

This communication to be read at each congregation outlining the consultation and discernment process and decisions of church leadership for the way ahead.

In May 2023 Hamish Galloway met with the ministers, Ian, Carlton, Clay and Claudio to discuss transition possibilities in light of Ian's intention to finish his ministry at Wakatipu Presbyterian Church in 2024. A report was given to Church Council. Carlton was on the plane to the UK for the beginning of his study leave on this day.

This was a time of discernment for Carlton on his sense of call, and for Clay to be doing the same over this period.

There was a clear sense of call for Carlton to focus on his ministry at Arrowtown and a prompting to explore Arrowtown becoming a distinct congregation ('congregation' is the word Presbytery uses for a church or parish). This was tested and affirmed by the Arrowtown elders over a number of months of prayerful discernment and discussions.

In November we had the first of two discernment gatherings made up of Church Council, elders and some leaders from each of the congregations. At the consultation in November the Arrowtown leaders spoke of their desire for more autonomy.

We discussed what that could look like and 2 options emerged, either;

- a) Arrowtown becomes a distinct parish with a partnership agreement or MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with Wakatipu Presbyterian Church regarding areas of ongoing partnership or
- b) Remaining part of the parish but with very clear agreement regarding the areas of greater independence

At the planning day in November there seemed to be affirmation of the importance of allowing Arrowtown to make this choice.

At the recent February gathering there was good, honest, heart-felt conversation with Arrowtown providing further clarification and responding to questions on their desire to become a distinct congregation.

There was strong consensus following this discussion that

1. The Arrowtown leadership be given permission to engage with their congregation at Arrowtown around this issue with a view to finding out the congregations wishes.
2. It was acknowledged that if Arrowtown congregation is of a mind that they would like to become a distinct congregation, it will start a process with Presbytery which will include conversations with neighbouring congregations. It will also need to include conversations about how the finances of the parish will be separated.
3. That if the ultimate decision is for Arrowtown to become a distinct congregation, there should be a MOU that sets out the areas of ongoing cooperation and working together.

Leadership arrangements for the parish once Ian and Amanda leave in April were discussed at the February consultation/discernment weekend. It was agreed that:

1. The parish needs to keep moving forward, it is not time for a pause.
2. A transitional minister be engaged to lead the parish and ministry team through this next period with a Job Description that includes;
 - a) Keeping the parish moving forward on the issues that need to be attended to
 - b) Taking the stress of the transitional period off the other ministry staff and allowing them to focus on their areas of ministry
 - c) As a neutral person, pastoring the parish through the decisions to be made around Arrowtown's desire for greater autonomy.

- d) Facilitating the parish conversation around vision and mission for the next 5-10 years.
 - e) Help to focus the discussion needed around the use of the funds from the sale of St Andrews with a vision for ministry within the Wakatipu Basin.
3. The leaderships is in conversation with an excellent person who would fit this role extremely well and is hopeful that they will be able to take on the transitional leadership position.
 4. In the event of a gap between Ian leaving and a transitional leader being found, Carlton will take on the role of team leader and Clay will step into leadership of Frankton and Manna.
 5. We have great lay leaders and elders in the parish who can step up during this transitional time.

The meeting ended with a reflection on these things:

1. There are feelings of loss and vulnerability in the parish that include the leaving of a much loved ministry couple, the sale of the St Andrew's building, the loss of the 5-mile vision and the possibility of Arrowtown become a distinct congregation. These losses are particularly strongly felt at the Frankton-Queenstown end of the parish. They were helpfully acknowledged at the consultation. It was agreed that it would take time to process these feelings.
2. It was agreed that how we tell the story around Arrowtown's desire to become a distinct congregation is important for the parish and for the wider community. This is a story of the good news of a vision to help a congregation get back on its feet, grow and flourish and that is the image of a child that has grown up and is ready to go it alone, becoming a distinct congregation is a good one.
3. Hamish's devotion at the beginning of the meeting based on Psalm 133 talked about unity based on hard, honest and heartfelt conversation as a place where God's blessing rests. There was a lovely sense of this being fulfilled in the way the whole consultation went. It ended with a strong desire for the various congregations to bless each other which came to life in the form of a time of prayer which included specific prayers of blessing for each congregation.

We are entering a new season as a church with a number of balls up in the air. Alongside feelings of loss, uncertainty and vulnerability the gathered leadership of the Wakatipu Presbyterian Church is excited and hopeful for what God will do amongst us as he continues to call us to partner with him. Jesus calls us to not be afraid but to have courage, faith, and hope because he is with us.