



Why have Church Property Trustees?

The Presbyterian Church Property Trustees are a group of up to 20 people who volunteer their considerable knowledge, skills and time to serve our Church and protect its assets.

All Presbyterian-owned property north of the Waitaki River and a variety of financial assets are held in trust by the Church Property Trustees.

There are two main reasons why the Church has Trustees:

The first is a practical one of ensuring continuity of title-holder. In the early days, property was often put in the names of individuals who then left or died, thus creating real problems. The result was the Presbyterian Church Property Act 1885, which is the legislation the Trustees still work under today.

The second reason is that there are many groups that have an interest in any church property. Obviously congregations do, but so also do the Presbyteries. They need to consider the regional needs of the Church and of course, the Church as a whole since we are a national Church formed through a network of parishes. This is why the Trustees place great weight on the advice they receive from Presbyteries when considering any property transactions. They are also guided by the decisions of the General Assembly.

The Trustees are bound in law to adhere to the principles of trusteeship. These include prudent dealings in property and the investment of trust funds, keeping proper records and financial accounts and establishing policies for the management of all areas of their responsibilities.

The Church Property Trustees are fully committed to good stewardship and its importance for future generations of the Church.

Any enquires for the Trustees may be made to:

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THEOLOGY MATTERS

In her book *Moving Forward, Looking Back: Trains, Literature, and the Arts in the River Plate*, Sarah Misemer describes the trains of Argentina as symbolising “the dialectical influences of the forward trajectory (progress/future), while at the same time embodying the backward glance (regression/past)”. When travelling on an old train in particular, despite being aware of the technology that makes such eccentric carriage possible, one can have a sense that even though one is moving forward, there is also the sense that one “travels into a quaint and less mechanized” world, escaping backwards in time.

The same theme is picked up by artist Michael Flanagan in his brief essay “The Backward Glance”. He explores the intersection between time and memory, suggesting that our vision of the past operates akin to the view of a disappearing landscape glimpsed from within a moving train: ‘How can the Past ever be anything but a mystery... We see life as if from the end car of a speeding train, watching through the rear window as the tracks slip away beneath us... everything passing, receding, disappearing into a point on the horizon’.

Insofar as this is true of our experience of train travel, the same might be said of our thinking about Christian community – we can lament that our past ebbs too quickly. Such lament can encourage the creation of romanticised images, like those of nineteenth-century artists George Angas and Gottfried Lindauer who Europeanised the New Zealand landscape. Flanagan calls this the “nostalgia problem”.

At the other end of the train are those who seek to drive on, aware only of what lies in front. Like perpetual teenagers, they are those for whom the past is forgotten and irrelevant; indeed, it is not even part of their being today.

But here the analogy breaks down, particularly for those of us who profess to be concerned with the project called “Reformed”: we have no tracks upon which to travel, and even the existence of the train itself is not a sure thing. Entirely bereft of the familiar and the certain, the reformed – ie. that churchly tribe of which Presbyterians form the largest part – are concerned to live entirely dependent upon God’s speech, upheld solely by the Word

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who continuously calls us into being. To be Reformed is to be always open to the risky possibility that what one hears from God tomorrow might be entirely at odds with what one heard yesterday.

Such a situation poses a real challenge – and opportunity! – for a tradition concerned to confess the faith by way of formal statements. One of the hazards of writing confessions, for example, is that institutions are then tempted to build upon them, to trust in them, to look to them to do the work of safeguarding whatever it is that the institution most values – to turn the living Word of God into a “thing”. Even the desire to confess and embody our unity in Christ can mask efforts which are at core idolatrous: namely, to locate the unity of the Body of Christ in something – in a “thing” – rather than in the person of Christ himself and his claims upon us, claims which precede and bring under judgement all our efforts.

The Christian community is called to be at once more free and more bound than a train. It is called to be entirely unburdened from all efforts to keep it from falling off the rails. And it is called to be entirely bound to him who alone brings it into love’s true freedom.

The Rev Dr Jason Goroncy is a lecturer at the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership, Dunedin.

Spanz

The New Zealand flag is positioned behind the letter 'a' in the word 'Spanz'.

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

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A bronze statue of a man in a long coat, pointing his right hand, stands in front of a large, curved building with a distinctive facade of vertical wooden slats.

Election 2014: Presbyterians name key issues

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