



# INDEPENDENT REVIEW - ARISE CHURCH

JULY 2022

PREPARED BY  
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This report presents the results of the independent review Pathfinding conducted into Arise Church, during April and May of 2022.

The report is in two sections:

### 1. Introduction

This section presents the context from which this review was commissioned, outlines the review process and the review team, presents some statistics around those who participated, and provides opening comments.

### 2. Experiences and Recommendations

A summary of the experiences people shared as part of the review process, and recommendations of changes for the future of Arise Church.

The review team also offers a Closing Prayer, as a conclusion.

# 1. Introduction

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## Context

This independent review was commissioned by the board of Arise Church. Arise Church is a Christian church, with 13 campuses around Aotearoa New Zealand. The Board committed to the review process in light of the stories which were shared in the public domain about hurts and harm some people had experienced during their involvement with Arise Church. Pathfinding was approached to lead the review of Arise Church, with a focus on understanding people's experiences of their time within the church and learning from these.

Acknowledging what is emerging as best practice for churches when responding to people's experiences of harm within a church, the Arise Church Board committed to ensuring that people would engage with trained and experienced mental health professionals, and that the process would be handled independently of Arise Church and centred on the needs of those coming forward.

## Process

On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2022, the commencement of the independent review was announced. People were invited to make contact with Pathfinding via an email address or 0800 number, with the option of making a written or verbal submission. In addition, to ensure that staff felt able to engage in the review, all current staff members were contacted directly to offer them an opportunity to engage in the process. This was done in agreement with the Arise Church Board. All participation was on a voluntary basis. We held in confidence the names of those making submissions and, as much as possible, anonymised or removed any information which would identify them. The process was open to any person who wished to make a submission.

Written submissions were acknowledged with a detailed individual response that asked follow up questions where necessary. Verbal submissions were managed by a small team of counsellors and psychologists who engaged with people over the phone or on a video call.

The submissions phase concluded on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May. Due to the volume of people who came forward on the final two days prior to submissions closing, further time was required to respond to submissions and to allow for interviews with those who wished to make a verbal submission. This process was concluded on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May.

Throughout the submission process, Pathfinding alerted the Arise Church Board to a range of matters at the time of submission that, if established, would constitute serious misconduct. Pathfinding also updated the Board regularly regarding the number of people who had come forward to make a submission.

Pathfinding has also proactively engaged with the New Zealand Police, who have seen a summary of the review findings.

In early June, we presented the Arise Church Board with a summary of each individual submission, removing any information which would identify individuals. This document will continue to be held in confidence by the Board and review team.

It is important to note that the process we have undertaken is a review process and not an investigation. Pathfinding was not tasked with undertaking an enquiry into all allegations, or to weigh all perspectives of Arise Church. Thus it is acknowledged that the experiences detailed in this review do not provide a complete picture of Arise Church or the people previously or currently involved in the Church.

Pathfinding was tasked by the Arise Church Board with creating an opportunity that allowed people who were, or are, involved in Arise Church to share their own experiences and views, to understand any follow up they desired personally, and to capture the changes they wished to see for the future of Arise Church. We were not tasked with determining whether those experiences were established on an evidential standard. Rather, we have treated people's stories as their real lived experience, avoiding perceiving people as complainants or putting them through a

process which disbelieves their experiences until proof is obtained. In order to uphold our responsibility to make reports to relevant authorities if necessary, we did undertake follow up action in some cases to ascertain what reporting had occurred. We were not tasked with putting allegations to those who were named in submissions as the focus of this review was to understand what people had experienced rather than to carry out an investigation and reach concluded findings on each allegation.

We would, however, note that there are no stories which have been raised as part of this report that stand alone and are not echoed by experiences relayed by other individuals, and it is on this basis that we make our recommendations. To provide additional assurance, and ensure that the report fairly and accurately portrayed people's experiences, we engaged independent legal counsel to review the recommendations alongside a summary of each of the submissions received.

We also note that by nature of the stories shared we have no reason to believe that any of the individuals who participated in the review process did so disingenuously – we believe that these are all real people who had a genuine association with Arise Church.

As part of our process we also requested to view relevant documents from Arise Church – for example, policies, a summary of incidents, and staff files we required access to.

It is important to mention that, at the time this review was initiated, there were two reviews commissioned – the review to be undertaken by Pathfinding, and a review by independent law firm, Duncan Cotterill, specific to employment matters with a focus on matters of legality. Some time after the submissions hearing process had concluded, the Arise Church Board announced that they would implement a Review Advisory Committee and shared a Review Roadmap outlining a series of additional reviews. However, the individuals who engaged in this review did so unaware of these further reviews and therefore with the expectation that the Pathfinding review process was the main review process within which they could make their comments. Within this context, a range of the content of submissions covers areas where further work will be undertaken. As this review was commissioned with a broad ambit, and



given it is an independently conducted review, our process was not affected by the Board's later decision to undertake additional reviews.

## The Review Team

Charlotte Cummings has been the lead reviewer, and was joined by two other review panel members, Reverend Frank Ritchie and Chris Clarke.

Charlotte is a counsellor and an experienced manager within the health and social service sectors. Charlotte's background includes managing highly sensitive complaints of abuse and misconduct, as well as policy and procedure development to prevent harm within charities and the church. Charlotte is a full member of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors.

Reverend Frank Ritchie is a minister within the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. Frank is well known for his commitment to the health and good standing of the body of Christ in this nation, and for his public commentary towards that end. Frank is also a broadcaster and a chaplain.

Chris Clarke is an experienced manager and leader, with a career spanning across high level management and governance roles. Chris has experience in health, humanitarian and philanthropic sectors and a series of CEO and governance roles in the public and faith based sectors. Chris's expertise is well regarded internationally.

Charlotte, Frank and Chris have a range of experience of different faith communities – Catholic, Brethren, Anglican, Baptist, Wesleyan Methodist and Pentecostal.

Verbal submissions were received by a team of five counsellors and psychologists, all of whom are full members of a relevant professional association.

## Statistics

Throughout the review process, we engaged with a total of 617 individuals. Some individuals made contact with questions, or sending links to articles, but did not go on to complete a submission. The total number of people who completed submissions was 545.

We were pleased that as part of this review process we heard from a range of people. We have heard from people from each of the Arise Church campuses across New Zealand, from a range of ages, ethnicities, from past and present Ministry School students, current and former members and staff, and from past Board members.

The following information provides some further data regarding submissions:

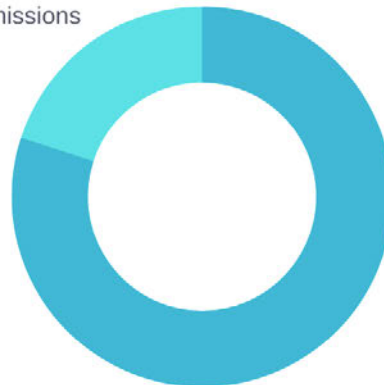
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**545**  
Completed  
submissions

**141**  
Submissions  
from current  
and ex interns

**117**  
Submissions  
from current  
and ex staff

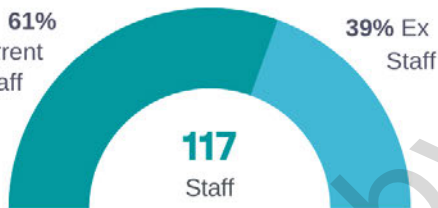
20% Verbal  
submissions



80% Written  
submissions



61%  
Current  
Staff



39% Ex  
Staff



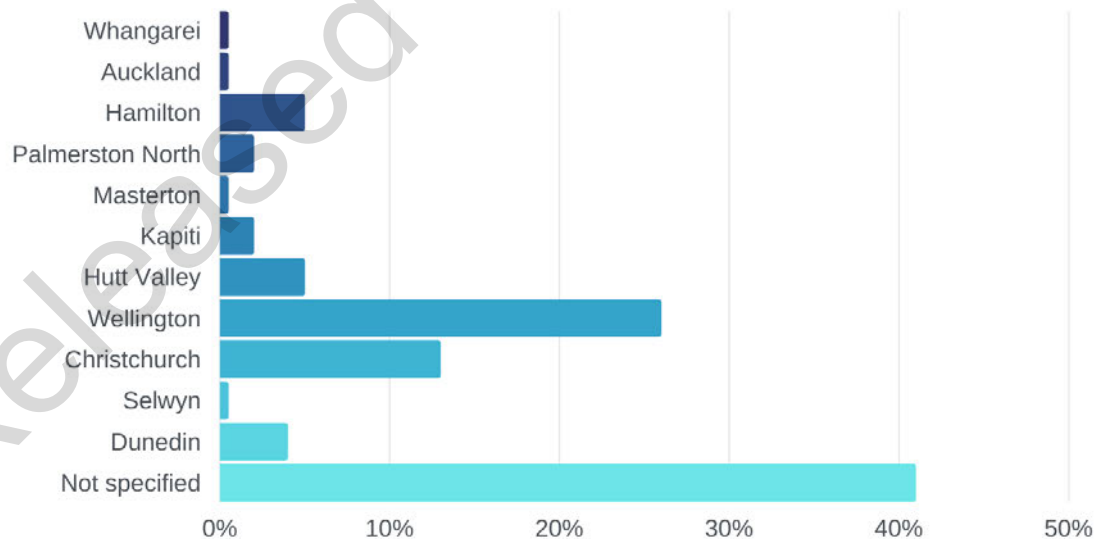
39% Male



57% Female



4% Anonymous or not specified





## Opening Comments

Firstly, we applaud the Arise Church Board for their willingness to undertake this independent review process and their prioritising of the needs of those who have been hurt or harmed through their involvement with Arise Church. It has been an extraordinarily painful and vulnerable time for the church. We are heartened that the Board chose to initiate a process which was, first and foremost, person-centred.

Most importantly, we wish to acknowledge the courage of those who have come forward to share their stories as part of the review process. The attention on Arise Church over recent months has been deeply confronting for many people, especially for those who have through this time had to recall and recount things that have hurt them or those they care about. Many of those who made submissions contributed a great deal of time and energy to presenting their experiences and views, often sharing many pages of content, or having prepared notes for verbal submissions. We know that for a number of people participation has been uncomfortable and has come at an emotional cost. We thank them for the gift that their feedback is to the future of Arise and we applaud the care they have shown for others in using their voices to prevent future harm.

It has been an exceptional privilege to be entrusted with these individuals' stories. We know from feedback that for some people there has been a sense of healing in the opportunity that was created for them to come forward - particularly in being heard, being believed and being validated. On behalf of the team who connected with those making submissions - thank you for the trust you placed in us, and for the opportunity we have had to be part of what we hope was and is a helpful experience for you.

The review allowed space for people who feel significantly aggrieved by their involvement with the church to share their stories and views. However, it has also encouraged many other people to share their experiences: long standing members, staff, friends of those in leadership, family of people involved with Arise Church. It would therefore be incorrect to conceptualise the review as being simply capturing the feedback of people who feel hostile towards Arise Church. While we have heard from some people who see no future for Arise Church and saw no future for its

leadership, a great many people have a strong desire to see Arise Church move forward positively into the future – addressing thoroughly the things that cause hurt, and allowing the positive impacts Arise Church has on its members and the community to continue. It would be fair to say that the vast majority of people who came forward with their stories did so with a desire to see Arise improve in the areas where they believe it has caused harm. In fact, 325 of the individuals who completed submissions are current members of Arise Church, many of whom carried their own stories of difficult experiences, and used this process to voice concerns they have held for some time.

The submissions demonstrate that some people have experienced significant harm through their involvement with Arise Church. It is also clear from the submissions that, while there were particularly difficult times in Arise Church's history, many harmful practices have continued up until the present time. Many people identified as part of their submission the years in which they were involved with Arise Church. So, while it is difficult to present data regarding the years of people's involvement, we can state that submissions cover the entirety of the church's history, from its early years right through to the present.

We also wish to acknowledge journalist David Farrier. We are aware that many people who have contributed to the review process, both former and current members of Arise Church, have expressed their gratitude for his role in bringing these matters to a place where they and their experiences have been given attention.

While some people have been critical of the role and views of the media through this time, their role has been significant in leading to the establishment of the review processes which is aimed at benefitting people who have been hurt and benefitting the health of the church going forward.

It is pleasing to see that 545 people completed submissions as part of the review process. We also understand that there are others who, for a variety of reasons, will not have come forward to engage in this process. Thus, the experiences we have heard should be considered as a sample, likely representing the stories of others we have not heard from. In particular, we note that there were a number of people who

engaged with us through the available contact channels, but did not go on to complete a submission. This is to be expected, and our recommendations include ensuring there are feedback pathways into the future for people to come forward should they choose to do so at a later time.

We recognize that the contents of this report make heavy reading. We also wish to acknowledge that with the completion of the various reviews, and with changes made to allow for appropriate structures and healthier culture, Arise Church can embrace a new future - a future where the church's good intentions align with the reality of people's experiences.

Released by Arise Church

## 2. Experiences & Recommendations

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The submissions received demonstrate a need for significant structural and culture changes within the life of Arise Church.

It is the opinion of the reviewers that, under new governance and leadership, and with the commitment of its members, Arise can rebuild as a church community. While the changes required are significant and wide ranging, we see that, with a clear plan Arise will be able to make these changes.

These recommendations connect directly with the themes we heard from those who made submissions as part of the review process, and also address what we as the review team see as some of the systemic issues which have led to people experiencing such significant hurt within Arise Church. We acknowledge that the recommendations here that give voice to what was heard in the submissions cross over with the focus of other reviews. We urge all groups to hold with care the desires of those who made submissions. We also acknowledge that the Arise Church Board has expressed that it is already taking steps in some of these areas. We believe that what follows should act to encourage and strengthen those activities within the church.

It must be acknowledged that some of the recommendations might be met with a response from some people of questioning whether these changes are truly necessary. We stress the importance of hearing the voices of those who have been aggrieved, and seeking to understand the importance of the church taking all possible measures to avoid future harm. The future of Arise Church must include an ongoing commitment to avoiding practices, attitudes and systems which have themselves caused harm or failed to stop harm that was occurring.

Grouped in themes, we present the following summary of submissions and recommendations:

## 1. Culture & Racism

**Experiences:** A number of submissions reflected issues regarding cultural identity and experiences of racism.

- a) Some who identify as tangata whenua expressed that they feel Arise Church shows a lack of understanding around their culture and values, and that they do not see evidence of the church's commitment to honouring Te Tiriti. These individuals described feeling that they have to leave their culture 'at the door' when engaging in the life of the church. It was commented on that efforts around engagement with Māori felt tokenistic and were generally Pākehā led. We have also heard that a number of Māori felt there weren't opportunities to succeed as Māori within the church.
- b) We also heard from people from a range of cultures (Pasifika, Filipino and Chinese), who described their feeling that there wasn't room for their cultural perspective to be included at Arise Church.
- c) A small number of submissions expressed some people have felt 'used' in that, while their talents could be utilized, the rest of who they were from a cultural perspective had to be set aside.
- d) People who identified themselves as being of non-European identity have commented that they are seldom represented in Arise Church's leadership, and made observations around the limited cultural diversity at a leadership level. They expressed a strong desire to see intentional efforts to address this limited cultural diversity in Arise Church leadership.
- e) We heard people recounting stories of experiencing racist remarks, including from the stage during Sunday church services. We heard that these comments on occasion allegedly came from some staff in leadership roles. We also heard that racist remarks were also allegedly made privately by guest speakers and [REDACTED]
- f) We heard from a small number of former staff who described being told to focus their efforts on 'white kids' and at times allegedly being told that certain groups of people belonged at a different church, based on their ethnicity.

**Recommendation 1:** Establish a group of tangata whenua to identify, lead, and champion the inclusion and engagement of tangata whenua in the future of Arise Church. We note that it is important that tangata whenua are given the ability to identify who should be approached to form the membership of this group, honouring their understandings and practices around leadership.

**Recommendation 2:** Establish a multicultural group to identify, lead and champion the inclusion and engagement of all cultures in the future of Arise Church. Again, it is important that minority cultures are given the ability to identify who should be approached to form the membership of this group, honouring their understandings and practices around leadership.

**Recommendation 3:** That the Arise Church Board receives a report from the tangata whenua and multicultural leadership groups, at least bi-annually, regarding their views, initiatives they would like to see undertaken, and any resourcing requirements.

**Recommendation 4:** Undertake a consultation and engagement process to understand the necessary actions and attitudes which will support greater cultural diversity in the future of Arise Church leadership. From this, create a plan which will foster and support multicultural leadership within the church, to be reported on at least bi-annually to the Arise Church Board.

**Recommendation 5:** Review Arise Church's policies around the church's commitment to fostering inclusion, ensuring it is clear there will be no tolerance for racism, including casual racism.



## 2. Sexual Harassment & Assault

**Experiences:** We have heard from some individuals with painful stories around the church's alleged responses to their experience of sexual grooming, underage relationships, sexual harassment, assault or rape. It was recounted that some of these incidents occurred within the person's life outside of Arise, but we also heard of alleged incidents at the hands of other Arise Church members. We have heard clearly from the people who had allegedly experienced these harms that they wish no person in the future of any Arise Church community ever faces the unnecessary additional hurts they feel they experienced from their church at a time of such vulnerability and need.

We also heard that some staff allegedly sexually harassed others or indecently exposed themselves. There were also allegations that a staff member engaged in unwanted sexual touch

- a) We heard from people who made submissions regarding their experience of sexual harm that they felt disbelieved and judged through the responses they received by church staff or leaders. This included that some people felt they were blamed for what had happened to them.
- b) It is alleged that stories of sexual harassment, assault or rape were shared with church leaders or staff more widely than was apparently appropriate or necessary.
- c) We heard allegations about the involvement of a [REDACTED] and, separately, [REDACTED] in incidents of nudity in front of a staff member, which if established would amount to indecent exposure, and we heard of ongoing targeted sexual harassment by a certain leader.
- d) Some submitters felt that there was a lack of action from some staff in preventing subsequent incidents of a sexual nature, including not reporting incidents where reporting was required. Some said they were not advised or encouraged to engage with authorities regarding their experience of a sexual crime, as would be expected.

- e) We note that there appears to have been insufficient record keeping about serious incidents of a sexual nature.

**Recommendation 6:** That all church leaders receive compulsory training on expected responses to incidents of a sexual nature. This training should include, but not be limited to: appropriate note taking and record keeping, legal and reporting obligations, best practice responses and what not to say, understanding consent, and how to provide necessary ongoing support.

**Recommendation 7:** That the church reviews its policies regarding unwanted sexual behaviour. This should include ensuring there is training around the prevention of unwanted sexual behaviour, how to identify matters such as grooming behaviours, managing underage sexual relationships, and detailed processes around responding when a sexual incident occurs.

*Comment: There are further recommendations made under both the Incident Management and Privacy themes which will also support best practice response and sufficient oversight regarding incidents of a sexual nature.*

### **3. Bullying & Physical Assault**

**Experiences:** We have heard a significant number of people have faced what they have experienced and named as bullying. We have also heard of some experiences of alleged physical assault.

- a) A number of submissions stated that some staff and volunteers were allegedly subjected to outbursts of anger and being shouted at by some leaders or

other staff, often leaving them feeling not good enough, and anxious about future interactions.

- b) We heard from some former staff and volunteers who relayed stories of being physically 'handled' on occasion; often in front of others. For example, some submissions recounted stories where people had allegedly been grabbed by the collar and shouted at.
- c) We were told of instances where interns were bullied when driving leaders - either with instructions to break driving laws solely for some leaders' convenience, or actions occurring just for "fun" by a leader, with that form of bullying potentially jeopardising the driver's safety.
- d) We also heard of practices where individuals were allegedly given nicknames by some leaders that were derogatory and then used in front of others over a period of months.
- e) We heard a significant number of stories related to a small number of past Arise Church staff members and the damaging treatment people received from these individuals.
- f) A number of submissions raised alleged experiences people have had of current Arise staff, where they have felt bullied or controlled.

**Recommendation 8:** Follow up with staff members identified in the review, including by formally investigating claims made against them, and undertaking necessary plans to ensure appropriate future interpersonal interactions.

**Recommendation 9:** That Arise Church reviews its policies around the prevention of and response to matters of bullying and assault.

**Recommendation 10:** All Arise Church staff must engage in compulsory training which includes outlining the church's expectations around zero tolerance for bullying and assault, including defining what could constitute bullying in a church setting.

**Recommendation 11:** Review and strengthen the Arise Church Code of Conduct, including providing definition of unacceptable behaviours.

**Recommendation 12:** Imbed the Arise Church Code of Conduct as a key organizational document, reflecting the church's commitment to appropriate conduct. It is expected that this process should include:

- Adopting the Code of Conduct to cover both staff and volunteers.
- Ensuring the Code of Conduct is covered as part of orientation processes for all staff and volunteers. This should include requiring individuals to sign reflecting their understanding of the document.
- Providing Code of Conduct training to be attended or engaged with at least once by all Staff and Volunteers.
- Considering how Code of Conduct training might be reoffered at useful intervals.
- Establishing a system through which the Code of Conduct is regularly re-read and re-signed by all staff and volunteers.

## **4. Marginalized Groups**

**Experiences:** We heard from some groups of people within the church who felt that they had challenges in their experience of the church which were related to personal factors – being older, being female, not being married, identifying as LGBTQI+.

We also heard from some people with professional skills and experience who have felt they have not had opportunities to contribute within the church.

In addition, we heard from many people who expressed painful stories around their experiences upon leaving Arise Church.

- a) We heard of the felt difficulties faced by people in trying to find their place within the church if they were older. We heard how saddening it was for these people when they perceived that younger generations were overworked while

they sat with capacity, struggling to find meaningful places to engage and serve. We heard stories from these people of feeling disrespected, undervalued, and disengaged.

- b) Submissions raised that some women in Arise Church have felt there have been limits on what and how they could contribute in the church, because they are female. Some people identified messaging they experienced as problematic around gender – for example, being told that the man's name should always come first when referring to a male/female couple.
- c) Submissions from some individuals identified that, as single people, they struggled to find their place within the life of Arise Church.
- d) We have heard from people who felt that they were shunned and cut off when they chose to stand down from roles of service or to exit Arise Church.
- e) We heard from people who identify as belonging to the LGBTQI+ community who have had a strong desire to also belong as part of Arise Church, who have faced great difficulty finding their place within the church. In particular, we heard from some people who felt aggrieved because they were denied opportunities to serve because of what they believe was said to be their 'sin'.
- f) We received submissions from professionals with a strong desire to contribute their leadership and business skills within the operation of the church, but felt there was not space to do this. We heard that they felt they were looked to for financial giving, but other opportunities to contribute were scarce. We also heard that it felt especially difficult to offer commercial skills within the life of the church if the individual was based outside of the Wellington region.
- g) It was raised in a small number of submissions that some people allegedly were referred on by the church to engage in what they identified as conversion therapy.

**Recommendation 13:** Establish a contact person who identifies as LGBTQI+ and is an active participant within Arise who can act as a contact point for other Arise Church members who identify as LGBTQI+, or their family members. The purpose of this role is to provide a channel through which people can raise their concerns and share their experiences, and to encourage and support people to find a meaningful

place within the life of the church. It is envisaged that people could be connected with this contact person by their Life Group Leader or Campus Pastor.

**Recommendation 14:** Examine the practice of disallowing people to serve within the church because of their sexual identity, and look for ways in which all people can participate in the life of the church.

**Recommendation 15:** Ensure that Arise Church makes a commitment in its policies to not engage in any practices which could be constituted as conversion therapy. This should also include committing to not referring individuals on for any therapeutic intervention that could be constituted as conversion therapy.

**Recommendation 16:** Review Arise Church's policies to ensure they sufficiently address matters related to diversity and inclusion.

**Recommendation 17:** Establish a 'Women of Arise' group, who will connect at least twice yearly to identify, lead and champion the inclusion and engagement of women at Arise Church.

**Recommendation 18:** Establish a process by which people with professional skills are able to connect with Arise Church leadership and/or governance to offer their skills.

**Recommendation 19:** Establish a portfolio and Board Liaison person for these special roles and groups.



**Recommendation 20:** Campus Pastors to create a plan for their campus regarding the inclusion of groups who can feel marginalized – older people, women, single people, people who identify as LGBTQI+. This plan should be reviewed annually and reported to the Senior Leadership.

## **5. Finances**

**Experiences:** We heard from a significant number of people about their concerns regarding the alleged use of finances by the church.

- a) A number of submissions raised that some people feel disillusioned and deeply disappointed by the way they believe their financial offerings to the Kingdom of God have been used by Arise Church. We have heard that there is a great discomfort from some of the congregation past and present around what they perceived to be extravagant spending by some [REDACTED] based on their apparent lifestyles and appearances.
- b) Some individuals have raised questions regarding personal expenses they allege were covered for some church staff – for example, regularly covering lunch expenses, family groceries, clothing, home landscaping.
- c) A large number of submissions reflected a strong desire for greater financial accountability, for policies guiding expenditure, and for fuller transparency around the use of church finances.
- d) We have also heard from some people who have felt pressure around giving financially to Arise Church, and from people who have felt uncomfortable that their financial giving seems to have been known and commented on.
- e) A number of submissions expressed people's discomfort around what they perceive to be the church's focus on money.
- f) We heard of people's experience of enduring personal hardship so they could tithe as they felt they were expected to.
- g) We have heard that there was felt discomfort around donations some believe were made to other churches or church leaders.
- h) Some individuals raised concerns regarding how they understood 'tagged' donations were used (eg. for Arise Care, or the 'Big Hearts' campaign), with

an apparent practice of some church operating expenses allegedly being apportioned out of donations for other things.

- i) We heard from some people who were deeply concerned to hear allegations that the church may have made financial settlements to exiting staff members, however this may have been termed.
- j) Some submissions raised that there was a problematic change in expenditure practices since 2017.

**Recommendation 21:** Commission a full independent review of the use of finances by Arise Church since 2017, beyond whether or not the church met auditing requirements.

**Recommendation 22:** Ensure that donations made to other churches or individuals are subject to approval by the Board on a case by case basis.

**Recommendation 23:** Ensure that the staff expenditure policy clearly outlines expenses staff are not able to claim - for example, family groceries, personal lunches.

**Recommendation 24:** Review policies around expenditure limits for senior leadership.

**Recommendation 25:** Provide a full financial report on an annual basis to Arise Church members, to be made public on the church's website. This report should provide a sense of full and transparent financial accountability to members for the use of church funds. This reporting process should also invite members to submit questions or comments, should they wish to do so.

**Recommendation 26:** Develop a policy or position statement around tithing, reviewing the messaging members receive from the church on this matter.

## **6. Staff & Volunteers**

**Experiences:** One of the key themes we heard through the review process was of the difficulties people feel they have faced in volunteering or working in a paid capacity for the church.

- a) A number of submissions expressed the physical impacts people have experienced which they attribute to their involvement with, or work for Arise Church. We have heard many stories of burnout and exhaustion, often affecting individuals for a period of months or years.
- b) We also heard from some people who felt pressured to continue working despite illness or serious injuries – for example, people who had broken bones, or had experienced concussion. We have heard of the dangers people have allegedly faced driving through the night without sleep to meet what they believe was expected of them, and operating heavy machinery after 17+ hours of duties on a Sunday.
- c) We have heard from people who say they walked away from the church and also walked away from faith, because of their experiences within Arise Church.
- d) We have heard people express that they felt pressured to serve Arise Church beyond what they could reasonably manage.
- e) We heard from a small number of individuals who relayed their experience of working voluntarily for the church, having been told a paid role would likely eventuate, who felt very disillusioned when this did not occur.
- f) Some submissions from staff and volunteers reflected that they have felt they had to be available to leadership 24/7.

- g) We have heard of the significant hurt some people have experienced when being stood down from roles, particularly voluntary roles, because of personal difficulties they were facing.
- h) We have heard from staff and volunteers who have felt overwhelmed by what they conveyed as unrealistic expectations.
- i) Some people have expressed feeling pressured to take new roles, including having to move to a different location.
- j) Some expressed that they believe staff remuneration and conditions need to be reviewed.
- k) Some staff have felt they have not received sufficient induction into their role.
- l) We heard of people's discomfort and concern around what they perceive as inappropriate initiation rituals for staff.
- m) Some submissions raised concerns that in their view there was not sufficient accountability for leave for senior positions within the church.
- n) We have heard from some individuals that, in their opinion, Arise Church has not handled its responsibilities to some staff with sufficient professionalism and care. It has been the experience and view of some individuals that Arise Church has, at times, allegedly been in breach of employment law and the principles of good faith. People's experiences have included what they have perceived as constructive dismissal, unfair redundancy processes, being promised jobs which didn't eventuate, warnings processes without support, and role changes without negotiation.

*Comment: We expect that the review of Arise Church's Code of Conduct, addressed under the Bullying and Physical Assault theme, will also address some of the matters raised relating to staff and volunteers.*

**Recommendation 27:** Develop induction modules which must be completed by all staff, interns and volunteers, including a system for key training modules to be revisited as a refresher at appropriate intervals.

**Recommendation 28:** Disestablish the practice of staff only having two Sundays off per year. Ensure that staff are able to have Sundays off to attend church services simply as members and alongside their family, or to attend elsewhere if desired, or for any other reason.

**Recommendation 29:** Ensure the practice of people working for 'promised jobs' ceases.

**Recommendation 30:** Ensure staff are given options and freedom to decline requests to move to work in different Arise campuses around New Zealand.

**Recommendation 31:** Establish agreed limits, to be reflected in policy, on serving times on Sundays, to ensure the health and safety, and mental and emotional wellbeing of staff and volunteers.

**Recommendation 32:** Ensure that senior staff are accountable to the Board for leave taken.

**Recommendation 33:** Ensure that Sundays are considered a 'work day' for staff within their work pattern.

**Recommendation 34:** Undertake job sizing for all roles to ensure that expectations for roles are realistic.

**Recommendation 35:** Ensure that staff initiation does not include induction rituals which might cause discomfort or humiliation.

**Recommendation 36:** Ensure that the church's People and Culture role reports directly to the board, protecting this as a key channel through which issues and concerns can be raised with the Arise Church Board.

**Recommendation 37:** Review remuneration and key employment conditions for all staff, including expectations around unpaid hours.

**Recommendation 38:** Ensure that changes to an individual staff member's role are negotiated with due process.

**Recommendation 39:** Cease the current practice of standing people down from volunteer roles within the church when they are struggling in an area of their life - eg. when people are experiencing mental health challenges or engaging in behaviour considered by the church to be sinful. Any stand downs should be considered with caution and approved by the People Care leader, ensuring a fair process is followed for the individual concerned.

## **7. Ministry School**

**Note:** The term 'Intern' was used historically by Arise. 'Ministry School Student' is the current term utilized by Arise, which will be echoed here.



**Experiences:** We received a significant volume of submissions from people who were historically or are currently engaged with Arise Church as Ministry School Students. While some individuals relayed their positive experiences or outcomes from being part of the Ministry School, the majority of submissions raised difficulties and concerns.

- a) We heard from a number of people that they gained valuable work experience and skills through their time as a Ministry School student.
- b) We heard many stories of exhaustion, burnout, and mental and physical breakdown both during and following people's experience of Ministry School.
- c) We heard of Ministry School students allegedly living in impoverished conditions and struggling to make ends meet. In particular, many people raised the challenge of needing to engage in part-time employment to meet their financial needs, but stated that the reality of doing this alongside Arise Church's expectations on their time felt unsustainable.
- d) Some alleged that Ministry School students were required to cover costs such as transport costs for running errands or transporting staff.
- e) We heard from Ministry School students who allege that they did not receive the support agreed by Arise, particularly around mentoring.
- f) Some stated that they believed there was no ability for Ministry School students to identify the areas they wished to serve in, or the hours or days they would serve.
- g) We have heard of the disappointment Ministry School students have felt that they were often seen as servants to the leadership of Arise Church, rather than being meaningfully engaged in growing in Christian ministry skills. In particular, we heard that some people felt used when their core tasks were allegedly to support pastors with child care, car and house cleaning, gardening etc.

**Recommendation 40:** Ensure that Ministry School students have a say in identifying the area/s they are willing to serve in, and are able to accept or decline the position they are offered.

**Recommendation 41:** Ensure that Ministry School students hold the power to identify the length of their engagement and the hours and times they are willing to commit to.

**Recommendation 42:** Develop a formal agreement process between Ministry School students and the church. These agreements should:

- a) Establish time limits for Ministry School students serving the church on a week-to-week basis and establish a timesheet system to ensure monitoring of agreed hours.
- b) Document the church's commitment to the support of the Ministry School student, including:
  - I. Who their internal Supervisor will be and the agreed frequency with which they will meet.
  - II. Who their mentor will be, outside of the Arise Church staff structure, and the agreed frequency with which they will meet.

**Recommendation 43:** In addition to the mentoring now in place, ensure that Ministry School students have access to counselling funded by the church, if required. Ensure that all students are made aware of this option at least quarterly, and have access to details of recommended counsellors if desired.

**Recommendation 44:** Undertake an annual evaluation of the Ministry School programme, which includes feedback from all students. This should be reported to the Arise Church Board.

**Recommendation 45:** Ensure that there is an identified process for Ministry School students to access mediation, supported by an external mediator, should there be issues requiring resolution.

**Recommendation 46:** Ensure that Ministry School students are reimbursed for costs - for example, when required to transport individuals or run errands.

## **8. Governance**

**Experiences:** Many submitters have conveyed a need for Arise Church to reform its governance structure in order to regain the trust of its members. Based on submissions received, it is the opinion of the Review Team that there have been significant and systemic failures in governance stretching back over many years including a lack of meaningful oversight and proper independence, little transparency in decision making, no recognised feedback channels for people to raise concerns, insufficient financial accountability, and an absence of policies in key areas.

While we understand that there is to be a separate governance review, given the number of submissions we received and the range of serious allegations and issues they raised, we are of the opinion that it is unacceptable both that the Board were unaware of key issues within Arise Church, and that they did not initiate the necessary mechanisms to ensure they could exercise their governance responsibilities.

- a) We have heard that a significant number of current members desire much greater transparency around church governance in the future. People expressed their wish to know who is on the Arise Church Board, to have the Church members decide who is on the Board, to have access to minutes, and to know how to contact the Board. We acknowledge that profiles for current Arise Church Board members are now available on the church's website.
- b) Many submitters have felt that there have been significant gaps in communication to and from the Arise Church Board. Several submitters considered the Board did not clearly pass on information or explain their decisions, there has also been frustration from past Board members about the lack of information available to them as they are learning of several issues only recently.

- c) We have heard a range of issues which relate to the past structure of having members of Senior Leadership also holding office as board members. Some people considered that having members of Senior Leadership on the Board impacted on the Board's independence.

**Recommendation 47:** That the current Arise Church Board resigns, identifying, by the 31<sup>st</sup> of July, an exit date.

***Comment:** Notwithstanding the new appointments, the Board as an entity has lost its moral mandate to govern Arise. The reasons we are recommending that the Board resigns are to:*

- 1. Demonstrate public accountability for the seriousness, longevity and scale of the harm caused to individuals.*
- 2. Demonstrate public accountability for the inadequacy of historic governance.*
- 3. Make a further step towards repairing relationships with those who were harmed.*
- 4. Enable new leadership to be appointed, untainted by past inaction and behaviours.*

**Recommendation 48:** That the current Board appoints a commissioner. The commissioner should be a committed Christian, and have significant governance and change management experience. We recommend that it is the role of the commissioner to:

- a) Take responsibility for beginning the implementation of the recommendations made in this review report.
- b) Facilitate the process of establishing a new Board.

*Comment: We also note that one current Board member could be appointed temporarily to the new Board for a period of 12 months, for the purpose of providing the new Board with any information they require. The selection of this person should be by joint agreement between the outgoing and incoming Board and the commissioner, and they should be precluded from holding any formal office (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer). Under the requirements of its current Trust Deed, we note that current board members would need to remain as office holders until such time as new board members have been appointed, and suggest that advice is sought from a trust/charities specialist around this process.*

**Recommendation 49:** That the commissioner remains to mentor and advise the new Board, for an agreed term.

**Recommendation 50:** Ensure that the Board develops a robust strategic plan for the church which can be shared with church members and made public on the church website.

**Recommendation 51:** Ensure that members of the leadership of Arise Church are not to hold a place on the board in the future.

**Recommendation 52:** Ensure that all future senior leadership roles should make formal written reports to the Arise Church Board, including representing in their reporting input from Campus Pastors, and having a standard order of business related to the reporting of incidents and health and safety issues.

**Recommendation 53:** Establish a plan to ensure diversity is encouraged into the future for the Arise Church Board.

**Recommendation 54:** Ensure that all new Board members undertake a formation process, which includes a theological component.

**Recommendation 55:** Ensure that all Board members names and a contact channel for the Board are publicised on the Arise Church website, with staff and church members made aware at least twice yearly that this contact channel is in place.

**Recommendation 56:** Ensure that all members of the Arise Church Board reside in New Zealand, and that the majority of Board members are current members of Arise Church.

**Recommendation 57:** Ensure that the Charities Commission website is kept up to date regarding details of current board members.

*Note: We acknowledge the difficulties the Arise Church Board has stated it has had with the Charities Commission's own timeline on updating their records with material it has been sent.*

**Recommendation 58:** Ensure that early tasks for the new board include:

- a) Establishing the future senior leadership/management structure of Arise Church, and managing appointments to these roles
- b) Developing indicators of church health
- c) Reviewing the church values
- d) Establishing how discipleship will be prioritised within the church.

*Comment: We acknowledge that there are other reviews focused on governance and we trust that the voice of submitters and these recommendations based on those voices, will be considered in these reviews.*

## 9. Leadership Structures, Training & Formation

**Experiences:** Through both staff and congregation member submissions it was clearly reflected that there is a need to strengthen the role of the Campus Pastors, in creating a new model of how leadership is held across Arise Church into the future. In the case of some regions, we heard incredibly positive comments about people's experiences of their Campus Pastors. In other regions, we heard that there is a felt need for further development of those in the Campus Pastor role. We observe that Campus Pastors are key leaders within the church, but do not appear to have the authority, training, support structures and formation we would expect to see in such roles.

- a) A number of review participants who are current members commented on their desire to see their Campus Pastors take more of a role within the church, in order for their campus to have more of a 'local' flavour than defaulting to centralised leadership and preaching.
- b) Some submissions raised that there is, at times, a sense that Campus Pastors are promoted due to their charisma, and that there is a need for training and formation to support leaders in their competence, character and theology.
- c) We have heard that some Campus Pastors feel ill equipped for their role and overwhelmed by the demands of the role.
- d) Submissions reflected that many feel the leadership structure at Arise Church has left Campus Pastors without the empowerment and decision making authority needed to lead their campus well and in a way which is responsive to the needs of their campus.



**Recommendation 59:** Invest in further training for Campus Pastors to strengthen their role within the church. Including:

- a) Establishing base training requirements for Campus Pastors - especially addressing what they receive by way of spiritual formation and theological training.
- b) Engaging with Campus Pastors to hear their training needs.
- c) Training in other key areas, including but not limited to people management skills and the handling of complex pastoral care issues.

**Recommendation 60:** Review Campus Pastors' Job Descriptions, giving Campus Pastors responsibility and appropriate accountability for their campus budgets, including the ability to identify and respond to the staffing and community needs in their location.

## 10. Pastoral Care, Mental & Emotional Health

**Experiences:** Another of the most prevailing themes discussed in submissions was people's experience around what they perceived as a lack of care they received in times of need.

- a) Many submitters expressed that they felt there are significant gaps in how Arise Church has responded to people in times of mental and emotional distress. In particular, some people noted that they felt the church did not understand the gravity of the issues they were facing, and that they experienced a lack of care or concern for their wellbeing. Some people have expressed their sadness as they don't believe that pastoral care was seen as a priority within Arise.

- b) Some people described efforts made by church staff and leaders to 'counsel' them through issues, with a focus on how they could move on from what they were experiencing. While well intentioned, it is important that church staff and leaders understand their limits and make appropriate referrals for additional support where needed.
- c) People have also shared that they felt Arise Church simplified their experiences of distress as being spiritual issues, and that there was problematic messaging around the supports people should engage.
- d) In particular, we heard people's experiences of a felt lack of understanding around their experience of addiction issues.
- e) We also heard the impact of what people have described as 'toxic positivity' and that they have felt the church needed to foster an environment which encouraged honesty in times of challenge and struggle.
- f) We also heard that, at times, some staff and leaders perceived that there was a lack of compassion in attitudes reflected in internal meetings which were intended to focus on pastoral needs.
- g) We heard a great many people raise how the 'culture of excellence' within the church impacted their mental and emotional health, and how this contributed to distress they experienced.

**Recommendation 61:** Reform the church's responses to people in mental and emotional distress, including:

- a) Reviewing and revising policies and procedures relating to the care of people who are experiencing mental and emotional distress. Policies and procedures in this vitally important area should also include:
  - I. Identifying things church staff and volunteers will not say or do regarding mental health - for example, giving advice around the use of medication, advising that people 'pray harder' for healing etc.
  - II. Establishing criteria/scenarios where staff or volunteers refer individuals on to further support from another individual/agency.
  - III. Addressing how Arise can be proactive in supporting good mental health for members, including:

- Considering appropriate messaging 'from the front' around mental health
  - Regularly presenting options for people should they wish to share about a personal issue
  - Offering people suggestions about how they can begin a conversation about a personal issue
  - Utilizing the church's social media channels to encourage and promote mental health and options for support
  - Explaining regularly to people the church's commitment to upholding people's privacy and what they can expect in terms of confidentiality around personal issues
  - Having material available on the church's website which clearly outlines support options.
- b) Ensuring all staff and key volunteers receive training upon induction regarding how to identify and respond well when a person is experiencing mental and emotional distress, with training to be refreshed annually – eg. Red Cross 'Mental Health First Aid' course.
- c) Establishing a national People Care role, to oversee the church's pastoral care systems, to support staff and leaders in navigating challenging situations and to oversee that people receive the care they need. The development of this role should consider the appropriate qualifications for this work - eg. social work or counselling training plus a church ministry background.
- d) Develop resources for leaders around how to respond helpfully to people in a range of challenging pastoral situations – eg. relationship break up, sexual addiction, suicidality, depression, anxiety. These resources should include providing clear guidance on 'what not to say'.
- e) Develop a list of local agencies/individuals to refer members to eg. counsellors, budgeting services, social work support agencies, addictions specialty services. Ensure all agencies/individuals referrals are made to have counsellors/health professionals who are:
- I. Fully trained
  - II. Members of an appropriate professional body with an Annual Practising Certificate
  - III. Can sign a statement confirming they do not engage in conversion therapy practices.

**Recommendation 62:** That the Board and church leadership discuss how to address the 'culture of excellence' within Arise Church, identifying the practices and attitudes which need to be addressed to ensure that people's mental and emotional wellbeing is held as paramount.

## 11. Privacy

**Experiences:** Through a range of submissions, we heard of people's experience of what, if established, would be significant breaches in their privacy.

- a) We heard that personal and sensitive information on the church's 'Flocks' data management system was allegedly able to be accessed by any person with system access, with inappropriate access possibly occurring at times.
- b) We heard that there was a lack of understanding from past and present church members about the collection and storage of information, and who would have access to their personal information. We have heard of people who have felt deeply betrayed by what they believe to be Arise Church's lack of protection of their privacy.
- c) We heard that practices around 'up-lining' may have often resulted in far more people being made aware of an individual's sensitive situation than was necessary to support the individual. While probably well-intentioned, the people that raised issues around 'up-lining' experienced significant breaches of confidentiality when they were facing personal difficulty and, as a result, this led to them feeling judged and isolated.

**Recommendation 63:** Reform Arise Church's understanding of and practices around privacy. Including:

- a) Ensuring that training around privacy is a compulsory induction/training module for all staff and volunteers.
- b) Ensuring that when church members/visitors/event participants are asked to share their personal information they receive a disclosure statement regarding

who will hold this information, how this will be used, the purpose for which it will be used, and how it will be stored.

- c) Ensuring that when a matter needs to be passed on to another individual it is clear what the purpose of this sharing is, and that the person who has shared about an issue is aware of who will know their situation and the reason for this.
- d) Establishing two Privacy Officer roles to champion privacy best practice - one to be based at Arise Church's office headquarters, and one to be based at a location in another part of New Zealand. In addition:
  - Establish a brief description of the function of this role within the church.
  - Provide the necessary training, opportunities for networking with other church Privacy Officers, and initial supervision/mentorship for these individuals.
  - Identify the Privacy Officer role holders on Arise Church's website, and ensure church members are reminded twice annually of this role, its function, and how to contact these individuals with any privacy concerns.

## 12. Health & Safety

**Experiences:** Throughout some submissions Health and Safety issues were raised. It appears there is a need for some more formal processes to support the church in upholding the necessary commitment to people's Health and Safety while engaged in church activities.

- a) We heard that staff, volunteers and members did not know who to go to in order to discuss health and safety concerns.
- b) We heard that health and safety concerns which were raised were not responded to in a manner that left individuals assured that necessary follow up would be taken.

**Recommendation 64:** Review the number of Health and Safety representatives within Arise, ensuring that the key 'groups' within the church – eg. Ministry School

Students, groups of staff, volunteers and campuses – have their own defined Health and Safety representative, through which concerns can be channelled.

**Recommendation 65:** Ensure all staff, volunteers and members are advised at regular intervals who the Health and Safety representatives are and how they might assist them in addressing concerns.

**Recommendation 66:** Review the system through which health and safety concerns can be raised and actioned.

**Recommendation 67:** Ensure the Board receives a regular report on Health and Safety matters, as a standing agenda item.

**Recommendation 68:** Review with urgency health and safety issues related to Sunday services and events - eg. volunteers walking alone through the central city at 4am, heavy machinery operation after 17+ hours of duty.

**Recommendation 69:** Review risk assessment and management processes for Youth Group activities, including a focus on emotional safety for young people.

## 13. Incident Management

**Experiences:** The review process identified significant gaps in Arise Church's response to serious incidents, which became evident when requests were made to review what follow up had occurred following some incidents.

- a) There were insufficient practices for recording the follow up to incidents.

- b) Often, due to poor or non-existent record keeping, knowledge of incidents was lost with staff turnover.
- c) The Arise Church Board had not been advised of some serious incidents which were raised as part of the review process.

**Recommendation 70:** Develop a clear incident management plan, including:

- a) Developing a matrix for determining the level of severity of an incident, including clearly defining what constitutes a 'serious' incident.
- b) Developing a standardised system around record keeping around serious incidents
- c) An escalation process for advising senior leadership and the Board when a serious incident has occurred, including clearly identifying time frames for notification
- d) A process through which 'open' serious incidents are regularly reviewed with appropriate plans for follow up
- e) Determining who within Arise holds responsibility for serious incident follow up
- f) A process through which serious incident themes are reflected on at regular intervals, with preventative actions planned where appropriate.

**Recommendation 71:** Clarify who is responsible for leading incident management and response within the church both locally and centrally.

## 14. Feedback

**Experiences:** We have heard of people's frustration that there have not been appropriate channels to raise feedback or critique.

- a) Some submissions raised that family relationships and spousal relationships made it feel difficult for people to raise concerns.



- b) We heard that some people felt there was a disparity between what was stated about feedback being welcomed, and the reality of people's experience regarding their treatment subsequent to raising feedback.
- c) We have heard from a number of people, especially current members, who have identified that they feel devastated that they sat with concerns about practices and conduct within the church, but did not take action around these concerns.

**Recommendation 72:** Reform Arise Church's stance towards feedback, including:

- a) Developing a policy around compliments, concerns and feedback, including how these are regularly summarised to the board.
- b) Establish channels for people to present compliments, concerns or feedback, and communicate these.
- c) Regularly articulate the channels through which people can raise feedback.

## 15. Church Practices & Expectations

**Experiences:** We also heard from some submissions about the following issues, which we believe are worth identifying and making recommendations around.

- a) A small number of submissions raised concern from parents around the pressure some children faced to tithe, especially if they were part of Arise Church without their parents also being involved.
- b) We heard from people who felt significant pressure to look a certain way to be part of roles which would have them up the front during Sunday services. In particular, we heard from people who struggled financially to meet the expectations they perceived around dressing in accordance with a provided 'mood board'. We also heard from people who felt significant pressure around

their weight and appearance, who felt particularly targeted when told they needed to change what they were wearing for a service.

c) We heard from people who felt upset and disappointed that they were required to pay for conference attendance, but were not able to attend any conference sessions due to service duties.

d) We also heard from many people who felt that the standards and scale of Arise Church conferences led to unreasonable pressure on individuals.

e) We heard from a small number of people who experienced being physically 'handled' by volunteers or staff to direct them to certain seating, when they wanted to sit in a different location. In particular, we heard from people who identified as neuro-diverse and people who experience mental health challenges, particularly social anxiety, who felt there was little understanding that there might be genuine reasons why individuals wish to sit in a certain location.

f) We heard some people raise a discomfort with the church's practices around 'VIP' seating in the front rows for church services. In particular, we heard from people who would like to see leaders and staff engage with those who are at the back of church, who may be in need of connection.

g) We heard from some individuals that they were uncomfortable with hearing political views shared during Sunday church services, including what felt like people being directed to attend political protests or rallies.

h) We heard experiences of people feeling pressured to undertake Ministry School or staff roles within the church, who felt they were being dissuaded from their sense of vocational calling in other professions or ministries.

i) We heard from people who felt shunned and cut off following leaving Arise Church. In particular, some people relayed that it had been shared with them that others had been allegedly directed to cease contact with them. We heard that this felt very damaging for individuals who had for seasons of their life called Arise Church their home and family.

j) We heard from people who have found it challenging to raise feedback or navigate issues because of conflicts of interest. We also heard from some people who felt there was a lack of understanding from church staff around conflicts of interest and how to avoid or manage these well.

k) Some individuals discussed challenges with interpersonal conflicts within the church, and their experience of the lack of process around resolving these conflicts well.

l) We heard from some staff and volunteers involved with Sunday service debrief meetings that these have been a cause of pain, anxiety and difficulty over their association with Arise Church.

m) We heard from a number of people who experienced difficulty with the 'culture of honour' within the church. An understanding of the importance of respecting leaders was reflected, however, many submissions raised current members' views that the church's attitudes and practices around honouring have gone too far in their view. It came through strongly that there is a desire to see the church return to honouring the person of Jesus as the central figure within the church.

n) We have heard that members past and present feel like there has been a considerable focus on conversion, however, this has resulted in what has felt like a lack of attention on existing members and on discipleship. We have heard people's desire to move away from the Arise's focus around numbers – the number of people making conversion decisions, the number of people attending, and the numbers of people giving.

o) Some people raised their view that they see the church as a cult, or that they are concerned about the aspects of cult-like behaviour they observe within the life of the church - iconic leadership, people's social circles being limited to Arise Church, experiences of control, and being shunned upon leaving the Arise Church community.

**Recommendation 73:** Disallow tithing by children (under the age of 18).

**Recommendation 74:** Cease the practice of having clothing expectations for those involved in 'on stage' roles on Sundays, reserving this only for special events/occasions.

**Recommendation 75:** Review the scale of any future Arise Church conferences to ensure that expectations are realistic and that all individuals who pay to attend are able to attend the majority of conference sessions.

**Recommendation 76:** Cease the practice of directing people around how they should physically respond during worship.

**Recommendation 77:** Cease the practice of people being restricted in where people sit within church services, acknowledging that there are a variety of reasons why individuals may desire or need space from others.

**Recommendation 78:** Cease the practice of having a designated VIP area in the front rows of church services.

**Recommendation 79:** Ensure that messaging from Arise on a corporate and individual level is mindful of encouraging all vocations as serving God, and not placing serving Arise as the highest vocation. In particular, Arise staff should be cautious to ensure there is not an over encouragement towards Ministry School to meet Arise's needs.

**Recommendation 80:** Develop guidelines around how people who have left Arise should be spoken about and treated.

**Recommendation 81:** Develop a policy on conflicts of interest and ensure these are managed appropriately. For example, developing a Board register of conflicts of interest which is published, and ensuring that relationships such as mentoring and workplace supervisory relationships are not with family members.

**Recommendation 82:** Develop a conflict management policy that clearly outlines the stages of how conflict will be handled within Arise Church - for members, volunteers and staff. This policy should clearly identify external channels for mediation support if required.

**Recommendation 83:** Set up a working group to develop guidelines to address the culture of Sunday service debrief meetings.

**Recommendation 84:** For the church leadership and board to work together to discuss the 'culture of honour' which exists within the church, and what changes need to be made to address this.

**Recommendation 85:** For the church leadership and board to work together to discuss how the church can hold more of a focus on discipleship moving forward.

**Recommendation 86:** For the church leadership and board to work together to discuss how the church safeguards itself against what people have experienced as cult-like behaviour.

## Positives and Other Perspectives

**Experiences:** We have also through this review process heard from many people regarding the things they appreciate about Arise Church. We have heard of people's experience of Arise as a place of belonging, and a place of tremendous personal and professional growth. We have heard of the deep gratitude held by some people for the support, encouragement and care they have received. A number of submissions raised that being part of Arise Church has been a central and defining part of their life – adding meaning, and allowing them to contribute to something of value beyond themselves. We also heard from a few family members who identified that they have seen the positive influence Arise has been on their loved one.

We have heard from many people who hold a great respect and appreciation for their Campus Pastors, particularly for their efforts to connect with them, and the efforts made to include and care for them. A number of submissions spoke very highly of some particular Campus Pastors and their leadership and pastoral abilities.

We have also heard many people express their positive experiences of Arise's senior leadership. We have heard the respect people have held for the vision of these leaders, and their admiration for their focus on people coming to know Jesus. In particular, we heard many people raise their view that the leadership of Arise has been well intentioned.

We have heard that some people feel the church and its leadership have been under attack, and that this has felt unfair.

We have heard from some people that their experience of Arise has been wholly positive, and we have heard their disbelief that others could have had such a different experience

We have heard many people expressing a deep longing that people in the future can experience the great things about Arise, without the personal cost faced for these benefits.

## 16. Auditing & Accountability

**Experiences:** We heard from a number of people, both former and current members, who raised significant concerns around whether Arise will implement the necessary changes.

**Recommendation 87:** Conduct a series of audits to evaluate progress against review recommendations making audit findings public on the Arise Church website. Suggested dates: November 2022, March 2023, July 2024.

## 17. Apology & Restoration

**Experiences:** A key theme through the content of submissions was that some people feel the church is yet to accept the reality of the hurts that people have experienced and yet to apologize for the harm caused in a way that they would perceive as meaningful. It is the opinion of the reviewers that there is a need for further apology to be made to those who have been hurt through their association with the church, and to those who are feeling deeply disappointed by the matters which have come to light in the public domain.

- a) We have heard some stories of people walking away from the church and also walking away from faith, because of their experiences within Arise. We have heard of the significant efforts people have had to make to rebuild their identity and lives beyond the church, and their desire that the depth of the impact they faced is acknowledged.
- b) We have heard from some current members their experience of deep lament at this time, and their desire to see the church find ways to own the issues of the past, to act justly and compassionately towards those who have been hurt, and to move forward in a unified way.



**Recommendation 88:** Issue a formal apology, acknowledging and apologising for the hurts people have experienced within Arise Church. This should include formally revoking previous comments regarding issues pre-dating 2016, and early comments that reflected a sense that issues were limited to Ministry School students.

*Comment: A concern that has also been raised as part of the review process is that there have been some apologies issued to date by senior leadership and the Board, however, it is important that an apology is issued following the conclusion of this review process, when there is a fuller understanding of people's experiences and concerns. We believe that it is imperative that all apology statements acknowledge specifically what the apology is for, showing understanding of people's experiences. We also suggest that it is important that apology statements respect the reality that the power to choose their response lies in the hands of those who have been aggrieved, and that while it is hoped that people may come to a place of forgiveness, this will not be the path all people take.*

**Recommendation 89:** Follow through to ensure there is reporting of matters that have been criminal, or where there has been a lack of appropriate reporting to authorities. This work should be collaborative between Pathfinding and the Arise Church Board.

**Recommendation 90:** Follow up on individuals' requests for further action, as stated in review submissions. As part of the review process, some individuals identified follow up action they would appreciate personally. This should occur as a priority in July 2022. This process should be managed by an Arise Church Board member and senior member of staff, reporting back to the wider Board and to Pathfinding when this process has concluded, no later than 1st August.

*Comment: The requests for personal follow up include receiving personal apologies, experiences being shared with church staff, and engaging with church staff directly to reconnect with Arise.*

**Recommendation 91:** Make an offer to provide funded counselling for those who have engaged in the review process, with the Arise Church Board to establish a standard agreed payment rate for counselling and a maximum number of sessions.

*Comment: To ensure continued anonymity for those who have engaged in the review process, and to allow anonymity for people in accessing counselling support, this process should include the option of Pathfinding managing invoices from counselling providers, and passing these on to Arise Church, using the unique identifier assigned to each person who participated in the review process. This data would also be looked over by another member of the review panel as a safeguarding measure.*

**Recommendation 92:** Engage an external Restorative Justice expert to advise the Arise Church Board on processes within the church community over coming months.

## Closing Prayer

Loving God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

You breathe life into your world and your Church.

We give thanks for the strength of those who have had the courage to share their stories within Arise.

We give thanks for your love for your Church;

a love that calls us towards wholeness;

towards healing, reconciliation and a way of being that grows in the reflection of Christ.

We acknowledge that the way forward will not always be easy.

We see that the path forward requires humility, wisdom, and a willingness to change.

May the Spirit of Christ dwell in all conversations and decisions as the way forward is determined.

May the Spirit of truth and wisdom lead all thoughts and actions for His name's sake, and the good of all.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Amen.

