

Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa
The Methodist Church of New Zealand
Governance Task Group

7 July 2009

Greetings,

**Ref: Methodist Church of New Zealand – Te Haahi Weteriana O Aotearoa
Governance and Management Review**

Conference 2008, established a work group to review the governance and management of the Methodist Church and asked that the group consult widely – Synod's and Hui Poari, Boards, groups, parishes and individuals. Earlier this year some of you will recall that members of the group attended most Synods, presented a 'workshop' and gathered information on aspects of the church's life. Now we enter a new phase, one in which we invite responses from other interested parties.

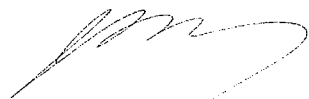
In order to review governance and management it is important to recall why the Methodist Church does things the way it does, the structures which have been inherited, together with the church's view on leadership, ministry, mission and decision making. All inform our organisational life, are grounded in our theology and based on the needs and methods of the day (business practices, academic views, cultural values to name a few).

Attached are two documents - an edited version of one by John Roberts and another by Lindsay Cumberpatch (Appendix I and Appendix II) as well as the Mission Statement of the Church (Appendix III). These are to provide you with a framework and an overview. Neither seeks to be a definitive argument, but each seeks to encourage and inform debate and engagement.

The Task Group has then provided some questions and invites responses to these so that, at Conference 2009, some broad-brushstroke ideas can be presented on how to better govern ourselves as a church. Anyone may respond to the questions, the only thing I ask is that the responses are returned to me by 31st July 2009 candrgibson@xtra.co.nz and that you identify in what capacity you are making the response.

Your time and effort in responding to this paper is very much valued and appreciated.

Kind regards,



p.p. Ron Gibson,
Vice President,
Workgroup Convenor.

Attached:

- Paper by John Roberts
- Paper by Lindsay Cumberpatch
- Mission Statement
- Questionnaire / Discussion paper

Theology for Methodist Church Restructuring

Following an invitation to provide the Methodist Church restructuring task group with a theological underpinning for its work, John Roberts worked with a small group of people to establish some theological principles that could be raised in the form of questions that could be used by the Task Group to assist it to engage in its own theological thinking as it goes about its work.

Those who joined in this exercise came back, with amongst other things, these statements:

- The need for the church to look beyond institutional survival.
- Structures need to be simplified.
- The exercise must be about what it means to be church in the 21st century.
- Governance and management structures must serve the mission of the church.
- The institutional life of the church must resource the development of the spiritual life of the church, and that in turn will resource its mission.

Some theological principles with questions

Beginning with models of church: mostly metaphors

“Simply stated: a model is a metaphor with staying power.”

Sally McFague

Heavy or light – Do we want a church heavy with structure, or one that can travel light because it isn’t burdened with a lot of baggage?

Static or mobile – Do we want a church whose life and structures are fixed in time and place, or do we want a church that’s mobile, and whose structures enable it to keep on the move?

Solid or liquid – Do we want a solid inflexible church, or a liquid and flexible church readily able to adapt to a rapidly changing world? (Pete Ward)

Denominational or ecumenical – Do we want a church that looks only to its own traditions, or one that that is genuinely ecumenical in outlook and seeks the visible unity of the church?

Exclusion or embrace – Do we want a church that demands conformity, or a church that embraces diversity? (Miroslav Volf)

Rank or peer based – Do we want hierarchical leadership with layered management in our church, or a flat horizontal structure that embraces a radical ekklesia of equals? (Jeffrey Nielson and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza)

Board table or round table – Do we want a church structure that is formal, aloof and separated out, or one that is open to all, overcoming patriarchy, offering empowerment, dispensing justice, and providing hospitality? (Letty Russell)

An arrogant or a loving eye – Do we want a church that looks at the world and its people with an arrogant eye (acquisitive, controlling and disempowering); or one that looks with a loving eye (respectful, interactive, empowering, appreciative of the difference and particularity of others). (Sallie McFague)

Task or people centred: Do we want a structure that has people primarily focussed on the tasks that need to be done, or one that is first and foremost people and relationship centred, allowing people to get to know each other well, develop trust, and so to do their tasks well?

Attending to relationships: How can we promote a real sense of collegiality and purpose amongst those who hold significant positions in the structures of the church?

Koinonia: How can we develop a greater sense of koinonia in our church, a real sense of belonging in community across the connexion, with rich and open conversations taking place around the different views of the groupings that make up our church?

Taking transforming mission seriously:

“The church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning.”

Emil Brtunner

Being mindful at all times of the existing Mission Statement of Te Hahi Weteriana o Aotearoa.

God’s mission/Missio Dei : Given that God’s mission and what the church sees as its mission are frequently not one and the same, does our thinking sufficiently embrace God’s revelation in Jesus Christ as a basis for the church’s mission?

Incarnational: How can we promote a sense of mission that is incarnational, that is, being immersed in the world of our communities; not mission to or for others, but mission with and alongside others that is empowering for people?

Context: Will what we propose take the context of Aotearoa New Zealand seriously, reflecting our church’s Tiriti understandings and bicultural commitments.

Justice: Will what we propose advance the cause of social justice in and beyond the church?

Evangelism: Will what we propose embrace gospel good news, and will it promote evangelism that is good news all round?

Liberation: Will what we propose be liberating for the church and its members, and those beyond the church?

Ecologically responsible :Will what we propose respect the need to care for God’s creation act in ecologically responsible ways?

People who are different to us: Will what we propose respect the Imago Dei or divine image reflected in those of different genders, ethnicities, abilities, sexual orientations, and enhance their place in the life of the church and wider society?

Partnerships :Will what we propose reflect a stand-alone church, complete unto itself, or will it embrace partnerships in mission within Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond?

Reviewing proposals in light of the Wesley theological quadrilateral:

“There were four sources of authority which Wesley believed underpinned his whole theology. ... By allowing these four pillars to complement each other, Wesley was showing a way forward to a lively, balanced approach to faith that would help his contemporaries and provide his heirs with useful tools in their search for truth and meaning.”

Barrie Tabraham

Scripture: Does our thinking reflect the best scriptural understandings about what it means to be church?

Tradition :Does our thinking value the tradition of the church built up over the years, especially the Methodist tradition?

Reason: Does our thinking make real sense and is it workable?

Experience: Does our thinking build on a wide experience of what it is to be church, learning from both positive and negative experiences of being church?

Bibliography

Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, David J Bosch

Super, Natural Christians, Sallie McFague

The Making of Methodism, Barrie Tabraham

To Be Methodist is to Be Ecumenical, Methodist Mission and Ecumenical

Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church, Letty M Russell

1995 Selwyn Lectures, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza

Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation, Miroslav Volf

Liquid Church, Pete Ward

The Heart of Methodism in Aotearoa in the 21st Century
Eight Possible Strategic Imperatives for Mission

As the Task Group on Governance and Management reflected on the February / March Synod and Hui Poari responses to its questions about the Church's organisational structure, eight theological principles emerged. We believe these principles could become strategic imperatives to guide our Haahi in its mission into the new century. Our hope would be that they might become visible in every part of our Church's life.

1. *Scripture*

Whilst John Wesley was incredibly widely read and himself an author of numerous books and tracts, he was described as a "man of just one book". For him, the Christian Bible was the "storehouse of meaning", the first element of what we now call the 'Wesley Quadrilateral'. It contains the story of grace – "in Christ God was reconciling the world to Godself"(2Cor. 5:19).

For Wesley, scriptural interpretation was always done within the context of the hermeneutic community, the Church. The other elements of the quadrilateral, namely tradition, reason and experience all informed his understanding of Scripture.

Methodists today, like their founder seek to take Scripture seriously but not necessarily literally.

2. *Connexional*

From its earliest beginnings the Methodist movement was connexional in that representatives of the lay preachers and later Methodist societies shared in an annual conference aimed at regulating the doctrines and disciplines of the movement.

Ever since, Methodism has strenuously sought to avoid congregationalism and maintain a sense of belonging to the wider collective.

3. *Every Member a Minister*

In recent years Te Taha Maori have sought to remind Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa of the New Testament understanding of Christian ministry belonging to the whole 'laos'/people of God, rather than just a chosen and ordained few.

Our baptism and incorporation into the Body of Christ makes each of us ministers of God's grace and truth. The challenge is to discover our unique ministry gifts and then develop and deploy them wherever God has put us – at home, at work, at play.

4. *Social Justice*

The Methodist movement began with an earnest group of Oxford students concerned not just for their own souls but for "social holiness". Class meetings gave opportunities for England's poor to become literate and develop leadership skills. Early Methodists established health clinics, schools, credit unions and helped begin the trade union movement.

Te Haahi Weteriana today is no less committed to working for personal and social transformation - a both and, rather than an either or. Becoming an increasingly inclusive church has been both controversial and painful but is clearly seen as a gospel imperative.

5. *The Warmed Heart*

John Wesley's spoke of his Aldersgate experience as "when he felt his heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone". He discovered or rather was discovered by grace. Wesley and the other early Methodists were often labelled 'enthusiasts' because of their felt experience of God's unconditional love. This was a love that Wesley described in the sermon 'Free Grace' as "free in all and free for all". Charles Wesley's hymns are full of references to a love that moves people to respond not just with worship but with passion and compassion.

6. *Catholic Spirit*

As Jim Stuart suggests in his book 'The John Wesley Code – Finding a Faith that Matters', "a Catholic spirit was simply the outward expression of an inward warmed heart" (p.174). In his famous sermon 'A Catholic Spirit', Wesley said, "while we all cannot think alike, and while we all cannot walk alike, we all can love alike... May we not be one heart, though we are not always of one opinion". He encouraged people to "think and let think".

The Methodist movement has always been at the forefront of the ecumenical movement and attempts at church union and cooperation.

7. *Practical and Expedient*

Jim Stuart also suggests that "through the entire process of developing what Methodists know today as connexionalism, Wesley was guided by the principle of expedience. His operative premise was : in situations where there is a lack of clarity and unanimity about what to do, trust Providence and follow the path of expediency". (p.31). The original break with the Church of England came over the need to ordain Methodist preachers for the American colonies. The new mission field desperately needed resourcing.

Over the years the Methodist Church has been willing and able to diverge from established protocols in response to the changing needs of church or community. The stationing needs of the church are presently forcing some changes in theological education for example. As a smaller church we pride ourselves on 'travelling light'.

8. *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*

The context for our ministry and mission is Aotearoa New Zealand where our founding document is a unique covenant between the British Crown and the tangata whenua, the people of the land. Wesleyan missionaries were, along with their Anglican counterparts, instrumental in ensuring Maori accepted Crown assurances of safeguarding Maori tino rangitiratanga and thus signed the Treaty.

In 1983 Te Haahi Weteriana embraced a bicultural partnership that sought to ensure that Maori and tauwiwi live within the spirit of Te Tiriti.

We would welcome your feedback.

Task Group on Governance & Management
25 June 2009

Mission Statement

Our church's mission in Aotearoa/New Zealand is to reflect and proclaim the transforming love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and declared in the Scriptures.

We are empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve God in the world.

The Treaty of Waitangi is the covenant establishing our national on the basis of a power-sharing partnership and will guide how we undertake mission.

In seeking to carry out our mission we will work according to these principles.

Christian community

To be a worshipping, praying and growing community, sharing and developing our faith and working through its implications in our social context.

Evangelism

To challenge people to commitment to Christ and Christ's way.

Flexibility

To be flexible, creative and open to God's spirit in a changing world and Church, so that the Church is relevant to people's needs. To release energy for mission rather than to absorb energy for maintenance.

Church Unity

To foster networks and relationships with communities of faith having similar goals.

Inclusiveness

To operate as a Church in ways that will enable the diversity of people (e.g. all ages, all cultures, male and female) to participate fully in the whole life of the Church, especially decision-making and worship.

Every member a minister

To encourage each person to develop his/her full potential by accepting and nurturing each other, developing skills and providing resources, challenging and enabling for service in the Church and community.

Cross-cultural awareness

To become aware of, and challenged by, each other's cultures.

Justice

To work for justice for any who are oppressed in Aotearoa New Zealand, keeping in mind the implications of the Treaty of Waitangi. To share resources with the poor and disadvantaged in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond.

Peace

To be peacemakers between people and in the world.

Healing

To listen for hurt and work for healing.

Ecology

To care for creation.

MCNZ GOVERNANCE TASK GROUP DISCUSSION PAPER

Boch, in his study of mission, made this statement “the church is mission”. In other words, mission is not a plan for survival, (Bonhoeffer once observed rather critically that ‘mission is what the church does when it is dying’) nor is it only about bringing individuals into the church, it is the activity of living out and taking the grace of God into the world.

For a community or group to do this in a meaningful way often requires careful thought and consideration and being lead by God, as we put it in Methodism ‘what is the Spirit saying to the church?’

The work group has called such considered action a “Mission Activity”. It is woven into the way we organise our life, review our future and engage with and live in the community. In other words if we cannot say mission is the way we are, then the alternative does not bear considering.

Using the papers enclosed (John’s, Lindsay’s and the Mission Statement) as a guide to your discussion, here are two questions for you – yes only two (2)!

- **How are the core values, as found in the papers, being expressed in your mission activity?**

- **What would assist you, structural or otherwise, to express these values better?**

This response is from (circle / highlight one):

An individual Group	Parish Council	Study Group	Youth
Women’s Fellowship	Choir/Music group	Men’s Group	Committee
Board	Other (describe)		