

A PAPER ON ECUMENICAL PARISH MINISTRY
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Abbreviations

MCCP *Minutes of the Crossway Community Church Parish Council.*

MSLM *Minutes of the Shirley Methodist Church Leaders' Meeting.*

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Introduction

In August 2008 North Avon Presbyterian Parish and Shirley Methodist Church covenanted to work together for mission and ministry, from which Crossway Community Church was newly formed. Having confirmed that the parent churches' reserved position on creating a new union parish, the Crossway congregations had to maintain the *status quo* as one church with two congregations, two legal entities and two traditions. This is the outcome of a case study carried out on the interdenominational ministry and mission of Crossway Community Church that incorporates St Columba Presbyterian Church and Shirley Methodist Church, to identify guiding principles of decision making and to discover peculiar ministry patterns.

Chapter 1 Two Places of One Mission

1.1 Shirley Methodist Church

Shirley Church started its life as one of five preaching places within the Christchurch area in 1860. After they made two shifts in response to the increased membership along with the growing settlement, the building was erected at the east corner of New Brighton Road and North Avon Parade, and the Opening Service of the new church was held in March 1919. Shirley Church was not only a sign of growth and expansion of the church in the district, but also a centre of the community flourishing with vibrant, enthusiastic, and faithful people.¹

1.2 St Columba Presbyterian Church²

St Columba Church also began with a small number of people in 1878 when St Paul's opened a branch Sunday School in the Richmond public school. In 1913 when St. Paul's Extension Committee bought the present site, the first move for its establishment as the church was made. In July 1916 the construction was completed, and Rev John Paterson of St Paul's Church conducted the first Service. From the outset the St Columba congregation was filled with a missionary zeal, which included caring for the mourners during war years and the sick in times of epidemic.³

1.3 The Tide of Challenge

Until the middle of the twentieth century, the churches in New Zealand were full of people who were part of church Services, social events, and mission activities. Overall membership, however, has been declining since the 1890s' peak, even though "Christian attitudes in various shapes and forms are taken into diverse areas of New Zealand life such as the marketplace, educational institutions, social meetings, the public service, local body politics and government."⁴ Furthermore, Shirley Church experienced a major split in 1998 and a loss of members in 2001. Not only that, some

¹ Neil Mitchell, *Shirley Methodist Church: one hundred years of Christian witness 1866-1966* (F.W. Larcombe, 1966), 5-10.

² Presbytery identifies St Columba Presbyterian Church as North Avon Presbyterian Parish. This thesis uses the name 'St Columba Church' for the sake of consistency.

³ St Columba Presbyterian Church, *St Columba Presbyterian Church, corner Petrie and Randall Streets, Christchurch: 50th Anniversary 1916-1966* (Christchurch: St Columba Presbyterian Church, 1966), 4,7.

⁴ Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa*, 182.

issues—the structural problem of the buildings, ageing and declining membership and lack of resources—put them under pressure to consider selling the property. St Columba Church was also dwindling with low attendance and lack of resources and could not afford a full-time minister.⁵

1.4 Making a Way Forward

In May 2006 Shirley Methodists approached St Columba Presbyterians with a view to some level of co-operation. The first meeting was held in October 2006. Following the first combined service, two churches kept exploring possible issues such as compatibility, mission objectives, working arrangements, and the church site to discern new vision and new ways of being church. On 1 September 2007 they had a combined retreat that produced a suggested timetable for a three-month trial of combined Services from 11 November 2007 through to the end of January 2008.⁶

After trial services, two congregations were determined to work together, and yet they intended not to form a union parish, but to be in a covenant partnership. The Shirley Church's Strategic Plan described the reasons for not proceeding to formal union: Firstly, further clustering or amalgamation of congregations was likely to take place in the area. Secondly, parent churches were not favouring formal union. Thirdly, a successful working together depends on the shared vision rather than a formal structure. Subsequently, two congregations retained their denominational identities as Methodists and Presbyterians.

On Sunday 3 Aug 2008 two churches had the Covenant Service and formalised the two churches' relationship. They covenanted to meet together for worship and witness, to honour their traditions and use them as a launching place for mission, to continue to seek God's help in reaching into the community, to share resources to enable mission and ministry, to appoint a full-time minister with an agreed job description and budget, to appoint parish officers to be part of a joint Parish Council, and to continue to share in the life of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches.⁷

⁵ MSLM, 13 Feb 2006. There were 15 attendees at Annual General Meeting on Sunday 26th August 2007.

⁶ MSLM, 8 May 2006, 12 Oct 2006, 10 Sep 2007, 12 Feb 2007.

⁷ Vision and Voice, 27 Jul 2008. Vision and Voice is the weekly newsletter of Crossway Community Church that includes the order of Sunday Service.

Chapter 2 Signs of Unity in Christ

Jesus' prayer for oneness in John 17 and the message of one body and many parts in 1 Corinthians 12 point out that the signs of unity in Christ are emitted from a congregational life of respect, integration, and love. There are various signs of unity coming through the congregational life of respect, integration, and love at Crossway Community Church.

2.1 Signs of Respect

The meeting minutes of discussion around a new name for the church, restructuring the Parish Council, and discussing amalgamation with the Richmond Methodist Church, show their respect of each other.

New Name

The congregations' responses to an invitation for a new name included "Shirley, North Avon Uniting Church," "Shirley, Richmond Uniting Church," "Shirley Church," "Crossway Community Church" and "The Gathering Place." After discussion Crossway Community Church was most favoured, and the subheading "St Columba Presbyterian and Shirley Methodist" was agreed so that different identities could be clearly shown.⁸

New Structure

The Parish Council was restructured with five committees and a lay chairperson. The committees were given a certain amount of power to act on the Parish Council's behalf to take the simple and housekeeping tasks. Each committee elected their own convener, and it turned out to be four conveners from Shirley Church and one from St Columba Church. One Methodist convener intentionally withdrew, and an additional Presbyterian convener was appointed for the sake of leadership balance.⁹

Amalgamation with the Richmond Methodist Church

Methodist Synod organised a meeting with the Richmond Methodist Church and Crossway Community Church for discussion on the future. As some concerns were

⁸ MSLM, 11 Aug 2008, 8 Sep 2008.

⁹ MCCP, 8 Jun 2009, 20 July 2009. Five committees are Children and Youth, Worship, Pastoral Care, Property and Finance, and Outreach and Social.

raised that the Richmond Church members might be put under pressure to join Crossway Community Church, the Crossway and Richmond Task Group was formed to continue the discussion. After some discussions, the Task Group reported that it reached “the point where it believes there are good missional reasons” for the three congregations to become one church. All the members of the three churches—St Columba, Shirley, and Richmond—participated in the vote and decided that they worship together from 3 February 2013.¹⁰

Decision Making without Conflict

All decisions were made by consensus, which included appointing one Parish Secretary, nominating the representatives working on a joint profile for new ministry appointment, putting up a new church noticeboard, supporting an expedition of Boys’ Brigade to Lake Daniels, planning to reduce the number of members on the Council, organizing the twenty-four-hour prayer-a-thon, and so on.

2.2 Signs of Integration

Dealing with the Issue of Formal Union

When the Parish Council was enthusiastically exploring the possibility of formal union, it received a letter from Synod, indicating that Synod would not endorse the Methodist parishes entering a formal union with another parish. While understanding Synod’s position, which was based on negative experiences of dissolving union parishes, some leaders, who expected a formal union to sort out some difficulties with the financial accounts, were disappointed. The mood of the meeting was refreshed by the last comment shared among them that “even though we are from different traditions, we are one in Christ.”¹¹

Coping with Disaster

Immediately after the earthquake, special Parish Council meetings were called to plan pastoral care and worship services. The pastoral roll was divided up into nine clusters with a Parish Council member responsible for each. All people on the roll were connected either by visit or over the phone. The Parish Council members encouraged

¹⁰ Ibid., 13 Aug 2012.

¹¹ Ibid., 14 Sep 2009.

one another by sharing “the buildings may be damaged, but the church, as people, is still standing. It is time to go the extra mile for others.”¹²

Celebrations

They enjoyed a variety of social events, including meals, barbecue, Games Evening, Concert, Fair and newcomers’ meals, and celebrated Infant and Adults Baptisms, and the accreditation of a lay preacher. They, connected in an integrated network of life, warmly welcomed newcomers, gently supported and cared for one another—particularly, in times of the disaster—and joyfully celebrated significant occasions in life such as baptism.

2.3 Signs of Love

Sharing Finance

The two congregations equally shared finances. They shared offerings equally, ran equal budgets, contributed half the cost, and adjusted, if necessary, at the end of the year. In Feb 2010 the Presbyterian finance team reported the shortfall in offerings was covered by some investment funds with only limited life. The financial reports of the following year indicated that the Presbyterian offerings were a little light with attendances down due to the earthquake, whereas the Methodist finances were healthy at the time of report. Even though the two congregations agreed to share finances equally, they practised a rule of generosity that whoever can afford willingly makes more contribution than the other.¹³

Pastoral Caring

The Joint Pastoral Caring Team was formed with the combined pastoral roll. Christmas greetings were sent to those who had left the city permanently following the earthquake, and to others who were unable to come to church for various reasons. When an elderly member was not able to drive to church, she gladly accepted an offer of transportation to attend church once a month. A young couple, however, gave her a ride on other Sundays as well. Another elderly woman was relocated to the other side of the

¹² Ibid., 11 Oct 2010.

¹³ Ibid., 22 Feb 2010, 11 Apr 2011.

city, which made her unable to attend Services. Her need was advertised resulting in five offers to take her to the monthly Communion Service.¹⁴

Support for the Youth Band

When the youth music group requested a new drum kit to replace the old one, the Parish Council granted finance for a new kit. A couple of years later the Parish Council contributed \$350 for a new acoustic guitar at the request from the Youth Band. Encouraged by the support from the church, the young musicians organised a contemporary and contemplative music Service with songs and psalms, which was named Saturday Night Praise.

Support for Children Ministry

The noise of children during the Service was raised as an issue. After some discussion the Parish Council affirmed that “we are a ‘kids friendly’ church and welcome children” and “we accept that young children will make some noise” and agreed that the partition in front of the front pew be removed to allow more spaces for children “to stand up and do some actions to songs or play percussion instruments” during the Service. Other resolutions were also suggested that a friendly place for pre-schoolers be provided at the back of the church, and that someone sit with the children to encourage their participation in worship. Three years later the same issue of children’s noise during the Sunday Service was brought to the Parish Council again. At the suggestion that the children’s time in church be shorter and earlier, Worship Committee had some discussions and agreed that the children’s time be positioned at the earlier part of the Service.¹⁵

The Crossway congregations enjoyed a life of respect, integration and love that reveals unity in Christ. These illustrations are only part of their congregational life, and yet they effectively portray how they have lived unity in Christ. It does not mean that there was no tension, conflict, or friction among the congregations. It does signal, however, that there was no serious problem that shook the church, disrupted the congregational life, or damaged its unity.

¹⁴ Ibid., 9 Aug 2010, 11 Oct 2010, 12 Dec 2011.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14 Dec 2009, 8 Oct 2012, 9 Dec 2012.

Chapter 3 Tradition and *Unity in Christ*

Tradition is one of the focal points in the ministry and mission of *one church with two traditions* as they pursue revealing unity in Christ. The two congregations, who had agreed to retain their own denominational identities, felt their own traditions challenged as they observed a new one taking shape.

3.1 Traditions Honoured

They were so determined to keep their own denominational identities that they covenanted to honour the traditions they come from and use them as a launching place for mission.¹⁶

3.2 Traditions Retained

The Holy Communion

When the Shirley Methodist congregational Meeting decided to sell the property, there were concerns about the church building and the Methodist traditions being lost, such as the way of sharing the Communion. The question was answered that the things important to Methodists and Presbyterians alike would be respected, that the Methodist traditions would not be forgotten, and that the different ways of celebrating the Communion would be used. Crossway Community Church has shared Bread and Wine in two ways. The only difference is how to share it. The Presbyterians receive Bread and Wine at the pews whereas the Methodists make their way to the table to receive it. They have the Methodist Communion in odd months and the Presbyterian in even months.

The Entry of the Bible

The St Columba congregation had begun the Sunday Service with the Entry of the Bible, whereas the Shirley congregation had proceeded without it. Since they combined, they have carried in the Bible as part of the procession. After the earthquake this was discontinued in Services at the parsonage, at a member's home and the

¹⁶ A Covenant, signed on 3 Aug 2008.

Windsor House lounge for lack of space but resumed after they moved to the St Albans Church. At the new church building, the service commences with the Entry of the Bible.

Envelope System

They covenanted to continue as independent legal entities, to keep separate financial records and to contribute to a common budget. Two traditions are sustained separately along with their own financial system. Since the two pastoral rolls were merged, the original membership roll of each congregation has lost its significance. Instead, the envelope system has been referred to for statistical purposes, which implies that the envelopes help set the membership roll of each congregation. Subsequently, the envelope system has become a significant marker of tradition. Their denominational identity is determined by the envelope they choose, and a new journey of faith begins with the one that they prefer.

3.3 Traditions Developing

There are new ideas and new initiatives that indicate the emergence of a new tradition within the church, which is not the outcome of any planning, guidance, or direction of parent churches, but the fruit of the congregations' self-motivation. It may be too early to say a new tradition, and yet it is a clear sign of unity in Christ.

Multi-Cultural Ministry

As of 15 September 2024, greetings in eight languages have been shared at the beginning of Sunday Services, which include English (Good morning), Samoan (Talofa Lava), Tongan (Malo Elelei), Chinese (Ni Hao), Filipino (Magandang Umaga), Malaysian (Selamat Pagi), Kunama (Maydoka Karembe), and Korean (Annyung Hasimnika). And, Since the Korean service was developed six years ago, the Crossway Korean congregation is growing under the umbrella of Crossway Community Church.

Emergence of New Generations

As Sunday School continued growing gradually and steadily for years, it was divided further into groups to give more effective caring and teaching, which resulted in need of more teachers and helpers. Noting that there had been no group activity and support for youth while there were a few teenagers already and several young people

approaching high school age, the Parish Council agreed to establish a new part time position. Early in 2024 a part-time youth worker started youth ministry at Crossway. He, as a Korean-New Zealander, has been part of the congregation for some years.

Visioning for a New Future

With members realizing no visioning had been undertaken since the Parish Council was restructured, they agreed to choose a visioning topic for each Parish Council meeting. Some ideas for the future church, which included outreach and evangelism, small group ministry, a Korean representative to the Parish Council and Bible Study group. It was a bottom-up visioning, not something imposed by the leadership.

3.4 Traditions Challenged

Fear of Loss

When Shirley Church decided to sell the property, anxiety was voiced about the loss of their Methodist tradition. To the concern about the church building being lost, it was reassured that, although the building would no longer stand, the Shirley Methodist congregation would still exist. A more direct question was also raised about the Shirley Methodist Church's traditions after combining with St Columba Presbyterian Church, and members were assured that two churches' traditions would be respected and nurtured.

The Uncertain Journey Ahead

Noting that maintaining two sets of accounts caused some confusion in relation to envelopes, record keeping and property management, the Parish Council explored possibilities to form a union parish and consulted with Presbytery and Synod. However, they were informed that the union parish model was not what parent churches wished to continue. The parent churches convinced them that the Crossway Community Church's covenanted relationship was less formal, and, thus, more flexible allowing for change in the future. Two congregations' journey kept going ahead into the uncertain future because no one knew in what forms their traditions would appear in the future. Ten years later—in 2020—when the project of rebuilding the church facilities was

completed, parent churches allowed them to be a union parish because it was the best way of dealing with property and finance issues.

Ecumenical Sprit Alive

The Parish Council members expressed some concerns about parent churches' tradition-oriented reservation. Three points can be made about church tradition.

First, as unity is both a gift and a goal, so is tradition. Tradition can be both an obstacle to and a catalyst of unity of the church. Clearly, the church tradition embraces all believers under its wing, whereas some traditions of the church, which were developed from denominational, cultural and ethnic emphases, can hinder unity of ALL believers, in that they may build up some barriers by binding SOME believers.¹⁷ Therefore, the all-embracing church tradition is both a gift given and a goal yet to be lived out.

Second, as unity is not to be taken as ideology, so is tradition. It has been a danger for the church to fall into taking tradition as ideology. Ideological attachment tends to lead a group of believers to put their own tradition in the centre of the church tradition, which generates tension and division among the believers. Traditions aiming to be placed in the centre cannot avoid competition with one another.

Third, as unity is paradoxical by nature, so is tradition. The church tradition is always the old and the new. A new tradition is envisioned and established, but it is not possible to disconnect it from the old. An old tradition is cherished and kept, but it is not possible to prevent it from maturing further. A congregation may try to sustain or preserve the tradition, yet it develops until it becomes part of a new church tradition.

The Crossway congregations have cherished their own tradition, honoured the other's tradition, experienced the emergence of a new tradition, and observed their own tradition under challenge. However, they have stayed together in unity in Christ that transcends denominational, cultural, and ethnic differences.

¹⁷ The definition of 'the church tradition' is not what this thesis is required to make. It may be understood as the overarching criteria that bring all believers in unity, which may be substituted by the Christian faith tradition that 'we are one in Christ.'

Chapter 4 The Christchurch Earthquakes

Two years after the establishment of the covenanted relationship, CCC was hit by a natural disaster, which not only shook the church building, but also devastated some members' lives. The church buildings had been so seriously damaged that it was demolished.

4.1 Worship Arrangements

Responding to the earthquake, the worship services were promptly organized, including a Communion Service at the parsonage which was not spacious enough for all church members. It took the Crossway congregation ten years, during which they were on the move in search of worship space. It includes, the North Avon Baptist Church, a member's house, the lounge of a local retirement home, the hall of St. Albans Uniting Parish, the church building of St. Albans Uniting Parish, and the lounge of Delta Community Centre.

4.2 Strategic Planning and Two Principles

While the parent Churches were working on the strategic plan for the post-earthquake churches in Christchurch, the parish council affirmed that "we wish to stay together as a congregation of Methodists and Presbyterians without losing our identity and traditions."¹⁸ Having carried out a wide range of conversation, consultation, and discussion, the Synod brought forth "the Recommendations to Parishes" and the Presbytery "Exploring the theology of the church." Both papers emphasized two strategic principles for rebuilding the churches: One was "community-facing" and the other was "working together" even beyond denominational differences.¹⁹ It was highlighted that "the future vision of the church is as the hub of the community, outwardly focused, responsive to community needs and with multipurpose community facilities that are used seven days a week."²⁰

¹⁸ M CCP, 10 October 2011.

¹⁹ Ibid., 14 May 2012, 9 July 2012.

²⁰ The Methodist Church of New Zealand, "Strategic Plan 2013-2017 of the Central South Island Synod," 7.

4.3 A Public-Private Partnership Project

The idea of a public-private partnership between the Christchurch City Council and CCC was initiated from an informal conversation between the CCC minister and a Strengthening Communities Advisor from the City Council. Following a series of conversation, CPC advised the City Council of its plans, requesting a partnership for the purpose of rebuilding a church-community facility. The conversation continued, and the Community Board supported in principle the proposal and recommended that the City Council grant a long-term lease for the former Shirley Community Centre site. A month later, the Christchurch City Council Meeting on 15 Aug 2013 supported the proposal in principle by. In response to the City Council's decision, CCC continued convening a series of consultations with the local community groups to confirm the support from the local community, and dealt with technical, financial, and procedural issues about the project, which included the appointment of a project manager and the production of the concept plan for the new building. Following the Local Body Elections in 2013, however, the church noticed the changing climate in civic administration and politics. The church leadership also sensed “the general negative attitude of the community towards a church having ownership of the Community Centre building” and even the resistance of some leaders of the parent Churches. The public-private partnership proposal was turned down at the Shirley-Papanui Community Board meeting on 11 July 2016. The lengthy and costly process of consultation, discussion, and planning turned out to be fruitless, having taken four years—from July 2012 to July 2016.²¹

4.4 A Multilateral Partnership Project

In March 2016, four months before the official termination of the public-private partnership project, North Avon Baptist Church²² approached CCC to discuss possibilities for working together. After a series of meetings, the two churches agreed on combining their children's programs, sharing lay preachers, periodically having combined services, and exploring the possibility of working in partnership to build a combined facility. Delta Community Support Trust, whose community services have been supported by North Avon Baptist Church, had offered CCC a lounge for Sunday

²¹ M CCP, 30 July 2012, 10 September 2012, 10 February 2014, 8 September 2014, 10 November 2014, 10 August 2015, 9 March 2015.

²² North Avon Baptist Church was renamed to be Delta Community Baptist Church on 1 September 2019.

services a year before the two churches started the partnership conversation. In March 2017, the representatives from the three organizations—CCC, North Avon Baptist Church, and Delta Community Trust—gathered for a consolidated meeting, in which they shared their common vision and embraced the partnership proposal. Consequently, an interdenominational and multilateral partnership project was initiated, which included three churches and one community service provider: North Avon Presbyterian Parish, Richmond-Shirley Methodist Parish, North Avon Baptist Church, and Delta Community Support Trust.²³

It took three years and eight months for all legal and administrative requirements, necessary for construction, to be fulfilled, which included the appointment of a project manager and the architect, the concept design of the building, a termination plan in case of the break-down of partnership²⁴, the plan for worship arrangements and for sharing the facilities, the confirmation of financial resources available²⁵, and the payment agreement²⁶. The first half of the construction plan was completed, and the Delta Community Centre was opened on 1 September 2019. With the completion of the second half of the project, Crossway Community Church held the opening service in March 2021.

²³ Ibid., 9 March 2015, 14 March 2016, 9 May 2016, 13 March 2017.

²⁴ M CCP, 10 April 2017, 10 July 2017. The separation of the building can be possible with fire rated wall in case the partnership project has to be divided between parties in the future.

²⁵ Parish treasurers and finance staffs from each party confirmed that \$6.4 million dollars were available for the building.

²⁶ M CCP, 9 May 2017. It was agreed that payment for the architect, the project manager and other expenses will be met by all parties percentagewise, according to monetary input into the whole project.

Conclusion

Two churches of different denominations agreed to work together in ministry and mission, which was not a voluntary commitment, but rather an unavoidable choice for survival. However, this ecumenical initiative is recorded as a successful one. Not only they have become a thriving multicultural congregation, but also they have cooperatively responded to the damage of the earthquakes. Furthermore, they had a multilateral project successfully complete. Crossway Community Church has set an example of ecumenical ministry and mission.

First, they have evidently shown various signs of unity in Christ, which was revealed in interpersonal, inter-traditional, and inter-generational levels.

Second, they have made their own journey in unity to be a healthy church where a new tradition is taking shape from the traditions that they value and respect.

Third, there were some ministry activities limited or in recess after the earthquake. However, their congregational life in unity is more visible through times of difficulty.

Fourth, there are young generations emerging in unity and growing in faith, being surrounded by the ecumenical spirit of the congregation.

Fifth, there are valuable attributes that have been practiced in the congregational life, which are sharing resources generously, respecting each other's tradition, and networking the community of faith.

Sixth, the life of unity in Christ beyond denominational difference enabled multiple congregations to stand together against difficulties and move forward, empowering one another.

Seventh, it is not a structural model, but a behavioural model, which offers applicable principles for decision making, policy development, mission engagement, and ministry practice.

Eighth, it puts people before positions, support before direction, and patience before discipline. The church has been growing in numbers, envisioning their future, strengthening its evangelical passion, and confident in whom they are.

At the same time, they had to deal with challenges on their ecumenical journey, and some challenges persist.

Lack of Confidence.

Considering working together, some expressed their concerns that even joining the two churches was not going to solve the financial problems and that new people were not coming into the church as fast as the church was losing people.²⁷ Some did not completely embrace the new journey and moved away.²⁸

Risks of Distraction.

When two churches' ecumenical conversation was going on, other discussions took place between Shirley Methodist Church and Richmond Methodist Church, among three churches in the eastern suburb, between the St Albans Uniting Parish and the Christchurch North Parish, and among the St Albans Parish, the Shirley Methodist and the St Columba Presbyterian. Eventually, the Shirley leaders' Meeting preferred to concentrate on the progress that had been made with St Columba Church.²⁹

Lack of Resources

The challenges of low membership, lack of resources and weakening financial status were given as the reason for the two congregations deciding to be one church. Even if each congregation's financial status was improving and some new families joined, the challenges did not disappear. In particular, the earthquake impacted the sustainability of various mission activities and services for the community. As the church grew in numbers and children ministry became vibrant, the needs of the church have been ever-increasing, which demands more volunteers.

A Road Never Travelled

Before coming together in ministry and mission, two churches found their future in full of uncertainty, which implied that there might be hidden issues yet to arise. Even though there were some other examples of ecumenical ministry and mission, it was a totally new journey for them.

²⁷ Minutes of the Shirley Methodist Church Annual General Meeting, 28 Oct 2007.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 10 Sep 2007.

Traditions Confronted

Some members of the two churches expressed the fear of losing their own tradition before they joined together. Their fear and anxiety were not groundless, in that tradition changes over time. Ecumenical spirit, alive in the mind of the two congregations, is a hidden factor that enforces them to change. The appearance of the third group, who identify themselves as the Crossway members, not Shirley Methodists nor St Columba Presbyterians, is a clear indication to the invisible force. Eventually, a ministry model of *one church with two traditions* is another tradition which confronts the two traditions inherited.

Traditions to be Remembered.

There was no indication that the members were regularly reminded of the origin, the historical context and development, core beliefs and theological emphasis of their traditions when they gathered for various meetings, and even after they had combined. It is not clear that each congregation has sufficient knowledge of their own tradition, without which there may be a danger that the members may only hold on to the name, denominational customs, and titles of leaders rather than on to the beliefs, perspectives, emphasises of each tradition that has shaped the church. Respecting tradition is not only to name it, but to live it. This would be how tradition will be passed on to the next generation. Therefore, it is essential for them to know what their own tradition is before they inherit it to their posterity by living it out.

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