

Independent Review of Culture at St John's Theological College

16 March 2021

Dear All

Since the Archbishops and Primates letter to you of 8 March 2021 the review has now formally commenced.

The purpose of this note is to provide you with some information on the team, registration, approach, process, confidentiality and timing.

The review team

As you are already aware, I have been asked to carry out an independent and objective review of the culture at St John's Theological College. I will be assisted by Doug Martin who will primarily focus on the last two terms of reference; I will be primarily responsible for the first three (see below). We will be assisted primarily by barrister, Nura Taefi. Nura will take notes during interviews which will be confidential to the review team. We will also be appointing someone to assist in an administrative capacity with scheduling interviews and will advise of his/her details in due course.

As you are further aware the review team has been tasked to:

- examine the nature and extent of current and past complaints
- examine how the college has responded to past complaints
- review the health and safety of staff and students at the college.

In light of these three matters we are also asked to comment, where appropriate, on:

- the extent to which the college is achieving its educational and ministry training objectives
- ways in which those objectives can be met in the future through alternative education ministry training models and strategies which may meet the changing needs of the church over time.

Approach

It is always my (and Doug's) practice to conduct reviews in as informal and co-operative a way as possible. I encourage free and frank discussion – both ways. I am also open to suggestions, as the review evolves, on ways to best conduct my examination of the college's culture (as well as commentary on matters relating to the church's educational and ministry training objectives), so please feel free to offer feedback. At an appropriate stage we will likely have a hui with interested stakeholders to help inform the review and test findings and possible improvements.

Participation

To participate in the review – in whatever form that may be – please send an email to reviewteam@kahuilegal.co.nz to register your interest (Kahui Legal is a law firm that will provide some limited assistance as required). Please note this email is strictly confidential to the review team. The review team will then be in touch with you. Registering will enable us to draw up a work schedule. The closing date for registering is 5pm on **Friday 9 April 2021**.

The review is open to all who have been at the college, past and present, as well as bishops, clergy, and people of your church. I encourage all of you to participate since the success of the review very much depends on the participation and cooperation of all of you, whether you have a specific complaint, more general comments about the college's culture or simply want to tell us what is working well at the college.

That oft-cited Maori proverb springs to mind here: He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata (What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people).

Process

As the Archbishops have mentioned we prefer face-to-face interviews. But we are happy to receive a written statement from you instead if you prefer. Some of you too may prefer to be interviewed in pairs or in small groups. I often find that small group interviews can be very helpful as they encourage good debate and the sharing of ideas. You can bring a support person to any interview if you wish.

Some of you may not be able to attend interviews in person or may be happier holding Zoom or Microsoft Teams meetings and we can arrange this.

I am also likely to arrange for a short confidential survey about culture to support the review. I hope you will participate in both the survey and the interviews.

Finally, the review team will have the assistance of a panel of advisors to consult as appropriate especially on matters relating to ecclesiology, tikanga, theological education and ministry training.

Confidentiality

As has already been emphasised, confidentiality is of the utmost importance particularly for those of you who have confidential and/or sensitive complaints about culture (past and current). That is because it protects your privacy, and it helps ensure free and frank discussion.

So, we want to assure you we will:

- keep confidential the identities of those we meet
- keep confidential all interview notes and any written material we receive from you
- destroy all notes and other material at the end of the review.

As you will appreciate, however, we must be able to test some of the information you give us – at a high level only and without revealing names – with the college and of course use it in writing our report, but with names anonymised. I emphasise the review is to consider the culture of the college: specific complaints will be relevant but it is not the purpose of the review to deal with these as such. Instead complaints will be referred on for a separate individualised process between the complainant and the college where necessary or appropriate.

Please note too, the review team will respect and maintain the confidentiality of, and/or legal privilege in, any relevant documents.

As to the interviews themselves we will:

- conduct them in a reasonably informal way
- outline the process to you at the beginning
- give you our assurance the interviews will be confidential where appropriate – and ask the same of you
- give you an idea of the topics we will cover at the start of the interview – including in advance if we think that is appropriate – but still let the interview unfold in a way that enables you to tell your story, share concerns or simply give feedback. As with any review we want to hear about the positives as well as the negatives.

Interviews will be either on-site at the college or off-site (likely my office in the city) or at a mutually agreed location especially if outside Auckland. You will be asked for your preference when an interview is arranged.

In short, we see this review – as with many other reviews Doug and I have done – as an opportunity for you to:

- voice concerns
- give feedback, including what's working well
- suggest ways you may like to see things change.

Wherever possible, interviews will be in English but if you would prefer to use your first language, then we will try to arrange for you to be able to do so.

Timing

The aim is to complete the review by 31 August 2021, if not earlier. We will do our best to meet that deadline. In that way we can then allow you – whether student or staff – to focus on the college's important work in providing theological education serving the tikanga of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia.

I will continue to keep you informed.

Kind regards



Miriam Dean CNZM QC