

Overture from Auckland Presbytery

Re: Denominational Name Change

The Presbytery of Auckland respectfully overtures Synod 2008 as follows:

To change our denomination's name to "Reformed Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand".

Grounds

1. This is an accurate description of our churches both historically and in terms of our character. Historically our confessions and traditions are rooted in the reformation and identify us with the churches that were reformed in the tradition and practices of Geneva. Our character, in terms of ecclesiastical structure and practices are 'presbyterian' in the sense of being ruled by elders (presbuteroi).
2. In the English speaking world the reformed faith was better known as 'presbyterian' rather than 'reformed' – a term favoured in the continental tradition. Here in New Zealand, in spite of our denomination's existence for over half a century, the name 'reformed' is not well understood by outsiders and remains associated with 'foreign' churches.
3. Titles *are* important in that they serve to identify. A misleading or misunderstood name easily becomes a barrier to communication. From the very beginning our denomination has wanted to be a church that is a church of New Zealanders open to and wanting to make its appeal to *all* New Zealanders. Our name, in spite of its rich heritage and potential explanatory power, has remained a hindrance. It is almost inevitably associated with the Dutch or South African traditions, often with negative connotations. To this day our churches continue to need to begin a description of who we are and what we believe and do in a negative sense by pointing out that we are *not* Dutch or South African, etc.
4. The experience at Bucklands Beach, the one congregation that has used this name, has shown that the more familiar name 'Presbyterian' has been especially helpful in enabling them to introduce the church to Korean, Chinese and even Indian immigrants. For them the name 'Presbyterian' rather than 'Reformed' is known and often trusted. By pointing to the name 'Reformed' it becomes possible to highlight the difference between the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand/Aotearoa and our denomination.

Respectfully submitted,

Pieter van der Wel
Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Auckland