

## **RAC Summary**

Last year, the Board received a number of reviews into the culture and operation of our church. These covered, but were not limited to Human Resources policies and practices, financial processes and cultures and behaviours within the church. The reviews were carried out by Duncan Cotterill Law Firm, BDO Accounting, Parry Fields Lawyers and Pathfinding, the latter providing a mechanism for congregation members past and present to provide anonymised feedback to church leadership.

To create a cohesive set of recommendations from these disparate reviews, the Board created the Review Advisory Committee (RAC) with a two-part objective:

- a. to oversee the receipt of the various reviews; consult with appropriate persons from the wider Arise membership and staff and propose, to the Board, any final recommendations.
- b. to oversee the implementation of the accepted recommendations in order to provide transparency and accountability to the wider church.

The RAC for part a. above consisted of 14 members, including members representing the Board, Arise leadership and congregational members from Arise. The committee comprised members from six Arise campuses. The membership included both staff and non-staff and sought to represent the diverse nature of our church family, as well as a variety of professional skills and backgrounds. The Board also selected an independent chair from outside of Arise who has strong church governance experience coupled with a professional legal viewpoint. The RAC worked well together and were well guided by two members with specific theological responsibilities.

The RAC has now provided both an interim (December 2022) and final (April 2023) report to the Board in response to part a. above, which is summarised below. This memo provides a summary of those recommendations.

### **THE PROCESS**

The RAC undertook three different but interrelated activities in fulfilling the brief outlined in the terms of reference provided by the Board.

Firstly, the RAC members facilitated a series of conversations across Aotearoa New Zealand that allowed church members to outline their hopes and aspirations for Arise of the future. Around 450 people attended these gatherings and answered a set of questions covering a wide range of issues. The summary of this feedback is included at the end of this report. It is important to note that the role of the RAC was to summarise what was said and provide no editorial input beyond that. The summary accurately reflects the majority view of those involved.

Secondly, the RAC considered the organisational and legal framework for Arise and made a number of recommendations that are purposed to strengthen the governance structures and improve transparency of decision-making and accountability for those making decisions.

These recommendations include;

- a) Replacing the current Trust Deed to reflect the requirements of an organisation the size and complexity of Arise, including the principle that Arise is one church in many locations. The Trust Deed will ensure appropriate controls are in place to allow the Board to govern Arise effectively, whilst differentiating the roles of governance and

leadership. The RAC also made recommendations on the appropriate composition of the Board.

- b) Creating a joint Senior Leadership model that sees the Senior Pastor(s) working alongside a Chief Operating Officer, with distinct but overlapping responsibilities and with individual reporting lines to the Board.
- c) Creating a Spiritual Advisory Panel to provide oversight, advice and guidance on matters of spiritual significance to the Senior Pastors and Board. The panel will consist of both staff and lay leaders from across Arise, supplemented with a number of recognised Christian leaders from outside of Arise. Members will be well known to and accessible by the Arise congregation.
- d) Creating and making known the criteria with which Board members, Senior Leaders, Spiritual Advisory members and other key leaders within Arise will be assessed prior to appointment.
- e) Creating local eldership groups to support and advise Campus Pastors, including in matters which are specific to the campus location.

Finally, the RAC provided a number of overarching recommendations relating to the individual reviews. In the case of those focussed on policy and process, the RAC largely reiterated the expert opinions contained in them and recommended proceeding to implementation.

For the Pathfinding report, which recommended activities beyond formal process and policies, the RAC themed these into a number of overarching Biblically based recommendations, that included;

- a) The Board and Senior Leaders, with the Spiritual Advisory panel, restate the mission, strategy and values of Arise in a way that captures the heart, culture and passion of Arise and expresses grace and love for those both inside and outside of our church.
- b) The Board reiterate through a statement of intent that the Arise culture is based on God's love for all in line with our Statement of belief. *This is to include outlining our responsibilities for all cultures within Arise and engaging in meaningful consultation with Tangata Whenua. An important element will be to acknowledge the value in this process is as much in the journey as it is in agreeing an endpoint.*
- c) The Board and leadership commence a process to understand and love LGBTQI+ individuals attending Arise, recognising that while differing views on this process will be held, our primary purpose is to demonstrate the love of Christ and encourage personal growth into His likeness.
- d) The Board identify circumstances that disadvantage women within Arise and determine specific actions to address these, endeavouring to create a culture of equality that can be an inspiration to and cause for impetus for the wider church environment in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- e) The Board, together with Senior Leaders actively dismantle any unhealthy practices of honouring within Arise that have no biblical foundation and reset the culture of honouring to the theological foundations of humility, mutual respect and servant leadership.

Part a. of the RAC objectives is now complete. The approach to deliver part b. of the RAC objectives will be determined by the Board in due course.

The Board has accepted the recommendations conceptually and will now begin to outwork and implement them, noting that some action has already been taken in the past twelve months, some of this activity is immediate and some will be over an extended period of time.

## HUI THEMES

Hundreds of Arise Church members met in small groups in October and November 2022 to express their views on the future of the church's governance, leadership, life, and culture. Discussion focused on ten questions posed by the Review Advisory Committee (RAC). Contemporaneous meeting notes were carefully reviewed and reduced into themes by members of the RAC. The RAC has endeavoured to faithfully represent the views that were expressed and has not evaluated the merit or limitations of what is conveyed here.

1. Arise members want the church to be one church, a family united nationally, enabling local campuses with optimal autonomy to be an expression of Arise Church in and to their communities.
2. Arise members envision a Trust Board that expertly governs and protects the organisational integrity of the church, that frees a distinct entity to have spiritual oversight of the church, and that operates within terms of reference that free and support trustees to be accountable members of the Arise family.
3. Arise members call for a spiritual oversight entity comprising a small group of mature leaders, most of whom are Arise members. Church members call for a senior pastor or pastors who are visionary, apostolic, empowering of others, accountable, and who carry the voice of the church, leading with the support of campus pastors. Alongside clear appointment processes and criteria, members see discipleship, training, and accountability mechanisms applying equally to the senior pastor(s) and spiritual leaders as to any other member of Arise.
4. Arise members recommend a strong, Spirit-filled, professional leadership entity, appointment to which is in accordance with robust, transparent, industry-standard processes and procedures. Operational leaders engage in clear development, training and review processes and collectively build an openness in communication throughout the church.
5. Operational and financial management policies, systems and procedures within the church enable increased transparency, increased reporting to the congregation and a strong culture of stewardship within a discipleship context.
6. Arise members see obedience to and the pre-eminence of Christ as our ultimate cultural context. They see a church that upholds Biblical standards with courage, clarity, and grace, where members of all cultures and marginalised groups are welcomed, accepted, and loved. Members envision engaging genuinely with tangata whenua and other cultures and groups to reveal the full gifting of the Body of Christ.
7. Arise members desire to see systems of feedback and communication that increase the health and effectiveness of the church. Systems should adhere to Biblical teaching, promote relationship, build discipleship and enable reconciliation.
8. Arise members call for pastoral care policies and practices that better serve the congregation, volunteers and staff through training, better documentation and information about support, professional services and appropriate privacy and confidentiality provisions.
9. Arise members recognise the significant role volunteers play in church life. They see volunteering as integrally linked with discipleship and relationship imperatives and call for policies and practices to better manage the availability of and need for volunteers, practices that enhance volunteer contributions, and expressions that honour and empower volunteers.
10. Arise members call for a resetting of the purpose of the Ministry School and clarity of individual purpose for students entering the school. They call for practical supports for students, greater connection with the congregation and clear policy on Ministry School practices.