

COUNCIL OF CONFERENCE FOUR PLUS FOUR RE MODELS OF PRESIDENCY (JULY 2009)

PREAMBLE

The Council of Conference four plus four in association with the Faith and Order Committee was charged by Conference 2007 to undertake the following:

1. Research the most appropriate and responsible Model of Presidency to take the Church into the future given its changing nature and size, as well as the understanding that people have of the role of President and Vice President.
2. Investigate the reasons behind the resistance of people to be nominated for the positions.
3. Prepare a discussion paper for June Synods with possible models.
4. Bring a report to Conference 2008.

A discussion paper reflecting on the nature of Presidency, resistance factors to being nominated for the positions of President and Vice President and possible models of Presidency was sent to June 2008 Synods and Hui Poari. Responses were received from eight Synods, one parish, one individual and Hui Poari. The Council of Conference four plus four thanks those who replied. Your questions and comments were particularly helpful.

The Council of Conference four plus four now presents this report for further consideration. We believe the model of Presidency being suggested is the most appropriate for the size and future of the Methodist Church in New Zealand/Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa. We expect that a decision to implement the proposed model will be a two-year process.

AFFIRMATIONS

The Council of Conference four plus four believes the President is important to the life and well-being of the Church. This was also reflected in the responses received.

We are strongly committed to the bicultural partnership. This partnership is reflected in our Conference, in the responsibilities of the President (one of whose tasks is to sustain the bicultural partnership) and in the selection process for the Presidency.

THE NATURE OF PRESIDENCY

The role of the President is one of **Governance** or 'Headship'. As the representative of the Conference when it is not in session, the President is responsible for maintaining the overall policy and direction setting of the Church.

This includes the following tasks:

- Being a **Leader**: The President is expected to bring gifts of visioning, discernment and guidance to the life of the Church. He or she is a voice for the Church and may speak out to the wider community (after seeking advice) on issues of justice, peace and integrity.
- Being the **Chief Pastor**: The President cares for the life of the Church in all of its parts, and so seeks to maintain justice in the life of the Church. He or she is available to listen, to pray and to be alongside all groups within the Church. He or she may offer personal pastoral care to individuals when required. The President acts as a 'spiritual mentor' to the Church.
- Having a **Ceremonial Role**: The President expresses the life of the whole Church on significant Church and/or community occasions. The role of President carries with it respect and status which is an expression of the Church's confidence in an individual and of the mana of the Body of Christ which is greater than any individual.

PROPOSED MODEL OF PRESIDENCY

The Council of Conference offers the following proposed model of Presidency after reflecting on the responses received from the Church and the future needs of Methodism in New Zealand.

(1 year – year of observation)
President Elect

(2 years)
President

- The President is a full-time position
- The office of President is open to all lay and ordained members of the Methodist Church who fulfil the Law Book requirements (7.5.1.6)
- Conference would be held every two years (issues like the time and place of ordinations will need to be explored)
- We believe costs would be similar to as at present
- The current bicultural partnership selection process would remain in place
- The first President under this model would be selected in 2011 and would begin as President in 2012. Thereafter Conferences would be held in 2014, 2016 etc.

RATIONALE FOR THE MODEL

The Council of Conference four plus four believes the proposed model is the most sustainable given the changing size and nature of the Church.

We believe that it best overcomes some of the factors behind the resistance of people to be nominated for the Presidency.

A two-year full-time Presidency will strengthen the role of President allowing greater continuity and the chance to make a sustained contribution to the Church. The time spent as President Elect will be a valuable opportunity for people to prepare themselves for the task ahead.

The Council of Conference four plus four believes the proposed model continues to affirm the place of lay leadership in the Church, which is a significant part of our heritage.

The model will have ecumenical advantages. The President will have time to get to know and be known by other Church leaders.

The Council of Conference four plus four believes the current selection process best expresses the Methodist Church's commitment to a bicultural partnership.

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OTHER MATTERS

The Council of Conference four plus four recognises that a number of issues were raised in Synod responses which remain unresolved. We have not been able to address these within this report but remind the Church of the need to continue to struggle with them in an attitude of prayer and concern for each other.

The Council of Conference four plus four notes:

- ongoing and serious concerns among some members regarding the bicultural partnership selection process
- the call for a more adequate resolution process in the event of disagreement over nominations
- the desire among some parts of the Church for the President to be an ordained person
- concern that, while the position of President is open to all lay and ordained people who fulfil the Law Book requirements, debate continues within Tauwiwi over the acceptability of gay and lesbian nominees - at the moment eligibility does not equal acceptability

SUGGESTED DECISIONS

1. Conference agrees to the appointment of the President for a two year term.
2. Conference implements the proposed model from 2011.
3. Conference asks the Administration Division to work on matters of funding and other structural and legal aspects and report to Conference 2010.

We ask August Synods and Hui Poari to consider this report and to send any comments/responses to:

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No later than Monday 17th August 2009

These will be collated and the report presented at Conference 2009.

Council of Conference four plus four