

**A Document**  
**Future Directions**

**Prepared for the Uniting Parishes Oversight Group (UPOG)**

(The Joint Committee of Oversight for Union Churches and Cooperating Ventures  
established by Presbytery Central and the Lower North Island Methodist Synod)

**For Discussion with**

**UCANZ Union Parishes and Cooperating Ventures**  
**in the Lower North Island**

**and**

**with the outcome being presented to**

**Presbytery Central and the Lower North Island Methodist Synod**

**MAY 2016**

## Introduction

- A** In 2013 Presbytery Central in Partnership with the Lower North Island Methodist Synod established a Joint Committee to oversee the life and work of Union Parishes, Cooperating Ventures, Shared Ministries and Local Ecumenical Projects in the lower part of the North Island.
- B** The Joint Committee is known as UPOG - the Union Parish Oversight Group.
- C** The scope of this committee's activities includes oversight of all the UCANZ parishes in which the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches are involved either in partnership with each other or in partnership with other UCANZ churches.
- D** There are 38 UCANZ family parishes in the Lower North Island.
- E** The Presbyterian Church is involved in 37 of these parishes; The Methodist Church with 32; The Anglican Church with 10; Christian Churches with 4; and the Congregational Church with 1. The Presbyterian and Methodist churches are involved together with 24 of these parishes.
- (By comparison The Methodist church is involved in 109 parishes New Zealand wide, The Presbyterian church in 107, the Anglican Church in 38, Christian Churches (originally the Associated Churches of Christ) in 9 and The Congregational Union in 2). i.e. 34% of the UCANZ Presbyterian family are in Presbytery Central and just over 29% of the Methodist UCANZ family are in the Lower North island Synod area)
- F** UPOG works with the Wellington Ecumenical Forum and the Hawkes Bay - Gisborne Ecumenical Forum.
- G** UPOG through its chair reports and makes recommendations when necessary to the regular meetings of the Coordinating Team (CT) of Presbytery Central.
- H** UPOG will also, from the second half of 2016, provide a report to the Standing Committee of UCANZ .
- I** UPOG membership is drawn from Taranaki, Hawkes Bay - Gisborne, Manawatu - Whanganui, the Wairarapa, and Wellington. The three Co-Superintendents of the LNIMS are members of UPOG and the Coordinating Team of Presbytery Central is represented on UPOG by a liaison person.
- J** UPOG members will be seeking to arrange visits to Parish Councils and Parishes to learn about parishes in their context and also to affirm and encourage parishes in their life and witness as Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand. UPOG members thought that it would be helpful to circulate parishes with our understanding of what can be achieved today in the life of our UCANZ family. The committee members felt that if we could summarise what is really important about the parishes and anticipate some of the questions we might be asked on the visits then we would hopefully promote useful discussions - hence the preparation of this discussion document.
- K** This version of the document, **May 8, 2016**, replaces earlier drafts.

## THE VISION

- 1 The UCANZ Guide to *Procedures* sets out the **vision statement** that defines the identity of all the parishes in our UCANZ family.

The statement 1.1.1 in the *Procedures* reads as follows:

**The Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand is a continuing journey of God's people seeking to reflect the essential unity of Christ's Church.**

As a result **This *community of Partner Churches and Cooperating Ventures* is discovering and living out what it means to be a *Missional Church of Christ in today's world*.**

- 1.1 *This mission statement therefore defines what it means for Union Parishes and Cooperating Ventures to be a union parish or a cooperating venture in the UCANZ family and takes precedence over any other mission statement a UCANZ parish may have. (Procedures 3.2.4)*
- 1.2 Union Parishes and CVs thus dance to a different tune from any of the parishes in any of the partner churches and this was the intention that the leaders of the Partner Churches had for these parishes particularly since the 1960s and early 1970s.
- 2 The Mission statement goes on to state that **Cooperating Ventures are one ecumenical expression of the Partner Churches and reflects a model of partnership. (1.1.2)**
  - 2.1 So this means that Union Parishes and Cooperating Ventures are a unique and special expression of what it could mean to be church in any part of today's New Zealand as if the Five Churches had been able to unite together as they had planned.
  - 2.2 What the Five Partners could not do together, this organisation (UCANZ and its predecessors) that they established, and the parishes belonging to UCANZ that they have brought together over time and that they continue to support, should provide, in local situations, this model of partnership.
  - 2.3 These parishes are not meant to be copies of any of the parishes found in any of the partner churches but have been given permission to, and have been encouraged to, and are expected to, pave a different pathway as parishes/churches in the New Zealand of today. They were given the opportunity in doing this to leave behind if they saw fit what they might regard as the 'colonial' baggage carried by the Partner Churches.
  - 2.4 The subsequent emergence of **models of ecumenical unity and of missional journeys** was expected to be an inspiration to the Partner Churches so that they in turn might be encouraged to work together.
  - 2.5 The 'missional journey' is a phrase that sums up the outward witness of these congregations into their local communities and the ways in which they make known the Good News for all found and proclaimed in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This

ecumenical journey has a particular relevance for the Partner Churches as the Procedures note:

**3 Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand continues to encourage the Five Partner Churches to seek wherever possible to work together to do those things that do not need to be done apart. (1.1.3)**

**3.1** In other words, the success story of the Union Parish and the Cooperating Venture was meant to encourage the Partners to reconsider their earlier decision not to join each other in establishing the Uniting Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. Union Parishes and Cooperating Ventures were to show the Five Partners how this unity could be achieved and to work together in their name to form such a Uniting Church.<sup>i</sup>

**4 Some Notes from History** (a full account is appended to this document)

**4.1** The **Plan for Union** had been drafted in 1960 but was then reworked to include the Anglican Church who asked to join the negotiations. The revised format was published in 1971 and keenly approved by parishes and the Partners in 1972.

To provide the theological glue to make this journey possible the *Five Partner Churches* agreed on the wording of one of the most important statements of Faith produced in New Zealand.

**4.2** It was entitled **The Faith We Affirm Together** and was produced originally in 1965 and then redrafted to include the Anglican contributions and is found in its 1994 version on page 34 and following in the **Procedures**. This document sets out a missional theology (or the theological rationale) for working together and moved beyond, what at that time, each of the Five held as their own founding documents. What made history in the preparation of this document was that the Five Churches *together negotiated and approved the wording at the highest levels*.

**4.3** But then the plans to create a United church came to an end. In place of a Uniting Church the Partners agreed that the union parishes that had formed in anticipation of the Union would carry the vision forward and live out this vision in their life and work.

**4.4** At that time the partners agreed that the **Union parishes** (The union of Methodist and Presbyterian parishes) and **Cooperating Ventures**, (the coming together of Uniting parishes with Anglican participation), could continue to be joined by parishes of the Five Partners with the hope that they together might evolve into the Uniting Church.

**4.5** In the meantime the Partners agreed on a structure to enable this to happen.

**4.6** So the next step that followed was to ensure that the Union Parishes and the Cooperating Ventures were able to realise this plan and were never tempted into losing sight of the vision that defined who they are.

## THE STRUCTURE

- 5 It was accepted that *all Partners have as their primary responsibility the task of supporting the local church [the Union parish and the CV] in its commitment to working together in life and mission. (Procedures, page 12)*
- 5.1 *The work of UCANZ is funded by grants from the Five Partner Churches (Procedures 8.1.2) and in connection with this funding it was agreed that an office be established and the resulting organisation serviced by an Executive Officer and an Administrative Assistant with responsibilities set out by the Partners (Procedures 8.4 and 8.5)*
- 5.2 The Five churches agreed to allow any of their clergy, who wished, to serve in the new parishes. (See *Procedures Chapter 4 and 9.3.3 Guidelines for Ministry Appointments*). Details are provided in this chapter of processes to be followed in matters relating to Ministry Appointments (4.1), Reviews (4.5; 4.6), Resignation and Termination of Ministry (4.7), Church Discipline (*Procedures 4.8*).
- Note (1) that the minister in an appointment *has a primary responsibility to their appointing church—normally the coordinating partner* and (2) that there is no UCANZ procedure in dealing with the termination of a ministry apart from insisting on the Partners led by the Coordinating Partner, discussing the matter thoroughly, and on genuinely seeking to reach a common mind on the outcome (4.4; 4.6; 4.7 4.8). In practice the Executive Officer sits on such discussions to offer advice as these matters are more complex today than was the case when the relationship between the UCANZ parishes and the Partner churches was defined at the time the Procedures were drawn up.
- 5.3 The Partners agreed that they would take turns in encouraging the Union Parishes and Cooperating Ventures to realise the collective aim of the Five, in establishing these parishes, and this eventually led to the roles of **coordinating and participating partner** being established (See *Procedures 2.1 and 2.2 and 9.3.6 pages 51-54*)
- 5.4 This role, of **coordinating and participating partner**, had the expressed purpose of facilitating and encouraging each of these parishes to realise their own distinctive ecumenical journey of faith, and to support their living out of this alternate missional dream in the way each with God's help chose. (*Procedures Chapter 2 particularly 2.1 and 2.1.1 and 9.3.6 and 9.3.7*)
- 5.5 Each Partner holds the position of Coordinating Partner on behalf of the other Partner(s) for a stated period (usually five years) so that no one Partner can assume, by default, the role of primary influence over the development of the parish and come (accidentally) to regard the parish as an extension of its own denomination. (*Procedures 2.1.3; 9.3.6 and 9.3.7*).
- 5.6 **A key activity and responsibility** of the Coordinating Partner is to arrange a meeting of the Partner Churches and the local church *at least once a year in a suitable manner.*(*Procedures 2.1.1*) This ensures that the partners are in regular contact with the

local church and kept fully aware of the mission of the local church and vice versa.(See *Procedures* 9.3.6, page 52 under Partnership, second point). Note also Coordinating Partners are required to appoint at least a specific person to be responsible for all Coordinating Partner duties in the local parish (*Procedures*, page 52 Partnership, point one )

- 5.7 *The Coordinating Partner responsibility is to discuss with the other partners and the local parish how the parish under their watch can continue to grow the founding vision and then to implement this agreement. This role requires that genuine consultation be continually held amongst all partners and the local church before any decisions are made.* (*Procedures* 2.1.1)
- 5.8 This way of nurturing and developing the parishes ensured that the vision (*Procedures* 1.1.1) remained the goal at parish level and would be regularly renewed and encouraged and that the parishes would continue to be empowered by the Partners to develop this vision in new and fresh ways.
- 5.9 To enable this to happen the Union parish and Cooperating Venture is **to be regarded by the Partner Church Courts as one of their own** in the way they are treated and accepted and encouraged. (*Procedures* 3.3)
- 5.10 Also for this reason the **Procedures for Cooperating Ventures** (and not the rule book of any of the Partners) became the primary document which sets out how this vision is to be pursued at all levels in this family of churches. (*Procedures* 1.5.1)
- 5.11 When a situation arises which is not discussed in the *Procedures* parishes were encouraged to contact the Executive Officer at the UCANZ office and seek advice.
- 5.12 When appointments to *vacancies in parishes* are made the *Procedures* of the Partner church concerned must be followed and these are set out in that Partner Church's Regulations. (*Procedures* chapter 4) (See also *Procedures* 9.3.3)
- 5.13 **Regional Forums** were established (given various titles over the years) to bring the local UCANZ parishes together to encourage each other and to enable each other resolve issues and deal with problems as they arise, and to organise Reviews. (*Procedures* 1.3.6.3)
- 5.14 **The Forum** was established meeting at present bi-annually with functions set out in the *Procedures* (see 8.2) and a **Standing Committee** works with the Executive Officer and the local churches to promote partnership and encourage opportunities for the churches to work together. (*Procedures* 8.3).
- 5.15 **Parish and Ministry Reviews** are important tools for the Partners in consultation with each other and with the local church to enable them to ensure that the parish and minister are on course to realise a further stage in their ecumenical and missiological journey as a uniting parish. Such reviews can be organised and conducted by the Regional Forums in consultation with the UCANZ office and with the Partner churches concerned. (*Procedures* 1.3.6.3; 2.1.8; 2.1.12)
- 5.16 The local UCANZ parishes in the Lower North Island relate to **UPOG** as the Joint Committee of Oversight established by the Methodist Synod and Presbytery Central to act on their behalf in this area.

- 5.17 UPOG** is the lower North Island **Regional Forum** as defined in the *Procedures* 1.3.6.3 and 2.3 for all the Union parishes and Cvs in the area (and see *E* and *F* above).
- 5.18 UPOG** provides a forum for the Methodist Synod and Presbytery Central to meet to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. It delegates responsibilities to the Wellington Ecumenical Forum and reports to Synod and Presbytery.
- 5.19 UPOG** arranges, reviews and consultations with parishes and oversees the settlement of vacancies in consultation with local parishes and the partner churches and ensures that the Synod and Presbytery receive regular reports of their activities.
- 5.20 UPOG** refers to the Coordinating Team of Presbytery through the Executive Officer all matters requiring the attention of Presbytery and where it is applicable seeks the approval of its decisions from both Synod and Presbytery

## MINISTRY

### 6 Special Considerations

- 6.1** The Five Partners had not been able to formalise the agreement to accept each other's ordination to the ministry of word and sacrament when the progress towards the formation of the uniting church failed, though they had agreed to this in principle and were poised to do so. (See the 1998 *Statement of Accord contained in the Act of Commitment* and reaffirmed in 1980 and at various points in the years following. (*Procedures* 9.1.2)).
- 6.2** Each participating church when appointing one of its ministers to ministry in the UCANZ family of churches uses its own denominational format for these occasions (*Procedures* 1.3.8)
- 6.3** Though there is mutual recognition of ministry but not yet total reconciliation of ministry (*Procedures* 1.3.8) a phrase was added to the *Letter of Appointment* of clergy asking them **to respect the doctrine and practice of all the participating churches.** (*Procedures* 9.2.4 )
- 6.4** In providing for this the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian form of Holy Communion was woven into and provided for in the Sunday service especially in Cooperating Ventures where the Anglican church is a partner.
- 6.5** The Methodist and Presbyterian churches have recognised each other's ordination to ministry and accept each other's clergy as equals so have total reconciliation of ministry. As a result the differences in the doctrine and practice of Holy Communion have, for them, been resolved in the union parishes they share.
- 6.6** However the addition of this one sentence (6.3 above) has made it possible for the Anglican doctrine and practice of the Eucharist to be incorporated without difficulty into the Sunday liturgy of all Cooperating Ventures and Local Ecumenical Projects.

- 6.7 Therefore, Parish clergy have the responsibility to respect the differences that remain and to ensure that the sacrament is available in whatever forms meet the pastoral needs of the members of their congregations (*Procedures* 1.3.8 and on page 42)
- 6.8 However, and not surprisingly, in the course of time many Union Parishes and Cooperating Ventures have found new ways of celebrating Holy Communion that meets the needs of its members: an ecumenical development that the Five Partners might well have originally expected to happen.
- 7 **A Code of Ethics** (*Procedures* 9.2.5 ) was also drawn up by the Partners to reflect the diversity of pastoral care and need required in the changing social situations of New Zealand realising at the same time that how these principles might be applied in a given situation may be varied (see for example clause 4 on the *dignity and worth of each person* and clause 5 on respect for *people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds*).

## 8 Special Issues

- 8.1 **Buildings/Property.** (*Procedures* 3.5) From the beginning of their negotiations the Five Partners agreed that when a Union Parish or a Cooperating Venture ( and this has been extended to Local Ecumenical Projects, LEP's) was formed, the buildings required by the new parish would be transferred not by title but with an agreement to use and to maintain until they were no longer required. (*Procedures* 9.2 pages 39-40)
- 8.2 The proportion of the original assets held by each Partner church - the **capital ratio** - was to be determined for and by each local church at the outset and brought up to date when changes occurred. The ratio must be registered and changes reported to UCANZ and to the particular Church Property Trustee concerned when such changes occur. A number of parishes did not register the original ratio because they had expected the uniting church to be launched soon after they had been formed but now these parishes need to rectify this as a matter of urgency.
- 8.3 In the course of time UPs and CVs have also discovered that property entails responding to the conditions the particular Property Trustee has imposed on all its property holders especially in the wake of earthquake risks and sometimes this has involved some parishes in dealing with more than one Property Trustee. This matter should not be overlooked
- 8.4 The UCANZ office has assumed an important role in helping its parishes resolve difficulties with buildings and Property matters (including all financial matters (*Procedures* 3.4) and should be consulted at all times
- 9 **An Annual Meeting between Parish and Partner churches.** To ensure that a good level of knowledge and understanding is maintained between the Partner churches and the respective Union parish or Cooperating Venture (or LEP) a meeting between the two should be planned and take place **at least once a year** (*Procedures* 2.1.1) and such a meeting **is required before any major decisions are made by the parish.** This requirement will be taken up afresh in the Lower North Island from the beginning of 2016

**10 Finance.** Of particular concern to all parishes in the UCANZ family is the Partner Support Fund (*Procedures 3.4.3*) and how this is maintained and the Regional Court Levies (*Procedures 3.4.4*) and how these are set and maintained (*Procedures 9.3.2*)

**10.1** Currently the UCANZ Standing Committee, in response to a resolution passed at the 2015 Forum, has begun the process of discussing these matters with the Partner churches at governance level.

## **11 A Caveat**

**11.1** The local churches, however, *are not a legal entity in themselves and cannot enter into a formal lease or assume corporate status. They are part of the wider churches to which they affiliate and cannot act independently or contrary to the laws of the Partner Churches* (*Procedures 1.5.3 and 1.5.4 and also all of 3 and in particular 3.7*).

**11.2** *But the Procedures* set out how the vision statement (1.1.1; 1.1.2; 1.1.3) is to be lived out in the life of the local church within the framework the Partners had established and within the limitations of this framework.

## **12 Renewing the Vision**

**12.1** Many in Uniting Congregations have sought the opportunity over the years to take the next step and develop a New Zealand Uniting Church that reflects New Zealand's multi - cultural and social values; to develop new and fresh patterns of worship; to develop theologies that resonate with our South Asia and South Pacific environments and histories; and to be known as distinctive worshipping communities in their local situations - as a continuing response to the challenge of living out the vision of the Five Partners.

**12.2** But there are major hurdles (as this document points out) in what might constitute these hurdles and also no clear consensus of what the next step or steps might be that could be taken to free up the UCANZ churches so that they can develop what it could mean for each to be empowered to be a missional local church of Jesus Christ in today's world. The partner churches of today often have ideas about these matters but their missional objective is sometimes not the plan of the local UCANZ church because it does not necessarily incorporate as its focus the core task of the local UCANZ church which is to witness to *(to reflect) the essential unity of Christ's Church*. As a result the status quo has continued with parishes deciding, in their own individual ways, how they will journey with the founding vision as their guide and relate it to their own situation often hampered by the existing structures; and they signal this by dropping out of as much contact with their partner churches as they can get away with.

**12.3** To put this point a little differently: coordinating partners can often impose their denominational expectations and standards on a local UCANZ church without standing back and considering what they could do to ensure that this local church can be empowered to achieve its own UCANZ objectives - and of course the latter might well be different from that of the coordinating partner and indeed of the participating partner(s). Something that the Five founding Churches would be aware

could well happen over time. According to the Procedures, however, the local UCANZ church must, where there are differences, comply with the views, expectations, and standards of all their Partner Church - which can from time to time be very difficult.

## **A Potted History of the Background to Union Parishes and Cooperating Ventures**

- i** 1940-1982 were the years in which the most intensive efforts were made in New Zealand to establish a Uniting church and this was the period in which all the Five present Partners of UCANZ were involved in detailed discussions with each other. (See *Procedures: Milestones of a Journey 9.1.4*)
- ii** Note however, that the invitation to consider a Uniting church was issued by Presbyterians to the Congregational Union and the Methodist Church first in 1902-114 years ago. Discussions were discontinued in 1904 and resumed again by the three churches in 1940. In 1943 the first Union Parish at Raglan was established with Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist partners uniting. Five years later a vote in Presbyterian and Methodist churches approved union discussions. Time was ripe for such discussions. Two world wars and an economic depression had brought all the churches close together. Overseas Uniting churches were emerging with the lead coming from South India and then North India. In 1948 the World Council of Churches had been founded largely out of the missionary movement of the previous one hundred years. But from 1925 onwards united churches were formed in most western countries as Christians came together out of historic denominations. In New Zealand in 1950 the Congregational Union, the Presbyterian church, the Methodist Church and the Associated Churches of Christ were in consultation with each other over a plan for Union. The Anglican church sensing the opportunities also set up a commission to consider the options and advantages in uniting.
- iii** Was God calling the Protestant Churches of New Zealand to move forward together? It seemed so! These were the post war years of optimism and expansion and New Zealand was becoming a wealthy country as it recovered from war. The churches shared this optimism and excitement and decided to share their faith and their resources in creating a Uniting Church for New Zealanders and to leave their colonial history behind. There was much encouragement from the experience of sister churches overseas.
- iv** In 1956 a vote on the principle of church union embracing all five churches was enthusiastically agreed and over the next ten years ground breaking work on the task of unifying five churches was undertaken aimed at creating a united church-with Bishops acceptable to all the parties was some achievement - although it did not please everyone particularly Anglicans and Presbyterians but for different reasons. Anglicans, because of the possible loss of the historic episcopate and the establishment image Anglicans held due to their role in the very earliest years of the settlement of New Zealand. And Presbyterians because of their long history of opposition to the office of Bishop and their own long held views of being the alternate established church especially in the bottom half of the country. But it

seemed this past would be put behind as the five went forward in faith exploring the possibilities.

- v A Solemn Act of Commitment was entered into by all Five churches in a service held in St Paul's Cathedral in Wellington in 1967. It was held in the midst of unprecedented debates about religion, and in the presence of a large congregation, Government and State dignitaries and Church leaders from overseas. This service represented a milestone achievement in negotiations. High hopes were generated that a united episcopal church would soon be formed with a definition of the episcopate that Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and the Associated Church of Christ could live with. The Five then took further steps towards creating the structure for this united church.
- vi In 1976 the Anglican Church in voting on the plan failed to secure the required unanimous vote in favour in the House of Bishops: one Bishop voted against. At all other levels, in the house of clergy, and in the house of laity, there had been a yes vote in the Anglican Church. In light of this decision the Anglican church withdrew from the negotiations. There was huge dismay at the decision. A uniting church had been so close, with agreement at the negotiating level and in the voting in four of the churches-if not the five- yet it had failed at the final hurdle. In spite of this decision the General Synod agreed to continue to support the uniting church movement at parish and regional level: at least that was a plus!
- vii The remaining Four Partners continued to carry the plan forward and rewrote the plan for union without Bishops. There were favourable votes on the way but when the shape of the final plan was put to the vote at parish level, the Presbyterian Church, in 1982, failed to secure a sufficient margin allowing it to continue to the consummation of the plan. The yes vote was 53% and the no vote 47%. The Assembly that year faced a very strong movement against union and the ecumenical movement and its theology, led by Evangelical and traditional Presbyterian Ministers and elders who did not wish to lose the values and the traditions of the church. If the slight majority wished to proceed then the church would split, the pro-union ecumenical group was told. With the prospect of a relatively strong Presbyterian church continuing alongside a broad ecumenically minded and more liberal Uniting Church and with the prospect of acrimonious legal upheavals in sorting out property and financial matters to follow, the Assembly voted to inform its close partner in the negotiations of eighty years, the Methodist Conference, that it too was unable to proceed with the plan for Union. This decision was greeted with dismay once again and some anger. Assembly had also to inform the Associated Churches of Christ and its close ally the Congregational Union: though many parishes of the latter had already joined the Presbyterian Church in 1970. The Associated Churches of Christ were already sharing theological training with Presbyterians in Dunedin and provided a staff member and were keen to remain in touch. But with this decision made the eighty year journey towards forming a Uniting Church - a New Zealand church for New Zealanders - came to an end.
- viii There were very deep feelings on all sides after the decision was taken and even more so in the Methodist Conference. The Methodist Church always strongly in favour of uniting throughout the eighty years had, in anticipating the formation of a uniting church, committed itself to forming union parishes wherever possible. A large percentage of its membership was in such parishes and would remain so. But the Methodist church was left high and dry by the Presbyterian decision, with a deep cost to its own identity being borne to this day by Conference.

ix Like the Anglican Church in 1976 the Presbyterian Assembly gave a similar commitment to the other churches that it would continue to support Union Parishes and Cooperating Ventures at parish level: an appreciable number of its membership were also in union parishes with Methodists and in a few cases with Anglicans.

X There was anger and bitterness in many of these parishes at that time and for some decades following, over the process that had been followed and in particular over the undertakings and the promises the churches and their leaders had solemnly given each other that in the end had counted for nothing. Nevertheless the Five kept their word over the commitments they made to support the union church movement at local level. But they always stopped short of encouraging these parishes to take the next step of forming and becoming the Uniting Church on their behalf – a dream that had so sadly eluded them would also elude the fledging movement they created.

xi Originally the membership of these uniting congregations had been drawn from congregations of the partner churches and some were a blend of Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational and Associated Churches of Christ and had ministers who reflected some strand of these blends. It was easy for the Partners to support and encourage these parishes to continue the ecumenical journey: they could treat them as responsible parents would treat their own children. But by the middle of the 1990s the uniting parishes and cooperating ventures had grown into adult communities and had blended into braided streams. In many cases people were attracted to this uniting church model and embraced its ideals from other church backgrounds - or from none at all. Most *were no longer uniting but had become united Church communities* with often little trace of their Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational or Associated churches of Christ backgrounds. Rather than determine the direction of these united congregations the Five Partners had become (accidentally) sponsors of new style emerging congregations that were making their own way forward.

xii They had become by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century just the kind of local New Zealand church the Partner Churches had entertained coming into existence in the heyday of the united church movement : but the way the Partners continued to relate to them was perhaps a little out-of-date. On the other hand the original vision has become, if anything, even more important than yesterday in defining their identity going forward. The blocks to that journey needed removing by the Partners so that the UCANZ family of churches could be recognised by their 'parents' as equal companions in the search to find relevant ways of proclaiming and living out the Gospel in a multi-cultural, secular country that is increasingly uninterested if not disinterested in what the churches and their leaders have to say. But theologies had changed and so had the social issues and faced with new challenges to their own identities the original Five Partner Churches, except for the Methodist church who had put so much of its people resources into the the UCANZ family of churches, began to lose sight of the vision of the UCANZ movement: which brings the story to where we are today.

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them. (For the Presbyterian side of the story see *Presbyterians in Aotearoa 1840-1990* (1990) )