

22 October 2024

Response of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand to the Royal Commission of Inquiry's findings into Abuse in Care^[1]

Waiata

Ko koe, e Ihu, tena
E patoto mai nei
E whanga tonu ana
Ko koe kia tomo mai
E ao ia nei te kino
Te hara tino nui
Ko au kia keke tonu
Ki tau i tono ai

Lament

O Jesus, thou art standing
Outside the fast-closed door
In lowly patience waiting
To pass the threshold o'er
Shame on us, Christian brothers
His name and sign who bare
O shame, thrice shame upon us
To keep Him standing there!

Acknowledgement and Apology

We are sorry.

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (The Church) accepts the findings of the Royal Commission, including our reluctance to confront abuse, failure to remove people, and the lack of consistent policies and procedures to prevent and report abuse.

The Church acknowledges and deeply regrets the abuse and neglect that occurred within its care. The Church accepts responsibility for the historical, societal, and institutional factors that contributed to these abuses. This includes the misuse of

religious power, sexism, racism, and other negative attitudes that allowed such abuses to occur.

We were an integral part of the social structures that caused harm. We did not use our power to stand with and advocate for the vulnerable and marginalised.

We acknowledge the physical, sexual, emotional, mental, spiritual, relational, cultural, educational, and financial effects that the victims and survivors experienced on every part of their lives.

The cumulative harm and deep intergenerational impact on victims, survivors and their whanau are immeasurable and unacceptable. We are dedicated to improving this now and for the future.

How we intend to respond

The Church commits to participating in the Crown-led Pūretumu Torowhānui initiative and supports the introduction of a Care Safety Act. The Church is dedicated to continually improving robust safeguarding practices, developing coordinated leadership, and ensuring transparency, monitoring and accountability.

Our Pathway Forward

Our work on the Commission's recommendations has already begun. We are committed to seeing that work through and expect to be held accountable for this commitment. In the meantime, however, we grieve deeply for all who have been harmed by our actions and inaction and provide this apology as a first step in doing the work of repentance, and from which we hope that in time, restoration may come.

Our sorrow is deep, and we are committed to working with all to building safe places for everyone.

Inoi/Prayer

Gracious and loving God, creator of all. We need to confess that we are sinners, and all fall short of your purpose for us.

We have not loved others as much as we love ourselves, and we cannot hide our guilt and shame from you.

We seek forgiveness for the oppression we have inflicted on others and pray for those who have endured pain for so long.

We are grateful for, and pray for the Royal Commission and its work. May the findings and recommendations bring healing and hope.

For those that we have hurt, for hearts we have wounded, for lives that have been damaged and minds that have been tormented, we are sorry

We ask for courage and grace to face our faults and address them so that others may not suffer. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Te Inoi whakamutunga/Benediction

He āroha te Atua,
whakatōhia mai ki roto o mātau ngākau,
o mātau hinengaro tou atawhai mē tou ārohanui tonu.
E whakaarahia ana hoki ē ia te hunga ē whakapiko iho ana.
He tika ngā ara katoa o Ihowa: He atawhai hoki ana mahi katoa.
Ka whakanui ahau ia koe ē Ihowa e Kiingi o nga Kiingi
te Ariki o ngā Ariki, kia āwhina i o mātau hoa tata anō ko mātau.

Loving God of justice and peace
refresh our minds and stir our hearts.
Show us where we have lost our way.
Let us learn from our past mistakes
Help us to see a way forward
And in doing so
May we bring help, peace, and healing to all.

Mrs Katerina Solomona

Convener

Council of Assembly

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Rev Roxy Gahegan

Deputy Convener

Council of Assembly

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Endnotes:

^[1] The full legal name of the Royal Commission is the *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions*. The terms 'Royal Commission' or 'Commission of Inquiry' are used interchangeably within this document for ease of reference.