

The Synod of Eastern Australia



Minutes

**Of the 164th Annual Meeting
Held at Wantirna Victoria
2nd May to 4th May 2011**

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

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11.1 OPENING

Within the Wantirna Church building of the Melbourne congregation, on Monday 2nd May 2011, at 4.30pm, the Synod of Eastern Australia met and was constituted with worship, conducted by the Moderator, the Rev GD Ball.

11.2 MODERATOR'S SERMON

Mr Ball read from Matthew 28 and focussed particularly on the closing verses 18-20, often referred to as the Great Commission. Why the Great Commission? 1) The greatest of all claims: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." 2) The greatest of all commands: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations." 3) The greatest of all comforts: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." The Moderator welcomed members and guests to the meeting of Synod.

11.3 ROLLS OF PRESBYTERIES

The Certified Rolls of Presbyteries were tendered. Apologies for non-attendance were received from those marked † below. The moderator made special mention of those attending Synod for the first time.

Northern Presbytery

Armidale
Brisbane
Hastings
Northern Rivers

Ministers

DP Smith†
JD Klazinga
DJ Kerridge
RW Murray †

Commissioned Elders

R Witting†
R Lawson (From Tuesday)
D Hamilton
R Campbell

Central Presbytery

Hawkesbury/Nepean
Hunter/Barrington
Manning
St. George's

DK Muldoon
SR Tamata†
GD Ball
JA McCallum

GA Neil
DS Upton
N Robinson
AH Steel (Treasurer)

Synod Appointment: TI Leggott (Seconded to AIM)

Southern Presbytery

Geelong
Knox
Knox
All Nations
Narre Warren
Ulverstone

MG Smith
RS Ward
AA Miranda
TW Yoa
S Bajema
Vacant

DPT Manly
J Dekter†
JB Loudon
T Buck†
I Hamilton

11.4 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Mr Ward introduced Rev David Kumnick, supply preacher of Carrum Downs congregation, and it was resolved that Mr Kumnick be associated with the court. Mr Ward introduced Rev Mr Lynsey Blakston, delegate from the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The Moderator welcomed Mr Blakston and it was resolved that Mr Blakston be associated with the court.

11.5 THANKS

After words of appreciation it was resolved that the retiring Moderator be thanked for his sermon, and that it be published in *The Presbyterian Banner*.

11.6 CLOSURE OF SESSION

The session was closed with praise from Psalm 145 and prayer at 5.45pm.

The session was opened with praise and prayer at 7.00pm.

11.7 MINUTES

The minutes of Session 1 were read and confirmed.

11.8 ELECTION OF NEW MODERATOR

The Clerk reported that the Rev MG Smith had been appointed Moderator-elect. It was moved and seconded that this appointment be confirmed. The motion was carried and Mr Smith took the chair.

11.9 ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The Clerk presented the Administration Committee's Report. It was resolved that the report be received. It was resolved as follows:

1. That Correspondence Item 1 be received and considered with the report of Northern Presbytery.
2. That Correspondence Item 2 be received and considered with the Superannuation Committee Report.
3. That Correspondence Item 3 be received and considered following the Law and Advisory Committee Report.
4. That Correspondence Item 4 be received and considered following the Training of Ministry Committee Report.
5. That Synod repeal Sections 1 and 2 of Act 1, Class 2 of Synod 1983 (as amended) and re-title the said Act "Reports and Correspondence to Synod".
6. That Synod enact as follows:
 1. Synod appoints such standing and occasional Committees as deemed appropriate.
 2. Normally a Synod Committee shall consist of no more than five members, and given the prevalence of electronic means of communication, these members do not normally need to be geographically close to each other. Members are expected to serve on their Committee for at least three years unless otherwise decided by Synod.
 3. Committees have the power to seek assistance and advice from other qualified persons if considered appropriate.
 4. All members of a Committee have a responsibility to contribute promptly to its deliberations and proposals. When using emails the subject line should include reference, in an agreed form, to the Committee concerned. 'Reply to all' should be used in all responses so that each member is aware of the responses of all other members and can interact accordingly, just as if they were personally present. Members have the responsibility of advising of any change to their email address. The use of employer-provided email addresses should be avoided. When using a conference call (audio or video) care must be taken to give each member opportunity to contribute, and decisions arising out of such hook-ups are to be very clearly expressed at the time and circulated in written form immediately thereafter.
 5. Committees are encouraged to begin their work soon after each Synod and where appropriate to divide the work among themselves. Committees may elect a Vice-convener to understudy the Convener so as to maintain the work if the Convener is not available.
7. That Committee Structure as noted in the report be adopted.

This Act may be cited as "Synod Committees: membership and method of operating"

8. That the following examiners of records be appointed:
- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Northern Presbytery | Rev. A Miranda and Hawkesbury Nepean elder. |
| Central Presbytery | Rev. D. Kerridge and All Nations Melbourne elder. |
| Southern Presbytery | Rev. J. Klazinga and Northern Rivers elder. |
9. That Synod note the passing of Mr Graham Kinder, a past minister of this church, on 21st March 2011, and assure Mrs Margaret Kinder and the family of our sympathy and prayerful support.

11.10 MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

The Moderator addressed the Synod and spoke under the three headings: 1) Scripture is full of relational language, 2) Scripture defined relational living is under attack, 3) Ways we fail to live as God intends.

11.11 THANKS

After words of appreciation, comment and further discussion it was resolved that the Moderator be thanked for his address, and that his address be published in "*The Presbyterian Banner*".

11.12 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of Motion were called for. It was noted that the notice of motion submitted by Mr Steel had been circulated amongst members and would be dealt with following the Law and Advisory Committee Report. The session was closed with praise and prayer at 8.30pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

MG Smith
Moderator

SESSION 3

TUESDAY 3RD MAY 2011

9.00AM

The session was opened with praise and prayer at 9.00am. The Moderator read from Acts 4 and shared in devotions from the text. The court engaged in praise and prayer.

11.13 MINUTES

The minutes of Session 2 were read and confirmed.

11.14 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Mr Ball introduced Rev Dr Michael Flinn, delegate from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. The Moderator welcomed Mr Flinn and it was resolved that Mr Flinn be associated with the court.

11.15 LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Ward, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. It was resolved as follows:

1. For removing any question about the Church's position in the light of more recent attitudes to marriage, Synod reaffirm its commitment to the statement in the Confession of Faith 24.1, namely, marriage is to be between one man and one woman. Synod commend the short statement on Marriage and Family Life in the Report to the use of our people in ways they may find appropriate.
2. The Synod transmit the following Overture about interviewing Women, Children and Vulnerable Adults to Presbyteries under the provisions of the Barrier Act and meantime enact the same as an Interim Act.:

1. *Whereas the Synod reaffirms the need to have clearly defined procedures available for all Church Courts to follow; and*
2. *Whereas it is imperative that the Church meets the standards set out in civil regulations for best practice in modern society, particularly with regard to the interviewing of women, children and vulnerable persons, and in so far as these standards do not involve principles or practices in conflict with Scripture; and*
3. *Whereas sensitivity applies in all situations where women appear before an all-male Court, especially in relation to breaches of the seventh commandment or in any matter where questions of an intimate nature are raised; and*
4. *Whereas the Free Church of Scotland enacted under Barrier Act with the consent of all Presbyteries identical legislation to that now proposed except for the necessary modifications to relate it to this Church;*

WHEREFORE it is hereby enacted and ordained that:

1. Where judgment is announced with information that a complaint has been lodged by a member of the Church court, parties before the court should be informed of the possibility that the complaint may be abandoned so that the decision complained against stands. This possibility may be a factor in whether or not a party before the court decides to appeal.
2. It is open to anyone who appears before a Church court to be accompanied by a friend or support person. Depending on the circumstances of the case, the support person may be legally qualified. On such occasions, the Church court itself should arrange to have a legal assessor present. The court should receive no less than seven days notice of such attendance in order to make its own arrangements, if required.
3. Sensitivities apply in all situations where females appear before an all-male court, especially in relation to breaches of the seventh commandment or in any matter where questions of an intimate nature arise. If a female is a potential witness in a matter which could lead to the disciplining of a Church member, another female should, where practicable, conduct the initial interview of the female, for the purposes of obtaining a precognition, which could inform the decision whether to institute disciplinary process. In any such situation, the following regulations shall apply:
 - (a) The female who provides such assistance should be a mature believer, preferably a communicant member of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, or, where this is not possible, a professing Christian in another denomination. Such a female should possess appropriate professional qualifications and experience of the procedures and issues involved in interviewing females, whether from a legal, social work or similar background.
 - (b) The female must be appointed by the Church court involved. No interviews should be conducted by individuals who are not so appointed.
 - (c) The principal questions should be prepared in advance by the relevant Church court in liaison with the female who is to undertake the interview. At the discretion of the interviewer, supplementary questions may be asked in the light of answers received.
 - (d) Presbyteries are responsible to keep a list of suitably qualified females to undertake such interviews.
 - (e) Interviewers' reasonable expenses shall be paid by the appropriate court.
4. In the event that, having considered the precognition obtained, the Church court considers that a disciplinary process should be instituted the general procedures applicable in all Church courts, as set out in the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure* shall be followed. In the event that it is deemed necessary to have a female give evidence to a Church court the court should consider in advance whether or not any special measures – such as giving evidence from behind a screen or via live video link or by a prior written statement or with a supporter - are practicable and appropriate. Before reaching a decision on whether such measures are appropriate, parties to the disciplinary process should have an opportunity to be heard.
5. In circumstances in which a minister or elder requires to interview a female in confidence, for example in connection with a pastoral matter, he should carefully consider the most appropriate venue for such an interview so as to ensure, so far as possible, that others are in close proximity.

6. Church courts should ensure that in all instances of the interview of a child (being a person under the age of sixteen) or other vulnerable witness (being a person who is not a child but in respect of whom there is a significant risk that the quality of his evidence would be diminished by reason of mental disorder or by reason of fear or distress in connection with giving evidence), the interview is conducted in a skilled manner and in a low-key environment, with questions being simple and non-leading, and with the child or other vulnerable witness being given a break or rest period at any time requested. Careful reflection is necessary, having regard to the whole circumstances of the case including the welfare of the child or other vulnerable witness, before any Church court seeks to have such a witness give evidence on a matter involving Church discipline.

7. If it is deemed necessary to have a child or other vulnerable witness give evidence to a Church court the court should consider in advance whether or not any special measures - such as giving evidence from behind a screen or via live video link or by a prior written statement or with a supporter - would be practicable and appropriate. If there is a significant risk that the quality of the witness's evidence would be diminished through mental disorder, fear or distress, or if it is felt that the giving of evidence without such special measures would be detrimental to welfare of the witness, an appropriate measure from such measures should be introduced where practicable provided its introduction, in the particular circumstances of the case, would not prejudice the legitimate rights of the party who is the subject of the disciplinary process. Before reaching a decision on whether any such standard or special measures are appropriate, parties to the disciplinary process should have an opportunity to be heard.

8. An individual who is the subject of a disciplinary process in connection with an allegation of sexual misconduct shall be prohibited from conducting his own defence. In such circumstances, a representative shall be appointed to conduct his defence.

This Act may be cited as 'Act Concerning Interviewing Women, Children and Vulnerable Adults by Church Courts'.

Presbyteries are requested to give their approval or disapproval with votes recorded and send advice to the Clerk of Synod by 31 December 2011 so that the Committee may report to Synod 2012.

The moderator welcomed the arrival of Mr Lawson.

11.16 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Mr Ball welcomed Rev Dr Henk de Waard, delegate from the Christian Reformed Church of Australia. The Moderator welcomed Mr de Waard and it was resolved that Mr de Waard be associated with the court.

11.17 LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Ward, continued with proposed deliverance 3. It was resolved unanimously as follows

3. Synod approve the proposed amendment of the Free Presbyterian Property Act as set out below and direct the Committee to arrange for its submission to the Parliament of Victoria.

DRAFT

Free Presbyterian Church Property Amendment Act 20**

Preamble

1. The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia wishes up to date legislation for the more efficient management of its property.
2. The Church desires the body corporate to have power to accept appointment and act as administrator, executor or trustee, to pool trust funds for investment purposes, to vary trusts where appropriate, and power to enter into joint use of property with other denominations.
3. It is expedient to enact legislation for this purpose.

The Parliament of Victoria therefore enacts:

1 Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to amend the Free Presbyterian Property Act 1953 to provide for more efficient management of the Church's property.

2 Commencement

This Act comes into operation on the day after the day on which it receives the Royal Assent.

3 Existing Section renumbered

Existing Section 10 is renumbered 1 3.

4. Additional powers granted

The following words are added to Section3(2) the principal_Act:

- i. accept appointment, and act, as an administrator, executor or trustee.

5. Pooling of trust funds

The following Section 10 is inserted

10.

- 1) Where the body corporate hold money on trust for different purposes or activities it shall be lawful for the body corporate from time to time to invest the money or any part or parts thereof as one fund and to distribute income arising therefrom rateably among the several purposes for which the money so invested is held and any loss arising from any such investment shall likewise be borne rateably.
- 2) The body corporate may make advances out of the money referred to in sub-section (1) for any purpose of or relating to the Church.
- 3) Any sum advanced under sub-section (2) shall be deemed an investment of the money and shall bear interest at a rate fixed by the body corporate in accordance with the rules and the sum advanced and the interest thereon shall be deemed to be a charge on the assets (if any) that the body corporate holds for the activity, service, institution or interest of the Church for which the advance was made.

6 Variation of trusts

The following Section 11 is inserted

11. (1) Subject to sub-section (2), in every case where by reason of circumstances subsequent to the creation of the trusts, including trusts declared under this section, to which any property vested in the body corporate is for the time being subject, it has in the opinion of Synod become impossible or impracticable to carry out or observe the trusts, it shall be lawful for the Synod by resolution to declare that opinion, and by the same or any subsequent resolution to declare other trusts for or for the use, benefit or purpose of the Church instead of the first-mentioned trusts, and the first-mentioned trusts shall thereupon by force of the resolution cease and determine, and the property shall thereupon be held upon the other trusts accordingly.
- (2) The property shall be dealt with for the same purposes as nearly as may be as the purposes for which the property was immediately before the resolution held unless the Synod by resolution declares that by reason of circumstances subsequent to the creation of the first mentioned trusts it is, in the opinion of the Synod, impossible or impracticable to deal with or apply the property or some part thereof for the same or like purposes, in which case the property or that part thereof may be dealt with or applied for the use and benefit of the Church for such other purposes as may be declared by resolution of the Synod.

7 Joint use of property with other denominations

The following Section 12 is inserted

12. (1) In this section, ‘scheme of co-operation’ means a scheme entered into by the body corporate with the permission of Synod:
 - (a) with or involving a church of another denomination or any activity of such a church, and
 - (b) involving the body corporate.
- (2) The body corporate may permit property to be used and managed for the purposes of a scheme of co-operation on such terms and conditions as the Synod determines.
- (3) Any proceeds derived by the body corporate from such a scheme of co-operation are to be applied in the manner decided by Synod.
- (4) Conditions that the Synod may determine under this section include:
 - (a) conditions with respect to the making of monetary contributions towards the acquisition, construction, alteration, maintenance or repair of property vested in or held on behalf of a co-operating church or congregation, and
 - (b) the giving or taking of security over any property.
- (5) Property may be used in accordance with a scheme of arrangement except to the extent that the property is subject to an express trust expressly forbidding its use in that manner.
- (6) Property is not to be regarded as property that is subject to an express trust expressly forbidding its use under a scheme of co-operation merely because it is held on trust for worship within or for the purposes of, the Church.

11.18 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 3: OVERTURE RE CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Synod took up consideration of Correspondence Item 3, an Overture from Central Presbytery. Dr Muldoon stated the Overture:

To the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
Overture as accepted by Southern Presbytery on 20/2/2010 and presented to the Law and Advisory Committee of Synod 2010 with minor modifications

Whereas God has been pleased to place the oversight of his church in the hands of church courts;

And **Whereas** that oversight should not only be according to good order, but be seen to be according to good order;

And **Whereas** the members of church courts have been saved by the grace of Almighty God, yet they remain sinful human beings;

And **Whereas** from time to time church courts deal with matters in which a member, or members, of that court have, or may seem to have, a conflict of interest;

And **Whereas** it is commonly recognized that conflicts of interest can occur in financial matters; but members of church courts may also be affected by other matters, such as matters involving family members;

And **Whereas** the Scriptures clearly warn against showing partiality in our dealings with others (Deut 1.17; Deut 16.19; Prov 24.23; 1 Tim 5.21);

Now therefore Central Presbytery humbly overtures the Synod of Eastern Australia to take these premises into consideration and to enact as follows:

a. Remind all church courts that all members are obliged to act with impartiality as servants of Christ, and that where there is or is perceived to be a real or possible conflict of interest whether in financial matters or by virtue of marriage or family relationship, or anything else, that interest should be

(1) declared before consideration of the business,

(2) noted in the minutes and

(3) the person should withdraw from the meeting unless the court resolves that the conflict is not an obstacle to him participating in the matter, or a specific provision allows him to remain and participate.

b. The lawfulness of such a resolution may be taken under review in the examination of records if not previously the subject of appeal or complaint. A person or court failing to declare a conflict of interest or breaching the conflict of interest principle is subject to discipline appropriate to the case.

c. If the court would be without a quorum due to a member or members excusing themselves, then consideration of the matter should be deferred until suitable arrangements can be made to resolve the quorum issue. If the conflict of interest affects the moderator of the court then he should arrange for another member present to moderate the meeting of the court in his absence. If the conflict of interest is anticipated, then these arrangements may be made in advance.

Or to do otherwise for this object as Synod in its wisdom may deem best.

The Overture was sustained and the prayer of the Overture was granted in the following terms with none opposing:

That Synod remind all church courts that all members are obliged to act with impartiality as servants of Christ, and that where there is or is perceived to be a real or possible conflict of interest whether in financial matters or by virtue of marriage or family relationship, or anything else, that interest should be:

- (1) declared before consideration of the business,
- (2) noted in the minutes and
- (3) the person should withdraw from the meeting unless the court resolves that the conflict is not an obstacle to him participating in the matter, or a specific provision allows him to remain and participate.

The lawfulness of such a resolution may be taken under review in the examination of records if not previously the subject of appeal or complaint. A person or court failing to declare a conflict of interest or breaching the conflict of interest principle is subject to discipline appropriate to the case.

If the court would be without a quorum due to a member or members excusing themselves, then consideration of the matter should be deferred until suitable arrangements can be made to resolve the quorum issue. If the conflict of interest affects the moderator of the court then he should arrange for another member present to moderate the meeting of the court in his absence. If the conflict of interest is anticipated, then these arrangements may be made in advance.

This Act may be referred to an Act Concerning Conflict of Interest

It was further resolved, with non opposing, that Synod declare that, as there is general agreement that the Act Concerning Conflict of Interest is not innovative and as the subject has been before the church for two years, the Act Concerning Conflict of Interest is held to have met the requirements of the Barrier Act.

11.19 NOTICE OF MOTION: NSW PROPERTY ACT DRAFT AMENDMENT

Mr Steel presented a proposed motion relating to the NSW Property Act Draft Amendment. The motion was received.

As the Synod Administration Committee has reported two of the three Presbyteries advised they were not in favour of the proposed *Draft Amendment to The Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act 1918* as transmitted to them by Synod 2010, Synod now:

1. Authorise the preparation of a fresh *Draft Amendment to the Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act 1918*.
2. Remit to Presbyteries for their consideration the suggested draft amendment detailed in Appendix 1 hereto. Their agreement or otherwise, together with suggested changes, if any, be sent to the Law & Advisory Committee by 30th November 2011.
3. The Law & Advisory Committee, together with the Trustees of The Synod of Eastern Australia, consider the suggested draft amendment, taking into account responses received from Presbyteries, and submit a fresh draft amendment to Synod 2012.

11.20 CLOSURE OF SESSION

The session closed with prayer at 12.45pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

MG Smith
Moderator

The session was opened with prayer and praise at 2.00pm.

11.21 NOTICE OF MOTION NSW PROPERTY ACT DRAFT AMENDMENT

Discussion continued in relation to the proposed motion relating to the NSW Property Act Draft Amendment.

Mr Ward proposed an amendment: That Synod direct the Law and Advisory Committee together with the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia, to discuss together proposed amendment to the 1918 Property Act, taking into account any comments received from Presbyteries by 30/10/2011 with a view to submitting a proposal to Synod 2012.

The motion was favoured over the amendment. Synod resolved in terms of the original motion.

Appendix 1.

The Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act 1918 **Suggested Draft Amendment**

Existing Contents to be amended as follows:

Long title

- 1 Who are the trustees. Trustees to be a body corporate
- 2 Vesting of all property in the trustees without conveyance or transfer
- 2A Trustees to be indemnified out of trust property
- 3 Saving the rights of certain trustees
- 4 Title deeds of property vesting in the trustees to be handed over to them
- 5 Property held by the trustees to be dealt with as the synod may direct
- 6 Synod may make regulations

Add -- Blending of Trust Funds

- 7 Power to sell
- 8 Application of proceeds of sale
- 9 Power to mortgage or sell subject to mortgage
- 10 Disposal of moneys arising from mortgage
- 11 Power to lease

Delete - 12 Disposal of rents and profits or other income of property

- 13 Rights of ministers

Delete - 14 Power to appoint agents and others

Add - Trustees may act as executor etc.

Add - Variation of Trusts

Add - Co-operative use of property

- 15 Certified copy to be evidence of proceedings of the synod
- 16 Definitions

Add - Definition for *trust property*

- 17 Name of Act

Renumbering – Sections to be renumbered as appropriate.

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Sections to be amended/repealed as follows:

Add (New Section):

Blending of Trust Funds

(1) The Trustees may invest trust funds held by it for different purposes or activities, or any part of those funds, as one fund (*the fund*).

(2) Any income arising from the investment of the fund is to be distributed rateably among the several purposes or activities for which the money invested is held in trust.

(3) Any loss arising from an investment of the fund is to be distributed rateably among the several purposes or activities for which the money invested is held in trust.

(4) The Trustees may make advances out of funds referred to in this section for any activity, service, institution or interest of the Church.

(5) Any sum so advanced is to be taken to be an investment of the money and bears interest at a rate fixed by the Trustees.

(6) The sum advanced, and any interest on that sum, is to be taken to be a charge on the assets held by the Trustees for the activity, service, institution or interest of the Church for which the advance is made.

Add (New Section):

Trustees may act as executor etc

(1) The Trustees:

(a) may apply for and obtain, or join in applying for and obtaining, probate of the will, or the letters of administration for the estate, of a deceased person if the Church has a beneficial interest (vested or contingent) in the estate of that person, and

(b) may accept appointment, and act, as trustee or co-trustee under a trust if the trust property is not already vested in the Trustees by or in accordance with this Act, and the trust was created wholly or partly for the benefit of the Church, and

(c) may do all things necessary for the exercise of its functions as executor, administrator or trustee.

(2) If authorised by the Trustees to do so, a member of the Body Corporate or a person employed by the Trustees may, on behalf of the Trustees:

(a) swear an affidavit, or

(b) make a declaration or statement, or

(c) give security and do any other act or thing, that is, by any charter, enactment or rule of court, required to be sworn, made or done by a person applying for or granted probate or letters of administration or who is administering a trust.

(3) The Trustees may:

(a) renounce executorship, or

(b) decline to act as administrator of an estate, or

(c) retire, or decline to act, as trustee of property (other than property vested in it by or in accordance with Part 3).

(4) Any commission or other remuneration earned by the Trustees as an executor, administrator or trustee appointed under the authority of this section belongs to the Trustees and the Trustees may use or apply the commission or remuneration only for an object or purpose specified or approved by the Trustees.

Add (New Section):

Variation of Trusts

(1) The Synod may by resolution declare that, in its opinion, it has become impossible or inexpedient to carry out or observe the terms of a trust of property vested in the Trustees, whether as to its purposes or any other of its terms.

(2) The Synod may, by the same or a later resolution, declare that the property is subject to another trust and, on the making of such a declaration:

(a) the trust that is to be replaced ceases, and

(b) the property is to be held subject to the other trust.

(3) In making such a declaration, the Synod must ensure that the property is dealt with as nearly as is possible for the purposes for which the property was held immediately before the declaration.

(4) However, the Synod may by resolution declare that, in its opinion, it is impossible or inexpedient to deal with the property in accordance with subsection (3) because of circumstances arising after the creation of the trust that is to be replaced.

(5) On making a resolution under subsection (4), the Trustees may hold, dispose of or otherwise deal with and apply the property for such purposes for the use and benefit of the Church as the Synod declares by resolution.

Add (New Section):

Co-operative use of property

(1) In this section, *scheme of co-operation* means a scheme entered into by the Trustees:

(a) with or involving a church of another denomination or any congregation or activity of such a church, and

(b) concerning the use of trust property.

(2) The Trustees may permit trust property to be used, managed and administered for the purposes of a scheme of co-operation on such terms and conditions as the Synod determines.

(3) Any proceeds obtained by the Trustees from a scheme of co-operation are to be applied in the manner determined by the Synod.

(4) Conditions that the Synod may determine under this section include:

(a) conditions with respect to the making of monetary contributions for the acquisition, construction, alteration, maintenance or repair of property vested in or held on behalf of a co-operating church or congregation, and

(b) the giving or taking of a security or charge over any property

(5) Trust property may be used in accordance with a scheme of co-operation except to the extent that the property is subject to an express trust expressly forbidding its use in that manner

(6) Trust property is not to be regarded as property that is subject to an express trust expressly forbidding its use under a scheme of co-operation merely because it is directed to be held in trust for worship within, or for the purposes of, the Church.

Add to (Existing Section 16)

Definitions

trust property means “property vested in or acquired by The Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia”

Repeal (Existing Section 12)

Disposal of rents and profits or other income of property

The trustees shall, out of the rents and profits received by them from any glebe lands and other lands belonging to any congregation, in the first place pay to the minister of the said congregation the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, exclusive of stipend from other sources, and in the next place, with the consent of the synod, apply the remainder of the said rents and profits towards the building, enlarging, or maintaining of the church or minister’s dwelling-house belonging to such congregation, or to such other religious or educational purpose as the synod may determine.

Repeal (Existing Section 14)

Power to appoint agents and others

The trustees may employ all agents, assistants, receivers, servants, and others in the performance or carrying out of any of the duties, work, or circumstances arising hereunder, and direct or authorise payment of any moneys payable to them, to any corporation, bank, institution, account, or person as they may deem expedient, and the receipt of any such corporation, bank, institution, account, or person shall be the same as if given by the trustees or the majority of the trustees themselves, and in like manner discharge the person or persons paying therefrom and from all responsibility of seeing to the application thereof or being answerable for the loss, misapplication, or non-application thereof.

11.22 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

The Moderator indicated that Rev Dr Henk de Waard, delegate from the Christian Reformed Church of Australia would not be available for the scheduled evening meeting. Dr de Waard was invited to address the Synod. The Moderator thanked Dr de Waard for his greeting and address. (His address will be included as an appendix to the minutes).

11.23 TRAINING OF MINISTRY

The Convener, Rev MG Smith, being moderator, vacated the chair to present the report. Mr Ball took the chair. Mr Smith presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances. It was resolved that:

1. Synod gives thanks to God for the present provision of ministers and the past provision of students/applicants for the ministry from which we continue to benefit. Synod exhorts the church to thank God for his provision and to continue to ask the Lord of the harvest and Head of the church to send out more workers both for our situation and for the wider work of God's kingdom.

Mr Ball led the court in prayer. It was further resolved that:

2. Synod notes the hope of the Committee to prepare web-based training materials. Synod encourages prayer for those involved; that they may be granted wisdom in their endeavours, and that resulting material will prove useful and will be well used.

11.24 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 4: OVERTURE FROM SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY

Synod took up consideration of Correspondence Item 4, an overture from Southern Presbytery relating to Mr Denver D. Boehret, BEng (Hons): Mr Miranda stated the overture:

WHEREAS on 25 February 2011 the Southern Presbytery recommended the studentship application of Mr Denver Daniel Boehret, BEng (Hons), a member of the Knox Congregation, to the Training of Ministry Committee;

AND WHEREAS the Training of Ministry has favourably considered the same and advised the Presbytery accordingly on 9 March 2011;

AND WHEREAS the Presbytery on the 12 March 2011 received Mr Boehret as a student for the ministry;

NOW THEREFORE the Southern Presbytery, in further following out the prescribed procedure, seek (a) ratification by Synod of Mr Boehret's reception by Southern Presbytery and (b) the favourable consideration of his request for a loan, in lieu of allowances, to assist in financing the balance of his MDiv studies at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne, expected to be completed by the end of 2012,

Or to do otherwise for this object as Synod in its wisdom may see fit.

The prayer of the overture was granted in the following terms:

- 1) Synod ratify Mr Boehret's reception by Southern Presbytery as a student and assure him of its interest and prayers.
- 2) Synod grant Mr Boehret's request for a loan in lieu of living and book allowances, the amount being \$20,000 for each of 2011 and 2012, with a loan agreement in line with the Student Bond agreement.

Mr Smith returned to the Moderator's chair.

11.25 CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

The Convener, Rev Dr DK Muldoon, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received as a report of the convener.

11.26 MEDIA AND BANNER COMMITTEE

The Convener Rev S Bajema presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received.

11.27 WEBSITE

The Convener, Rev MG Smith, being moderator, vacated the chair to present the report. Mr Ball took the chair. Mr Smith presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. Mr Smith returned to the moderator's chair.

11.28 YOUTH & FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Rev A.A Miranda presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. It was resolved that:

1. Synod thank all Sunday School teachers and youth leaders for their dedicated work in teaching the young people.
2. Synod thank Mrs Margaret Kinder for sending birthday greetings to children.
3. Synod thank Mrs Irene Steel for setting and assessing Search Work questions and awarding prizes to the children.
4. Synod remind Deacons Courts of the church to include the Youth and Fellowship Committee Working Funds as a worthwhile special collection and to seek financial support from their congregation.
5. Synod request that certificate statistics be sent through to the convener for reporting purposes.
6. Synod confirm the initiative of the committee to implement an annual church-wide family camp.
7. Synod recommend that Presbyteries/local congregations examine the need for Youth activities/camps and seek to provide opportunities for fellowship.

11.29 MISSIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

The Clerk, Mr Leggott, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. After discussion, it was resolved:

1. That Synod express its continued prayerful support and interest in the work of Rev Trevor Leggott in his ministry with Australian Indigenous Ministries.
2. That Synod delegates direct their congregations attention to the prayerful and financial support needed for Rev. Trevor Leggott in his ministry with Australian Indigenous Ministries
3. That Synod encourage congregational members to consider volunteering to help as native English speakers in either San Andres or the Annie Soper School.
4. That Synod adopt the budget for 2010 and express general agreement with the estimates for 2011.

11.30 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and the session was closed with prayer at 5.50p.m.

TI Leggott
Clerk

MG Smith
Moderator

The session was opened with prayer at 7.00pm. The minutes of session 3 and 4 were read and confirmed. Mr Ward had offered his apology for non-attendance at this session.

11.31 INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Convener the Rev GD Ball presented the report and it was resolved that the report be received. It was resolved:

1. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) meeting in Melbourne 2-4th May 2011 expresses its deep disappointment and grief at the outcome of the Plenary Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in November 2010. We are disappointed that the decision of the Assembly implies that the inspired book of praise is inadequate for Christian worship. We are dismayed that such a momentous decision did not go down to Presbyteries by way of the Barrier Act, and we are concerned about the possible impact this will have on the unity of the church.
2. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) meeting in Melbourne 2-4 May 2011 sends warm Christian greetings to the General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church meeting in the Sandy Cove Conference Center, North East, Maryland, 8-14 June 2011. In particular we join with you in giving thanks to our Gracious God as you commemorate this special 75th General Assembly of the OPC. The OPC has since its inception been known and recognised for its vigorous affirmation of the truths of historic Christianity and Reformed orthodoxy as it is expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. The PCEA and the OPC have enjoyed a long and cordial relationship over the years. We were both members of the RES and both founding members of the ICRC. We were delighted that a formal ecclesiastical relationship was established in 2007. We appreciate the great emphasis the OPC makes on world mission – something we readily see at the ICRC conferences. We regret that none of our men will be able to be present at your gathering, but we as the apostle declares, ‘are bound to thank God always for you.’ May the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church, preserve you and prosper you as you seek to serve Him faithfully in all things.
3. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) meeting in Melbourne 2-4 May 2011 sends warm Christian greetings to our brethren in the Christchurch Presbytery of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. In particular we express our sympathy and sorrow at the distress and shock that you have experienced as a result of the terrible earthquake on 22/2/11 which affected many parts of Christchurch. We are thankful to know that the lives of all your members were preserved as well as their homes. We commend your desire and efforts to reach out to your neighbours in a practical and tangible way in order to express Christian compassion. We commend the Christchurch Reformed Churches (CRC) Earthquake Relief Fund to the church; in particular to Deacons’ Courts and individual members. The Convener will keep the church informed of any further developments.
4. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) meeting in Melbourne 2-4 May 2011 sends warm Christian greetings to our brethren in the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland meeting in Cullybackey 13-15th June 2011. We congratulate you on reaching this significant milestone as you celebrate your bicentenary. We give thanks to our Covenant God for preserving you and enabling you to maintain a faithful Testimony to Reformed and Covenanting truth. We value the fraternal bonds we enjoy with you and the contact we have together in the ICRC. We share many things in common; not least our shared commitment to the exclusive use of the psalms in public worship. We regret that this commitment is being abandoned by some in our day. May God enable you to remain faithful, and we pray that the Lord will bless you as you assemble in Synod and use you for His glory – in Ireland and beyond. ‘Christ is

Presbyteries keep this in mind in the annual examination of records to ensure outstanding entitlement is minuted at least once a year.

11.35 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 2: OVERTURE FROM CENTRAL PRESBYTERY RE SUPERANNUATION

Synod took up consideration of Correspondence Item 2, an Overture from Central Presbytery relating to Superannuation: Rev Dr Muldoon and Mr Steel stated the Overture:

Whereas superannuation is compulsory under the Federal Government Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act 1992, where stipend payments exceed \$450 per month with the minimum contribution rate being 9% of the minimum stipend.

And **Whereas** Synod makes an additional employer contribution of 9% of minimum stipend, paying the total contribution of 18% of minimum stipend, to a Complying Superannuation Fund of the minister's choice, for those ministers with more than five years service with the church.

And **Whereas** the additional employer contribution by Synod for ministers with less than five years service is 1% (total contribution 10%) and for ministers aged 70 to 75 years 5% (Superannuation Guarantee contribution ceasing at 70 years)

And **Whereas** Synod has set a minimum weekly stipend, payable by Deacons' Courts to all ministers within their charge from the date of their induction to retirement.

And **Whereas** the minimum stipend is not based on years of service or age, as is the case with current additional employer superannuation contributions.

And **Whereas** Synod sets levies on Deacons' Courts to fund contributions to ministers' superannuation accounts:

- 14% - Self supporting charge one serving minister
- 11% - Additional ministers in same charge
- 10% - Aid receiving charge one minister
- 5% - Vacant charge or charge with serving minister aged 70 years more

And **Whereas** Synod maintains a Superannuation Support fund which can be drawn on to supplement contributions made to ministers' superannuation accounts.

And **Whereas** inequalities exist in the current rates of superannuation levies on Deacons' Courts and contributions made to ministers accounts compared with the basis of payment of minimum stipend (2nd Cor 8:13, 14).

And **Whereas** the Law & Advisory Committee reported to Synod 2010 that they had accepted an overture regarding Conflict of Interest, stating it 'spells out what is generally understood to be sound practice'.

And **Whereas** it is considered there is a potential conflict of interest within the Synod Superannuation Committee, with half of the members "to be members of the Retirement Fund" ie. be beneficiaries of the current Synod Superannuation legislation (Decision book p95).

Now therefore Central Presbytery humbly overtures the Synod of Eastern Australia to take these premises into consideration and to enact:

- a. The administration of Superannuation on behalf of ministers be under the purview of the Synod Finance Committee.
- b. The Finance Committee make recommendation to Synod to remove the current inequalities in the administration of ministers' superannuation.

Or to do otherwise for this object as Synod in its wisdom may deem best.

It was moved and seconded that the prayer of the overture be granted in the terms requested.

An alternate motion was moved and seconded that the overture be passed from.

The alternate motion was favoured. It was resolved that the overture be passed from.

11.36 FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr A Steel, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. It was resolved that:

1. We record our thanks to God for the sufficiency in temporal blessings the church as a whole has enjoyed since last Synod.

2. Adjustment of the Minimum Stipend, Cash and Non-cash components (Excluding Manse, Car and Telephone) for 2011/2012 be made on 1st January and 1st July in line with the movement in the *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia (Full-time adult ordinary time earnings)* as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In the event of a negative movement in any six monthly review period, no adjustment be made.

3. Stipend Assistance for 2011/2012 Synodical year (1/5/11 to 30/4/12) to the following Deacons' Courts, be approved up to the following LIMITS:

\$ 14,965 – (43%)	Armidale (8 months X 50% of Minimum Stipend - \$44,895paas at 1/1/11)
	<u>Subject to the prayer of Northern Presbytery's</u>
	<u>Overture to Synod being granted</u>
\$ 9,000 - (26%)	Hawkesbury-Nepean
\$ 11,000 - (31%)	Narre Warren
-----	-----
\$ 34,965	(100%) Total
=====	=====

As it is estimated there will be insufficient Synod funds available to fully provide the amount of aid requested, Synod approve ALLOCATIONS hereunder in terms of Synod resolutions (Mins 10.32.4b.4d)

\$ 4,085 – (43%)	Armidale – <u>Subject to the prayer of Northern Presbytery's</u>
	<u>Overture to Synod being granted.</u>
\$ 2,470 - (26%)	Hawkesbury-Nepean
\$ 2,945 - (31%)	Narre Warren
-----	-----
\$ 9,500	(100%) Estimated funds available
=====	=====

4. The repayment terms of the loans (2) from Synod Funds totalling \$550,000 granted to Knox Deacons' Court to assist in the redevelopment of the church and hall complex at 183-185 Grange Road, Glen Huntly, Victoria and approved by the Synod Administration Committee in August 2010 be amended:

From: "The loans to be progressively drawn from 1/10/2010 and repaid in full by 30 June 2011"

To: "The loans to be progressively drawn and fully repaid within nine months from the date of the first draw down".

11.37 GENERAL TREASURER'S REPORT

The General Treasurer, Mr AH Steel, presented his report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Treasurer presented the proposed deliverances. It was resolved that:

1. Synod confirm the charging of the deficit of \$10,525 as at 31/12/10 in *Stipend Relief Working Funds* to *Synod General Working Funds*
2. Synod confirm the reallocation of \$5,790 of *Stipend Relief funds* from Narre Warren to Armidale Deacons' Court.

11.38 QUEENSLAND TRUST CORPORATION

The Clerk presented the report on behalf of the Trustees. It was resolved that the report be received.

11.39 NSW TRUST CORPORATION

The Clerk presented the report on behalf of the Trustees. It was resolved that the report be received.

11.40 THE TRUSTEES FOR VICTORIA

The Secretary Mr AH Steel presented the report on behalf of the Trustees. It was resolved that the report be received.

11.41 PRESBYTERY REPORTS

Mr Kerridge presented the report for Northern Presbytery. Mr Muldoon presented the report for Central Presbytery. Mr Ward presented the report for Southern Presbytery. It was resolved that the reports be received.

11.42 CLOSURE OF SESSION

The session was closed with Mr Manly leading in prayer at 12.30 p.m.

TI Leggott
Clerk

MG Smith
Moderator

The session was opened with prayer at 2.05pm. The minutes of Session 6 were read and confirmed.

11.43 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 1: OVERTURE FROM NORTHERN PRESBYTERY

Synod took up consideration of Correspondence Item 1, an Overture from Northern Presbytery relating to Rev DP Smith and the Armidale congregation.

It was resolved to meet in closed court.

Mr D Kerridge stated the Overture:

WHEREAS the Minister in Armidale, Mr Smith, has requested, and been given, Leave of Absence on compassionate grounds for a period of six months, 14th March – 14th September;

AND WHEREAS the Presbytery, on compassionate grounds, has resolved, through the Congregation, to provide up to half the Minimum Stipend to Mr Smith during this period of time;

AND WHEREAS it has resolved to reduce the Status of the Armidale Congregation from a fully sanctioned Charge to a Preaching Station under the oversight of the Northern Rivers Congregation as from the 14th September, 2011 due to continued financial difficulties;

AND WHEREAS the Presbytery has resolved to provide a Transitional Period of Ministry for Mr. Smith within its bounds until the end of 2011;

THEREFORE Presbytery overtures the Synod of Eastern Australia to continue Financial Support for the minister in Armidale on compassionate grounds; [1] for his six months Leave of Absence, 14th March – 14th September; and [2] for his continued support until the end of 2011, such support to be on a needs basis up to [proportionately] 50 percent of the Minimum Stipend.

OR to do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.

Synod, having heard the overture of the Northern Presbytery resolved as follows:

1. The granting of six months leave of absence on compassionate grounds on the basis of 50% of minimum stipend and 50% of manse allowance is approved, as also the severance of the pastoral tie on compassionate grounds as well as the lack of financial viability of Armidale Congregation., effective 14th September 2011.
2. The decision of the Northern Presbytery to dissolve the local Session and Deacons' Court and place the Congregation under the Northern Rivers Session is rescinded as it could be construed as not being in accordance with the laws of the church. Instead the Armidale Congregation continues as a vacant charge from 14th September 2011, consisting of the existing Armidale Session and three assessors as appointed by Northern Presbytery.
3. Appropriate interviews shall be conducted by representatives of the Northern Presbytery with Mr and Mrs Smith and other interested parties in order to understand their circumstances and provide counsel and encouragement.
4. The request for stipend for the transitional period from 14 September to 31 December 2011 is not approved.
5. In respect of all matters related to Rev D.P.Smith and the Armidale Congregation only, two assessors are hereby appointed to Northern Presbytery, one nominated by Southern Presbytery and one by Central Presbytery, who shall be entitled to participate by telephone hook up or personal attendance as may seem best to them.

It was resolved to meet in open court.

11.44 REPORTS OF EXAMINERS OF RECORDS

The minutes of the Northern Presbytery for 2010-2011 were reported to be in order. The minutes of Southern Presbytery for 2010-2011 were reported to be in order. The minutes of Central Presbytery for 2010-2011 were reported to be in order. It was resolved that the Presbytery records be attested.

11.45 MODERATOR-ELECT FOR SYNOD 2012

The Clerk nominated Rev Sjirk Bajema. It was resolved that the Rev Sjirk Bajema be appointed Moderator-elect for Synod 2012.

11.46 TIME AND PLACE OF SYNOD 2012

The Clerk reported that a letter had been received from the Minister of the Hastings Congregation indicating that the congregation has offered to host Synod 2012 with the agreement of the Session and Deacons Court. It was resolved that Synod 2012 be hosted by the Hastings Congregation at Wauchope in the first half of May 2012, with the date being determined by the Administration Committee and notice given by the end of October 2011.

11.47 STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

It was resolved that Synod meet in Committee. The moderator invited Rev Sjirk Bajema to take the chair to lead in a time of discussion and reflection. Mr Bajema read from Exodus 18 and reflected on Moses' leadership under the hand of God. Synod broke into four discussion groups to consider the subject: Where to from here? Under the subheadings: Looking inward and looking outward.

11.48 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of sessions 7 were read and confirmed.

11.49 CLOSURE OF SESSION

The session was closed with praise and prayer at 6.04pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

MG Smith
Moderator

The session was opened with praise from Psalm 100 and prayer at 7.10pm. The Moderator read from Psalm 67 and introduced the Missions Evening.

11.50 MISSIONS EVENING

The Moderator invited Mr Ward to introduce Rev Yoa and Mary, the leader of the women's group, Gatwech Pal and Buai from the All Nations congregation, and invited them to share through singing praise in the Nuer language.

The Moderator invited Mr Muldoon to speak about the mission work in India, and Mr Leggott to share about his work with Australian Indigenous Ministries. The moderator thanked Mr Muldoon and Mr Leggott for their presentations and Mr Ball and Mr Campbell led in prayer.

11.51 TREASURER'S REPORT RE COSTS INCURRED BY SYNOD 2011.

The General Treasurer, Mr AH Steel, gave an indication of costs incurred by Synod 2011.

11.52 THANKS

The Moderator expressed his thanks to the members of Synod for the spirit in which the meetings had been conducted.

The Moderator expressed the thanks of the court to the Clerk for his work. The Moderator expressed the thanks of the court to the Synod Treasurer for his dedication and efficient work.

The Moderator expressed the thanks of the court to the Knox congregation for hosting the Synod and for their hospitality. The Moderator expressed thanks to the ladies for their presence, fellowship and assistance. The Synod expressed agreement through acclamation.

The Clerk expressed the thanks of the court to the Moderator for his leading of the Synod and for his address and devotional messages. The Synod expressed agreement through acclamation.

11.53 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of this closing Session 8 were read and confirmed.

11.54 CLOSURE OF SYNOD 2011

Synod 2011 was closed with the singing of Psalm 72 and prayer and the benediction at 9.00pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

MG Smith
Moderator

ACTS OF SYNOD 2011
Appended by the Direction of Synod (09.50)

Class 1 (Barrier Act Procedure)

No	Act	Reference
1	Act concerning Conflict of Interest	11.18

Class 2 (Others)

No	Act	Reference
1	Act concerning Church's position on Marriage	11.15.1
2	Act concerning Interviewing Women, Children & Vulnerable Adults by Church Courts (<i>Interim Act</i>)	11.15.2
3	Free Presbyterian Church Property Amendment Act (amendment of Parliamentary Act 5691, Victoria 1953)	11.17
4	Act concerning worship in the Free Church of Scotland	11.31.1
5	Act concerning Armidale minister and congregation	11.43
6	Act amending Act 1 Class 2 Synod 1983 (as amended) and renaming same Act concerning Reports and Correspondence to Synod	11.9.5
7	Act concerning Synod Committees: Membership and Method of Operating	11.9.6

ADDRESSES FROM DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Appendix (See 11.22 and 11.32)

Fraternal Greetings to PCEA Synod 2011

Rev. Henk De Waard, Fraternal Delegate, Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

Thank you brothers for the invitation to be represented at your Synod as a fraternal delegate of the CRCA. It is a real joy to be here and to meet with you and observe the way you deal with issues that confront you.

I bring you good wishes and greetings on behalf of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia with the prayer that the Lord will bless you in your ministry and that through you the Gospel may be advanced in this nation.

Though we have a long relationship of mutual encouragement, it is also true that it is not a highly functional relationship. We largely exist side by side. Perhaps in a few places where our two churches are present there is a limited degree of interaction. I dare say that there all kinds of cultural, historical and theological reasons to account for this level of interaction.

Let me give a brief picture and update as to what our situation is.

We are a denomination of some 8500 members, comprising 50 congregations and some 56 serving ministers, some of whom are ministers in general service or involved in teaching institutions. Essentially we have a cluster of churches around every capital city in Australia. The CRCA has existed for some 60 years and through ups and downs of years we have seen the grace of God at work.

For the first 40 years of our existence everything went rather predictably and well. All members knew what it meant to be the church and how to conduct the affairs of the church. After 1990 many changes began to happen. The current generation no longer has any links with our heritage in The Netherlands. Trusted structures that served us well for generations are questioned, revised or left behind. Loyalty to the denomination is not nearly as strong as it was and during the 1990's we witnessed a decline in numbers. That decline has now stabilized, in no small part due to the influx of many brothers and sisters from South Africa

Due to all the changes that occurred there is increasing diversity within the ranks of the CRCA. The uniformity that used to mark us has given way to a growing diversity that is causing concern for a number of our people.

Does that mean that there is no longer unity? There is a unity as far as allegiance to the Gospel is concerned.

Throughout the denomination there is ongoing debate and refocusing with an increasing emphasis on the centrality of the Gospel and the need for outreach and church growth. This renewed focus on the Gospel has led to a number of activities that motivate many to mission involvement. I mention such initiatives as:

- Leadership training for young people and significant initiatives in training men and women for ministry (not ordained) at the local level
- Mission trips- Burma, Indonesia, Solomon Islands, Russia, Philippines
- Adoption of the four -fold task which has church planting at its heart
- Church planting- a number of church plants

All these activities are intended to advance the Gospel and as such they are good initiatives. Churches that are focusing on the Gospel and are willing to leave behind some unhelpful traditions and ways of being the church by the grace of God are having an impact on society.

We all struggle with change. And in that process we have to face the tension of being biblical/faithful and yet minister relevantly.

In other words, we face the tension between our self-identity as a Reformed Church and the desire to minister in the contemporary Australian context.

This raises the issue of what is absolutely essential in the proclamation and what is peripheral/traditional. And I am sure that we tend to draw the lines at different points. Even the Confessional standards, good and helpful as they are, cannot provide final answers. Sure, the Scriptures give us clear indication as to what is doctrinally non-negotiable but on many other aspects (church government, liturgy, ministry), we are often required to use our sanctified common sense guided by biblical principles.

We face the same tension ecumenically and again there are differing points of view within our denominations. The CRCA currently is in an 'ecumenical wilderness'. For most of our existence we have been aligned with the Reformed Ecumenical Council. The REC ceased to exist in 2010 and nearly all its membership has become part of the World Communion of Reformed Churches- a much broader body which includes all churches that have some Reformed/Presbyterian link in their history which they prize but which is not necessarily upheld in a confessional sense. Our Synod next year will have to decide which way to go.

Having said that I would say that generally ecumenical matters are not high on the agenda. Some feel that these relationships take up an inordinate amount of time and energy and do not really advance the cause of the Gospel.

In any case, churches face enough struggles in their own circumstances:

- Shortage of ministers
- Declining membership
- Lack of leadership
- Retaining our young people.

Nevertheless, I believe that inter-church relationships of mutual care, support and prayer are an important part of what it means to be part of the universal body of Christ.

I trust that we can mutually support and encourage one another in a world that is rapidly becoming anti-Christian. We need each other more than ever.

We respect you as brothers and sisters in the Lord; we stand with you in the defense and proclamation of the Gospel; we share your love for truth and a commitment to the spread of the Gospel.

We wish you the Lord's strength and wisdom as you deal with the issues of your church at this Synod and express our desire for both our churches in Paul's words:

Philippians 1:9-11 *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*

Rev.Henk DeWaard
Fraternal Delegate
Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

Rev Dr Michael Flinn, Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

Mr. Chairman
Members of the Moderamen
Fellow delegates, and visitors to the synod:

Thank you for the welcome I have received and for the privilege of addressing you at this synod as a fraternal delegate of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Our formal interchurch relationship has been in existence since 2002.

What has nearly a decade of contact brought? Well, I can recall a discussion that we had with your delegates prior to the establishment of formal ecclesiastical ties. We asked Peter Gadsby at the time: Why would the PCEA want to establish ties with the RCNZ. Without batting an eyelid, and with a bit of a wry smile, he said: “We want be able to call your ministers.”

Well, you did. And they accepted! Revs. Bajema and Klazinga are serving among you and now, when we exchange formal greetings at each other’s synods, we can also catch up on old friendships. I’m sure that Sjirk and Jim would just love to go on your interchurch relations committee just so that they can visit New Zealand.

I bring greetings on behalf our churches in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We testify to the sovereignty of God in the world at large and in salvation and we proclaim man’s calling and purpose to glorify God and enjoy him forever. In a day when there is much misunderstanding and false teaching among those who claim to follow Christ, and much godlessness and unbelief in society at large, these truths that we profess are a great heritage. They are not a trench into which we must retreat but a citadel from which we must advance, and as churches we would like to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in our service to the King.

Let me update you with something of what lives in our churches across the Tasman. Our current membership stands at just over 3300 in 19 congregations. We currently have 20 ministers serving. It’s great to be able to say that because there was a time in recent years where we had a number of vacancies and where we also were very short of ministers. Thankfully, we have had a number of men come to help us, especially from the US, and they are making a valuable contribution. We have 1 student for the ministry currently training at Geelong, and one student graduating from Mid America Reformed Seminary in the middle of this year. He will be returning and serving in an internship, which we call a vicariate, which constitutes the final year of his training. We also have one student who has just completed a vicariate and will be undergoing final examinations in May.

Some of our congregations are becoming greedy and calling more than one minister. Two ministers serve in one of our larger congregations in Christchurch. I know of at least three other churches who are considering calling a second minister and in Palmerston North, we too have done this. We are looking forward to another pastor joining us from the US later this year. He is an OPC minister who has served as a missionary to Spanish speaking people in New York. He has NZ connections, having married a Kiwi, and we are looking forward to having him and his wife and family join us.

Our churches currently have two church planting works, or home mission works, as we call them. One is in a place called Wanganui in the North Island. That is a work associated with Palmerston North as the mother church. Then Rev. Bruce Hoyt, whom some of you will know, is serving in Oamaru in the South Island, seeking to build that congregation to the point of becoming independent of its mother church in Dunedin.

In regard to overseas mission, our churches support Rev. Alan Douma serving in PNG as well as missionary support couple Wally and Jeanette Hagoort. The work in PNG is the lion’s share of our missions budget, although we still support Miss Janice Reid, who has had many years’ experience in radio broadcasting. We also have occasional contact with Uganda, with an OPC mission work there.

On the interchurch relations front, we now have relationships with the United Reformed Churches in North America and with the Canadian Reformed Churches. We have good contact with folk in the Grace Presbyterian Church in NZ, although this has not resulted in a formal tie with them yet. With respect to the CRCA, our interchurch Relations Committees have been exploring a possible way forward that may remove the strain that has existed between us because of particular decisions taken by the CRCA, such as opening the office of deacon to women. Our synod in September will be considering the establishment of a new category of relationship, not equivalent to a sister church relationship but that nevertheless allows for meaningful and mutually beneficial contact and cooperation. Our committees are positive about this, but it remains for the synod to decide.

Finally, in the area of theological education, our last synod commissioned a committee to undertake a review of the training given to those studying for the ministry. In connection with this, the committee has been exploring with the RTC the possibility of offering part of the training in New Zealand rather than students having to leave the country for 3 or 4 years. In some ways this possibility coincides with a direction that the RTC already endorses and is beginning to implement. These discussions have proven fruitful and the synod will be considering some concrete proposals later in the year.

Brothers, we pray for the Lord's blessings upon your deliberations – that your decisions may be in accordance with the revealed Word and for the furtherance of the Lord's kingdom here in Australia and further afield.

Thank you.
Rev. Dr. Michael Flinn

Rev Lynsey Blakston, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Moderator, members of Synod and visitors - thank you for the invitation to represent the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia at your synod, and thank you for your hospitality and the privilege of being associated with the court. It has been very instructive to hear the discussions and impressive to see the way matters are handled.

I am glad to bring greetings from the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The first time I did this in the early 1970s I spoke against denominations and although I'm not going to do that today I still think that denominational division needs correction and work. Many of you won't know much about us and many in the RP church don't know much about you, and that is something we need to attend to as well. I have had a close personal acquaintance with the PCEA since my connections as a youth mixing with St Kilda young people and marrying into the PCEA.

We are a smaller church with three congregations, Geelong, McKinnon and Frankston. In our Frankston congregation we have a theological student who expects to be eligible for call at the end of 2012. Alastair McEwen supplied preaching in McKinnon for the last three years while it was vacant, as well as lecturing at the Reformed Theological College and we have recently installed a new minister there following his completion of an internship in Geelong.

The things you are dealing with here are relevant to our denomination and give us good ideas. We had been thinking of the need to have procedures for people subject to our oversight to be protected from possible abuse and what you have decided here will give us a good idea of the direction we should go in this. We have been trying to use good developments in electronic communication like you but have found it limited in some more complex discussions. The harmony you have shown in your own dealings at this synod has been impressive and commends the unity God gives his people when they seek his will together.

The enormity of our task sometimes makes us feel inadequate as I have heard you acknowledge here, so I want to bring a word of exhortation if that is appropriate. I came across some words that I have heard used in connection with occasions where the church is expressing humiliation in the face of its difficulties and questions of faithfulness. They are the words, 'We are unworthy servants, we have only done our duty', found in Luke 17, verse 10. These words can also be encouraging if we see them in their context and I would like to explain what I mean.

There is something puzzling about these words. If servants do what they are obliged to do, how can they be unworthy? It doesn't seem fair. This same idea appears in one other place so I looked for help there in Matthew 25, verse 30. But there the situation is clearly not encouraging because these same words are translated 'worthless servant' and the person is to be thrown outside 'into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'; so maybe not suitable for an occasion like this. Looking more closely we see that using either of these passages about unworthy servants to express our humility to Christ our master is not really appropriate because the examples in neither story are to be followed. These were examples to be avoided.

The key to interpreting these passages is found in a lack of faith that appears in both stories. In Matthew 25 there are three servants, one is called wicked and lazy, and he is the unworthy servant who buried his master's deposit. The other two with their varying returns on their investments were both called good and faithful, because they acted on what they knew about the character of their master. Then when we go back to the unworthy servant in Luke 17 we find the phrase comes in Jesus applying the meaning of a story to something in the disciples' conduct. The story is about a servant who comes in from his work and is told not to expect a place at the master's table. But this was a follow up to the disciples' complaint that their faith was too small to carry out his instructions. That was an unworthy complaint for Jesus' servants to make. Why? Because a small amount of faith in him could achieve way beyond their own capacity. Measuring the scope of what they could achieve themselves was looking at the minimum, which is certainly far below the scope of what our master can achieve through us trusting him.

Look at the particular task they struggled with on their own – forgiveness – repeated forgiveness toward a fellow believer who is falling into sin. ‘Lord increase our faith!’, they say. Then Jesus tells them that the smallest amount of faith in him can achieve way beyond their minimum, because God can do what is impossible for us. He doesn’t need our support, but he calls for us to trust him and obey him. Forgiving one another is not the main task, but it is an important one for the church. ‘Forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven you’. That’s not easy, but it is our duty.

One of our main tasks is to love, and forgiveness is part of that. In the two moderators’ addresses we heard about Christ’s call to make disciples and live relationally for him. And we thought about the difficulty of doing this in a world that doesn’t understand what we are talking about. ‘In a relationship’ now means something else, so does ‘in love’. But it can be done; we can show people what these things mean. When the lady next door to us broke her hip and was housebound with no family nearby, my wife did her shopping and massaged Sylvia’s legs and looked after her on a daily basis; although she didn’t ever recover. At the funeral chapel a few weeks ago there were prayers and words from the Bible because eight years ago Sylvia had asked for a Christian service.

It was encouraging to hear what a niece, Sylvie’s closest relative, said in her words to the mourners. Heather had learnt about Karin’s attention to Sylvie indirectly and was able to pick up on the Christian references in the service and point out to the people that those acts of kindness identified Karin as a Christian. Without a word the spoken gospel could be seen to be real to the extent that talk about it could become possible. So this answers the question of how we can forgive and how we can be worthy servants of Christ in a fallen world that speaks a different language – by trusting his great power to help us. That’s what Christians do; then people may want to know and can learn who Christ is, and so the people of the world can be reached and brought into relationship with him beginning with our love. This is our prayer for you.