the church to be the church of Christ in our times. It will mean taking account of these gifts in the selection and recruitment process and offering the necessary specialist training rather than the omnibus version that assumes that everybody will be a parish minister."

(The whole report is worth reading. It is far sighted and has much that can apply to this country.)

There is an assumption that theology is primarily learnt through scholarship, reading, exams and specialist theological language. This gives an unbalanced view. It leaves those who have not or cannot have access to that form of learning feeling that they have nothing to offer, that they are second class. It also leads to the idea that the people of God are theologically illiterate. That may well be, but I'm not so sure. Many I work with have a robust theology that has come from working out their relationship with God through prayer and the Scriptures as they deal with the things of life that come their way. They don't use 'theological' language to express it so are often seen as having no theology. There is the assumption that to talk theology you need to use theological language and as most don't use theological language they themselves feel then that they have no theological understanding. It has been most encouraging to see people come to understand that they do indeed have theological insights that have come from their life experiences and not from books. Many have found that releasing. If there is theological illiteracy then that would suggest that there is something not right in the way our professionals are fulfilling their calling as teachers. It is their calling to educate and resource the whole people of God. Perhaps a better job is being done than we realise if we don't only look to formal qualifications as the measure of competency but look more for the character of Jesus in the believer.

Professionals are under pressure to perform. Professional success is important in relating to peers. We look up to and admire those we perceive as being successful and that success is usually measured in numerical growth. However the average Christian congregation worldwide is 30-40 people. We have been heavily influenced by church growth theory and culture from North America. I wonder what real relevance that has to 21st century New Zealand. Some, I accept, but God knows what He wants in New Zealand and it will be unique to us. Leadership is learning to trust Him and seek Him. What that means for us could well be different congregation by congregation.

I was surprised by how deeply affected I was by the images of collapsed churches following the Christchurch earthquake. I didn't understand why I felt that way because I had no personal connection with any of the buildings. As I reflected and prayed I had the sense that this destruction was a sign. What of, I had no idea at that stage. I then recalled a comment made to me by a young church leader who had been part of a consultation where we looked at the challenges of being church in a post modern/post Christian age. He commented to me that he wondered if, in the New Zealand context, the question was not so much post Christendom/modern as post colonial. This stuck with me. In another conversation a colleague made the comment that the very forces we saw let loose in Christchurch were the same forces that formed this land that we love. We live in a land that moves. I began to wonder if the 'sign' was God saying that our European forebears understandably bought to this land that with which they were familiar from the land of their birth – buildings and institutional structures. But these structures – building and institutional - are not appropriate in a land that moves. We need something that has much more flexibility and can move more readily as things shift around us.

In his 2013 inaugural lecture Wayne Te Kaawa, Moderator of Te Aka Puaho said *'To meet the needs of the churches mission to Maori something needed to change in how they did church.'* A conference was held in 1952 where changes were suggested. Wayne continued: *'underpinning these changes of how we are to be and do church were the missionary thinking of Rolland Allen who was an advocate of establishing churches which would be self supporting, self propagating and self governing, adapted to local conditions and not merely imitations of Western Christianity.... His approach to mission is based upon the Apostle Paul's missionary methods where he entrusted the local church to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.... When Paul established a church he immediately devolved all necessary power and authority to them as it arose from the working of the Holy Spirit.'*

The foundations are the same as Paul says in the Ephesians passage, but the expression needs to be different.

- Is the way we do things the only way? Is it a way that has roots in Scripture or more in tradition?

Although Wayne Te Kaawa was reflecting on Maoris' journey with the church in this land, much of what he said has application to the wider church as we are still in a colonial mindset that makes us 'merely imitations of Western Christianity' not something that has grown to be an indigenous New Zealand expression of the Gospel.

- Do we have the courage to step out under the Lordship of Jesus to explore a new land – one that is constantly moving and changing, throwing up new mountains and new vistas - to explore new terrain?

- Do we have the courage to trust the Holy Spirit among the people of God?
- To pick up another image – are we ready to pack up our tents and follow the pillar of cloud and fire with all the uncertainty that means?

I feel that the pillar has lifted and we are being asked to pack up the tent and move on. We have camped in this place for a long time.

Part of our heritage has been to educate the people of God and to encourage the whole people of God in service to Him. The 2002 General Assembly affirmed that strongly but it seems that we have moved little to work out what those most important and significant decisions would look like in the field. It seems we have spent a lot of time and energy working out how we may modify what we have, to basically keep it the way it has always been. At that 2002 Assembly when we set up NOMs, LOMs and LMT's one leader suggested that as he and I didn't fit in any of those categories then perhaps we should call ourselves GOMs – God Ordained Ministers! In a sense he was right as we are all called to service by God.

- Is our understanding of ministry/leadership the next major challenge God has put before us as a reformed and reforming people? Is this the next stage of our reformation?
- Are we prepared to follow even if we are called to be different from those around us?
- Are we prepared to explore, trusting the Jesus, who is Head of His Church, to lead us on and that His Spirit is able to guide us through the collective wisdom and diversity that is His gift to us?
- Is Jesus Lord of all, even our culture both church and ethnic?
- Is He calling us to be counter to our particular culture?
- Is our culture more important to us than the Lordship of Jesus lived out in accordance with His word?

My longing is that we, the people of God, will be changed more into the likeness of Jesus and truly be the Body of Christ.

Bruce Fraser
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