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## ABOUT US MENU

# General Assembly

## Three Courts

The Presbyterian Church is governed by a hierarchy of three courts or governing bodies which exercise their authority at a local, regional and national level. Talk of courts sounds forbidding. But it's not. It's really just a romantic remnant of the quaint language often at the heart of Presbyterian life.

### The Church at Local Level

The Church at the local level is organised into congregations and parishes. Parishes are governed by a Session or Parish Council whose members are elected by the congregation. Sessions (another quaint old word) or Parish Councils made up of elders (quaint word #3) are responsible for the oversight of parish life. Elders, who may be young or old, are elected by the congregation.

### Presbytery - The Regional Court

Each parish is represented on the presbytery by their minister and another elder. The [presbytery](#) has responsibility for all the parishes and other ministries in its area. Its job is to coordinate mission, look after personnel matters and make sure parishes are functioning well.

### The General Assembly – the National Court

Presbyteries are accountable to the [General Assembly](#), the highest court. The General Assembly sets the policy and the direction of the church as a whole, as well as approving the various regulations that help the church to operate as an effective organisation. The General Assembly normally meets once every two years.

That all seems simple enough, but...

## Synods

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Because the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand is the result of a union between Northern and Southern churches in 1901, the Synod of Otago and Southland still exists and plays a special role in supporting churches in that part of the country.

Since the Church wants to reflect a partnership relationship between the settler church and Maori a Maori Synod was established – now known as [Te Aka Puaho](#) (The Glowing Vine). It has responsibility for Maori parishes, known as pastorates, throughout the country.

Because the Church recognises that people from Pacific island backgrounds should have more say about the way they organise church life, it formed [Pacific Presbytery](#) to make this possible.

The Council of Asian Congregations was established to provide opportunities for combined worship and fellowship, witness, and a place in which Asians members can speak to and interact with the wider Church.

The [Synod of Otago and Southland](#) covers the area south of the Waitaki River.

## The Moderator

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Each of the Church's courts - sessions, [presbyteries](#), Synod and the General Assembly - is presided over by a Moderator who:

- is elected by the members of the court
- chairs its meetings
- is the ceremonial leader of each court
- makes sure other members of the court are supported in their life and work
- may speak on behalf of the court to others in the church and the wider community.

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand elects a new Moderator every two years. Read more about [our current Moderator](#).

## Council of Assembly

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The [Council of Assembly](#) has responsibility for advancing the policy of the Assembly and setting the Church's strategic direction.

## Sub-committees

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These are committees of the Council of Assembly, appointed by them to help Council provide what Assembly seeks.

Nominations come through the [Nominating Committee](#).

The [Resource sub-committee](#) has responsibility for financial management, reporting and stewardship of the Church's resources including risk management.

The [Leadership sub-committee](#) has responsibility for the formation, education and continuing education of ordained and lay leaders.

## Assembly Office service team

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The Church employs [national staff](#), who are mostly based in Wellington, Dunedin and Auckland.

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