

## **Report of the National Diaconate Committee**

### **1. The Committee**

With this report, the Auckland-based committee completes a third term of service to the denomination. Its members are humbled in being entrusted with its task, are awestruck at God's abounding mercies, and encouraged at the generosity shown by the denomination's membership.

The committee lost from its membership after only a short time, C van Tonder because of poor health but otherwise continued with the appointments of Synod 2005 viz. C Larsen, D J van Garderen, J Ploeg, G Posthuma and A Ruijne. D.Petchell has recently returned to the committee, attending his first meeting on 21 June 2008.

Members are continually in touch, updated and sharing through the medium of email and phone but plan meetings quarterly. There have been 9 meetings (until Feb 2008) in the inter-synodical period.

### **2. Ongoing Projects**

#### **a. C.A.R.E.**

Our support for the C.A.R.E. project (Centre for AIDS Rehabilitation and Education) began in 2001, at the invitation of our Australian counterpart, WD&RW (and the TEAR Fund). In 2004 NDC undertook to support the work with INR360,000.00 p.a. which equates to approx. NZ\$12,000.00 p.a.. Until last Synod, NDC had relied solely on field or other organisations for reports on the work to which we contribute. Last Synod allowed limited expense for field visitation and on-site evaluation. This enabled a first-time visit to the CARE work in India which now gives to us a much more intimate awareness of the people, circumstances and the nature of the work.

In December 2006, NDC committee member, the Rev Dirk van Garderen was able to travel to India (Tamil Nadu) where he could observe this work and meet with the key people involved. He visited the work in Dharampouri, Madurai, Tutincorin and Chennai and met extensively with Paulus Samuel and his wife Rosie as well as with Dr Chanthi and her assistant, Mrs Arthi in Chennai. The visit was extensively reported in a series of 5 articles that appeared in *Faith in Focus* in 2007 (see below).

As reported, our New Zealand contributions fund the work in *Chennai*. On his return from India, the Rev van Garderen reported that he was able to examine the financial as well as clinical records of CARE in Madurai and in Chennai. The records show that our funds are channelled to Chennai via the head office in Madurai and that 100% of our funding ends up at its destination. Furthermore, the nature of the work in Chennai is based completely on a Christ-centred, reformed approach to diaconal ministry and was especially impressive as an undertaking that combines word and deed. The NDC remains convinced that, as a long-term, ongoing project, this work deserves our continued prayer and enthusiastic support.

( Faith in Focus 2007 series by Rev D J van Gardereen

1. "Face to face with C.A.R.E. (India)" March vol 34/2 pp23,24
2. "To care through 'CARE'" April vol 34/3 pp23,25
3. "C.A.R.E." May vol 34/4 pp15-17
4. "New Zealand's contribution to C.A.R.E. India:" June vol 34/5 pp19,20
5. "A day at the C.A.R.E. Clinic at Chennai" July vol 34/6 pp25-27 )

#### **b. Henry Murray School for the Deaf**

Support for the School, begun in 2003, has continued through this inter-synodical period. The yearly RCNZ contribution has settled to NZ\$15,000 targeted at poor families/carers to enable the payment of school fees and board at this School. The fund is administered by the school under the supervision of the Reformed Church of Zimbabwe.

NDC exercises extreme caution in remitting these funds as the political situation continues to be

extremely unstable. Inflation runsg at a reported 1,000,000% (!) and NDC is extremely careful to avoid revenue getting into wrong hands. However, all these difficulties aside, the NDC remains convinced that the needs in this country are enormous. Our contributions are vital. At the time of closing our books for this report, the negotiations for remittance of the 2008 support had not been concluded (conclusion was reached a few days later). The annual NDC Christmas appeal is the revenue source for this support. The generosity of our membership is extremely gratifying.

The NZ Cadet and Calvinette organisation has adopted the School for its 2007/2008 mission project and support. The result of their 2007 efforts, which raised \$7,803.70, was received after 31 March 2008 and is consequently not included in the financial report.

### **c. TLM (The Leprosy Mission)**

For many years now the NDC (perhaps since inception) has supported this work with a modest contribution which now is \$1,000 each year. In 2007, a further \$1,000 was given to assist with the relief for flood victims in North East India. This money is employed in the rehabilitation of leprosy sufferers at the hospital in Muzaffarpur, India, which is solely supported by NZ TLM.

TLM have provided NDC with a complimentary and very highly commended DVD on the exceptional ministry of the Doctors Paul and Margaret Brand. Congregations are invited to borrow this DVD.

## **3. One-off Projects**

### **a. New Guinea supplies**

In February 2005 Wally and Jeanette Hagoort contacted your Committee. requesting help with shipping some goods from the Foxton and Hamilton congregations needed in PNG. Contact was made with the RNZAF to see if they could help. Initially the answer was no, but in October they made contact to say that there was some space available for Aid Goods on a flight to Port Moresby on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2005. Twenty-three cartons of aid goods were able to go on the flight to PNG. The goods were gratefully received by the Hagoorts.

### **b. Frericks – Pakistan**

This Wanganui couple had spent time in Pakistan at the Sahiwal Christian Hospital associated with the ARP (Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America) and administered by their mission board (World Witness of which the Rev Frank van Dalen is the director). They saw an opportunity to train and advance the skills of local people to enable them to make a greater contribution to their society. After further discussion with World Witness and NDC, they returned to Pakistan, where they established a small computer training centre on hospital premises. WW contributed US\$5,000 and invited NDC to support the venture with \$5,250.

### **c. Solomon Islands - Hospital Beds**

In May 2007 NDC was made aware of a dozen decommissioned hospital beds. Was there use for them? Contact with Kevin Rietveld (CRCA) in the Solomons determined that there was. A hospital on one of the islands had recently sustained cyclone damage and needed to replace their beds. NDC requested the Wellington Deacons to organise an aid project to the Solomon Islands. Because of the bulk the RNZAF could not help. Ed Leenders from the Silverstream congregation was asked to organise a 20ft container and its shipping and together with Jonathan Marinus to organise the collection and packing of the beds and suitable aid goods. Ten tonnes of supplies and equipment was shipped (underwritten by NDC funds). It arrived in September 2007. The consignment was gratefully received and distributed through SWIM.

### **d. Pakistani Doctor**

RCNZ members, doing occasional medical work with the ARP/World Witness Sahiwal Hospital in

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Pakistan, have been planning for a Pakistani Christian doctor to come to NZ for a brief term of further training. NDC has committed to providing \$4,000 to this endeavour when it is realised.

## **4. Disaster Relief**

### **a. Tsunami - Indian Ocean**

The Synod 2005 NDC Report told of our sending \$10,000 to the Damansara Reformed Baptist Church of the Rev Boon-Sing Poh for deployment in both Indonesia and Sri Lanka. A further \$3,230 was forwarded in November 2005 in support of this same ministry of mercy by the church of the Lord Jesus.

### **b. Hurricane Katrina - USA**

In the latter part of 2005 Katrina struck the Southern State of Louisiana in the USA causing massive flooding. \$5,100 committed to NDC was forwarded to the OPC Church in the region. Its minister was the Rev Jack Sawyer who, with his congregation, was able to reach out a helping hand to families that had fallen prey to the hurricane.

### **c. Earthquake - Pakistan**

Pakistan sustained a severe quake in 2006. In response RCNZ diaconates gathered some \$16,060. Various options for the distribution of these funds were explored. On advice from the Rev Frank van Dalen, we eventually sent them to the Bach Christian Hospital (run by TEAM - 'The Evangelical Alliance Mission'). This hospital is located near the devastated region. The hospital was introducing a new service, the production and fitting of prosthetics, in this case that was artificial limbs for quake victims. Faith in Focus had photos of the first such production and the first patient to be fitted with her new leg. Our funds were applied to that new and important venture in rehabilitation, but as an evidence of divine compassion reflected in Christian concern.

### **d. Iraq Presbyterian Church of Baghdad**

A distress call letter received early July 2007 was forwarded to the diaconates. The RCNZ constituency response was \$13,626 entrusted to NDC. This was forwarded via MERF – 'Middle East Reformed Fellowship' in two tranches: \$5,000 on 5 July 2007 and \$8,626 on 1 October 2007. In 2007 MERF, from its diaconal fund, was able to provide US\$60,000 support for the Presbyterian Church of Iraq of which US\$33,500 went to the PC Baghdad. Mr Yousif Al-Saka, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Churches in Iraq reported appreciatively that:

- US\$10,000. diaconal aid went to the poor to overcome sickness, poverty, and hunger;
- US\$8,000. to support and cover expenses of the medical centre in the church complex where medical examinations and medications are offered freely especially for young children and elderly;
- US\$5,500. for purchase and distribution of blankets and heating stoves for immigrants, especially widows and orphans;
- US\$10,000, for food distribution (the essentials, milk, sugar, food-oil, cheese, rice).

The Assyrian Presbyterian Church was closed by terrorism, the survivors joining the Baghdad Arabic Presbyterian Church which now has about 180 families. Of these, 30 have been forced from their homes and 130 families are needy. Mr Al-Saka wrote of the diaconal aid: "May the Lord bless your service for the glory of His name and spreading His peace to every one. Pray for Iraq. Thanks."

### **e. Uganda Flood**

Latze 2007 rains drenched part of the African continent North of Uganda causing flooding. In response to a tentative call from the Rev John Rogers, teaching at that time in a theological school in Uganda, we promised to respond to a call on NDC funds. In time a modest request for \$1,000 was

met to enable OPUM, the Orthodox Presbyterian Ugandan Mission, to assist victims of the floods.

## **5. Operational Matters**

As reported to last Synod NDC in the first instance attempts to work through Reformed Churches although that is not always possible.

Appeals at Christmas and mid-year are promoted for designated purposes and are primarily allocated to the two large ongoing projects, C.A.R.E. and Henry Murray School for the deaf. Disaster relief usually requires a speedy response. NDC has been able to respond quickly to disaster relief by using reserves of unallocated or general funds which are subsequently reimbursed from a special appeal.

### **Synod 2005 Decisions**

Art. 107.2 has been effected by the denominational Webmaster creating generic email addresses for each Church and for ministers, clerks and deacons.

Art. 107.4 was fulfilled when the Wainuiomata Church organised a Deacons Conference in October 2007.

Art. 112 was realised by the visit of the Rev van Garderen to the C.A.R.E. work in India.

NDC has been invited to contribute more fully to the denominational Website. Because of the sensitive nature of its work, it was considered prudent to provide only very limited information.

### **Care Facility for the Disabled**

NDC has recently been approached to consider whether the churches should share in the provision of a facility for housing disabled people. NDC is aware that there are a small number of people within the churches who qualify to be residents in such a home. Homes specialising in this type of care exist but most are secular and those very few with a Christian flavour are not noted for their Reformed character.

Although this is a diaconal need, NDC has recognised that it does not have the resources or the expertise to develop a project like this. NDC believes that a charitable trust, with a Reformed charter and run by entrepreneurial members from our churches with experience in the sector, would be a more appropriate solution. NDC is not specifically looking for a decision from Synod but is willing to accept suggestions. Offers of help will be directed to a small nucleus of interested people who are interested and committed to developing the project.

## **6. National Deacons' Conference**

Our mandate (8.3) states:

*The NDC shall organise a National Deacons Conference in the Wellington area during each intersynodical period, the cost of which shall be shared by all the Churches on the then current quota percentage basis.*

*The travelling cost of a maximum of two Deacons (Office Bearers) per congregation only shall be claimed and reimbursed.*

These triennial conferences have been held since 1992 and have, through the years, been deemed successful and fruitful for those who attended. Yet it has become increasingly evident that involvement on the part of deacons is waning. Just over half of the churches of our denomination were represented at the last conference (Wainuiomata, October 2007) and in several instances, by one deacon only.

The NDC deems these meetings as extremely useful for a number of reasons:

1. They provide an excellent venue for explaining what our committee is doing in international diaconal work on behalf of all the churches of our denomination. Input and suggestions can be discussed and evaluated. The necessary questions addressed and our mandate explained.

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2. We note that, on the whole, the deacons of our churches are younger men – often first-time office-bearers. Furthermore, because the conferences are triennial, there is almost a complete change in personnel each time. The new deacons often lack opportunity for training and the kind of specialised input pertaining to their office. The Deacons' Conference is an ideal venue to provide the needed training and stimulation.
3. Deacons meeting as deacons are able to ask one another about the work being done in various churches. Comparing notes, sharing ideas and mutual encouragement is invaluable.

However, this usefulness depends on the organisers of these conferences and, even more important, the cooperation and involvement of *all* deacons as well as their local sessions.

### **The Mandate**

The NDC's policy has been to call on a local Wellington-based session to organise the conference as well as to select speakers and topics. We believe that it may be appropriate to be more pro-active in organising the conferences by having greater input into the topics and issues discussed. At this point, it is not clear to us whether our mandate includes training and/or encouraging the deacons in their local work. We believe it should, but seek Synod's input.

NDC also believes that the present mandate, which limits the location to the Wellington area, should be reviewed. Given that NDC is located in Auckland, it may be expedient to allow NDC to organise the conference there or wherever else is deemed to be cost-effective.

### **Possible models for conferences**

Our committee has attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of these conferences and discussed different ways of organising them.

1. The national deacons' conference: The current model is for one such conference (synodically funded) triennially. This will only work and be effective if all sessions make it clear that at least two of their deacons are expected to attend these conferences as part of their mandate. Unless all churches cooperate, the resources spent on these conferences are wasted.
2. Regional conferences: We have noted that at least one presbytery (Auckland) saw an initiative from the local deacons to meet together at this level. Such meetings involve less travel and not having to be away overnight. The disadvantage is that the sharing of ideas and input between presbyteries is lost. The NDC also believes that, unless it were invited to attend such regional conferences, its opportunity to meet with the deacons would be lost.

Our committee prefers the current (national conference) model, but only on the condition that *all* deacons are expected and encouraged to attend. If synod decides that the current model is to be replaced by regional conferences, then the NDC would need to ask that costs for attending them be reimbursed by the Synodical treasurer.

## **7. Financial Report**

The financial report for the past 3 years is attached as Appendix 1. The auditor's report will be forwarded separately following completion of the audit.

## **Recommendations**

That Synod:

1. *Receive this report.*
2. *Approve the actions of the NDC in the inter-synodical period.*
3. *Continue the mandate of the Committee and encourage vigilance in monitoring the needs of the Church as to where our assistance, as a loving neighbour, can help in the Name and Spirit of*

*Christ.*

- 4. Recommend that Presbyteries arrange annual deacons' meetings for the purpose of information sharing and training.*
- 5. Charge the NDC to organise a National Deacons' Conference in the Wellington area during the inter-synodical period in order to instruct and encourage the work of our deacons at home and abroad.*
- 6. Call on sessions to encourage their deacons to attend this conference as part of their diaconal task.*
- 7. Encourage the Deacons' Courts in their ministries and the congregations in compassion, prayer and generosity for the ministry of mercy to those who are our needy neighbours.*

Respectfully submitted:

Rev. C.A.R. Larsen (Chair)  
D. Petchell  
J. Ploeg  
G. Posthuma  
A. Ruijne  
Rev. D.J. van Garderen

## Appendix 1

**REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND - NATIONAL DIACONATE COMMITTEE  
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS  
FOR THE PERIODS FROM 1 Jun 2005 to 31 Mar 2008**

	<b>Period ended 31/03/06</b>	<b>Year ended 31/03/07</b>	<b>Year ended 31/03/08</b>
<b>Receipts</b>			
Interest received	149.12	37.16	689.28
General donations	5,797.60	11,771.65	15,399.16
Mid-year appeal	6,121.45	4,472.20	4,767.20
Dedicated donations			
C.A.R.E.	2,038.50	1,140.25	2,281.00
Christmas appeal	12,677.05	16,989.00	24,296.00
Hurricane Katrina	5,099.20	-	-
Henry Murray School for the Deaf	7,507.15	572.10	877.60
Pakistan earthquake	19,872.05	-	-
Sth India - Leper cottages	8,000.00	-	-
Pakistan hospital	-	-	488.00
The Leprosy Mission	-	70.00	488.00
Iraq	-	1,400.00	11,711.50
Solomons	-	-	1,900.00
	<b>67,262.12</b>	<b>36,452.36</b>	<b>62,897.74</b>
<b>Payments</b>			
Bank charges	203.01	75.00	150.00
Stationery & postage	-	-	50.00
Travel	3,350.00	84.44	-
Donations			
C.A.R.E.	10,000.00	11,385.67	19,588.74
Hurricane Katrina	5,100.00	-	-
Henry Murray School for the Deaf	17,000.00	-	15,000.00
Sth India - Leper cottages	8,000.00	-	-
Pakistan hospital	16,035.00	-	-
The Leprosy Mission (TLM)	1,000.00	1,000.00	3,488.00
Pakistan - Frericks project	-	5,250.00	-
Uganda	-	-	1,000.00
Iraq	-	-	13,626.00
Solomons	-	-	5,550.50
Tsunami	13,230.00	-	-
	<b>73,918.01</b>	<b>17,795.11</b>	<b>58,453.24</b>
<b>Net Receipts/Payments</b>	<b>-6,655.89</b>	<b>18,657.25</b>	<b>4,444.50</b>
Add opening bank balance	13,400.04	6,744.15	25,401.40
<b>Closing bank balance</b>	<b>6,744.15</b>	<b>25,401.40</b>	<b>29,845.90</b>
Westpac cheque account	6,744.15	25,401.40	1,254.29
Westpac savings account	-	-	28,591.61
	<b>6,744.15</b>	<b>25,401.40</b>	<b>29,845.90</b>

**REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND - NATIONAL DIACONATE COMMITTEE**  
**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS**  
**FOR THE PERIODS FROM 1 Jun 2005 to 31 Mar 2008 (Cont)**

<b>Donations by Source</b>	<b>Period ended 31/03/06</b>	<b>Year ended 31/03/07</b>	<b>Year ended 31/03/08</b>
Avondale	1,424.95	1,974.25	1,207.90
Bishopdale	3,456.85	2,223.75	4,116.46
Bucklands Beach	3,304.50	4,200.00	4,600.00
Christchurch	10,801.40	1,211.90	2,028.40
Dovedale	1,607.65	571.45	1,725.60
Dunedin	2,815.75	1,711.40	867.70
Foxton	778.50	472.65	623.10
Hamilton	8,876.00	6,522.00	11,577.00
Hastings	4,102.00	1,000.00	4,066.00
Hukanui	3,130.95	711.40	3,602.60
Mangere	3,865.00	1,606.75	3,369.30
Masterton	2,081.70	600.00	2,105.50
Nelson	-	500.00	950.00
North Shore	4,706.70	3,754.00	5,994.80
Oamaru	1,026.00	607.00	-
Palmerston North	2,874.55	-	2,109.10
Pukekohe	3,223.80	1,956.00	3,931.30
Silverstream	4,200.00	2,000.00	2,000.00
Wainuiomata	1,558.40	1,353.80	3,550.00
Wanganui	-	125.00	-
Wellington	2,161.65	-	661.50
Auckland Regional Youth	453.65	-	-
Christchurch Youth Camp	-	225.20	-
Easter Youth Camp	-	-	300.00
Unidentified	663.00	3,088.65	2,822.20
	<b>67,113.00</b>	<b>36,415.20</b>	<b>62,208.46</b>