**Our Future Together**

**UCANZ (Uniting Congregations Aotearoa New Zealand) Report to the 66th Session of GSTHW**

The Anglican Church is involved in 35 of 105 Co-operating Ventures (CVs). This compares with around 100 each for the Methodist and Presbyterian churches. The Anglican Church more than pulls its weight and exercises its stewardship with seriousness and consequential outsized influence. Most of the Anglican presence is found in the Waikato / Taranaki Diocese.

At the beginning of 2023 UCANZ Standing Committee employed Rev. Andrew Doubleday as ‘Ministry Facilitator’. This was a move beyond the previous role of ‘Executive Officer’ - believing that the administrative functions were now mostly being handled by the Waiapu Diocesan Office in Napier. Andrew comes as the immediate Ex-President of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, and has been charged with providing strategic leadership, building relationships across the Partner churches, and resourcing Parishes for ministry and mission.

Toward the end of January just past the UCANZ Standing Committee met for two days in Auckland. We considered our future. We first asked whether we believed we had one. We recognised that we are slowly dying by attrition – with an either apparent or declared reluctance of the partners to enter into any new Cooperating Ventures (CVs). We also recognised that there are those in the partner churches who would favour dissolution of the CVs, and distribution of the resources among the partners. While it would not ultimately be our decision, the possibility of winding up needed to be considered. One cannot give a full-throated ‘yes’ without being willing to seriously consider saying ‘No’.

It became clear that we are committed to the ecumenical project – believing that if the partner churches are to survive in the long run, it will likely be as a body unified in some way, rather than separately. We want more than survival. We want to thrive. And we believe we can. The days of special pleading need to be behind us. While acknowledging and honouring our taonga, we need to make a place for them where we can focus on the call and mission we share in common, rather than each clinging to our taonga as shibboleths that we regard as so distinctly central that they ultimately deprive us of a possible future together.

We acknowledge that demographically CVs represent the oldest age cohort – this was clearly borne out by the findings of the National Church Life survey. We also recognised the level of energy and giftedness present in many CVs - many without paid clergy – yet life-giving, relevant, and connected into their local communities.

There needs to be a wider conversation about the future – our future together. The ecumenical project needs to be re-birthed. We believe that UCANZ can be a resource to the wider church – beyond the confines of our current partner churches.

With this in mind we are in the early stages of planning our Biennial Forum – setting it down for 30 May to 1 June 2025 in Auckland – based at the Onehunga Co-operating Parish. We need to know ASAP if these dates conflict with significant Partner scheduling.

The theme for our forum is **Our Future Together**

National and Regional leaders of the Partner churches need to be in the same room together – by which we mean Bishops, Presidents, Moderators, Assembly and General Secretaries, Synod Superintendents, Executive Officers. We hope you will all be there. This is important. To all of us.

This is an ambitious project – yet if we are to succeed, the dream needs to be big and compelling.

Feedback is appreciated – please send to Rev. Andrew Doubleday, Ministry Facilitator, UCANZ. office@ucanz.org.nz