

# **The Synod of Eastern Australia**



## **Minutes**

**Of the 166<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
Held at Wauchope NSW  
7<sup>th</sup> May to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

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**13.1 OPENING**

Within the Wauchope Church building of the Hastings congregation, on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013, at 4.30pm, the Synod of Eastern Australia met and was constituted with worship, conducted by the Moderator, the Rev Sjik Bajema.

**13.2 MODERATOR'S SERMON**

Mr Bajema read from Acts 3:1-4:22 and spoke on 4:12. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." He shared five aspects: 1) The scene of total opposites. 2) The situation of thorough change. 3) The source of true deliverance. 4) The signature of the Saviour. 5) The seal of triune working.

The Moderator welcomed members and guests to the meeting of Synod.

**13.3 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES**

Mr Ball introduced Mr Peter van der Wel delegate from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and Mr John Coles delegate from the Southern Presbyterian Church, and it was resolved that these delegates be associated with the court.

**13.4 ASSOCIATION OF OTHER MINISTERS**

Rev Peter Smith and Rev Alan Tripovich were welcomed to the synod and it was resolved that they be associated with the court.

**13.5 WELCOMES**

The moderator welcomed Mr Andries Scheepers as new members of Synod.

**13.6 ROLLS OF PRESBYTERIES**

The Certified Rolls of Presbyteries were tendered. Apologies for non-attendance were received from those marked † below.

**Northern Presbytery**

Brisbane  
Hastings  
Northern Rivers

**Ministers**

JD Klazinga  
DJ Kerridge  
Vacant

**Commissioned Elders**

R Lawson  
D Hamilton  
R Campbell

Northern Presbytery Appointment WJW Hanna †

**Central Presbytery**

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

DK Muldoon  
Vacant  
GD Ball  
JA McCallum

TR Reeve  
JF Kerridge  
JA Cromarty  
AH Steel (Treasurer)

Synod Appointment: TI Leggott (Seconded to AIM)

**Southern Presbytery**

Geelong  
Knox  
All Nations  
Narre Warren  
Ulverstone

MG Smith  
AA Miranda  
TW Yoa †  
S Bajema  
JA Scheepers

DPT Manly  
D Boehret  
RS Ward  
T Buck †  
I Hamilton

**13.7 THANKS TO RETIRING MODERATOR**

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*.

### **13.8 ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

The Clerk presented the Administration Committee's Report. It was resolved that the report be received. There was some concern expressed about Committee Structure. It was agreed that further consideration be given, and that a proposed deliverance be presented to a later session. The Clerk presented the proposed deliverance 2 and it was resolved that:

That the following examiners of records be appointed:

Northern Presbytery	Rev. R Ward and Hawkesbury Nepean elder.
Central Presbytery	Rev. J Klazinga and Geelong elder.
Southern Presbytery	Rev. G Ball and Brisbane elder.

### **13.9 CLOSURE OF SESSION**

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

TI Leggott  
Clerk

S Bajema  
Moderator

## **SESSION 2**

**TUESDAY 7<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2013**

**7.25PM**

The session was opened with praise and prayer at 7.25pm.

### **13.10 MINUTES**

The minutes of Session 1 were read and confirmed.

### **13.11 ELECTION OF NEW MODERATOR**

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

### **13.12 MODERATOR'S ADDRESS**

The Moderator addressed the Synod reading from Psalm 81:1-10 and shared that there is more for us in God than we have yet understood. God is prepared to give us more of his blessings. "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." There is an awesome capacity of God to give his people full satisfaction. Christians need to be hungry for God, to have a ferocious appetite for God. God is willing, God is prepared, God is ready. Are we? Synod joined in praise singing Psalm 81:1-10.

### **13.13 THANKS**

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

### **13.14 PRESBYTERY REPORTS**

It was resolved that the reports as printed be received. There was discussion particularly in relation to church extension.

### **13.15 CLOSURE OF SESSION**

Notices of Motion were called for and the session was closed with prayer and praise at 8.30pm.

TI Leggott  
Clerk

A Miranda  
Moderator

The session was opened with praise and prayer at 9.00am. The Moderator read from Matthew 13:31-35 and shared devotions considering the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven. The Moderator led the court in prayer.

### 13.16 MINUTES

The minutes of Session 2 were read and confirmed.

### 13.17 LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Ward, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverance 1 and it was resolved that:

1. Synod add the following preamble to Act of Synod 2004 (Guidelines for Church Workers), and order a copy of the Guidelines thus amended be pasted in the front of Presbytery, Session and Deacons' Court Minute books:

At least once year an affirmative answer to the following questions shall be given by all Session members and all members of Presbyteries and duly minuted in Session and Presbytery records: *Ministers and elders are reminded of their obligation to keep watch over the flock of God and in particular to the care of the young and the vulnerable. Are you familiar with the Guidelines for Church Workers passed by Synod? Are you faithfully keeping to them? Are you aware of your obligations under State and Church law concerning the reporting of suspected or actual cases of child abuse or child pornography?*

The Convener presented proposed deliverance 2

### NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr Muldoon presented the motion: That the words "and meantime enact the same as an Interim Act" be deleted. Mr Muldoon spoke to the motion. The motion was defeated.

It was resolved that:

2. The Synod transmit the following Overture to Presbyteries under the provisions of the Barrier Act and meantime enact the same as an Interim Act:

## PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

(repealing Act 6 Class 2 Synod 2004 as amended)

### A. Introduction

1. Sexual assaults against children are almost always pre-meditated, involving predatory acts of grooming, manipulation, self-gratification and exploitation, and occur widely across the various socio-economic areas. Child sexual assault is generally perpetrated by a male in the vast majority of cases and is more likely to be perpetrated by someone known to the child or their family (research varies but commonly finds between 85% and 95% of the time). Of those offenders known to the child most commonly the offender is not living with the child (approx 70%). Child sexual assaults involve shame, silence and secrecy and for these reasons often are not reported for many years.

2. While mindful of the possibility of baseless allegations the Church does not condone or tolerate any acts of sexual misconduct, whether directed toward children or adults and will seek to prevent their occurrence. (Refer also to Guidelines for Church Workers, Synod 2004 as amended 2013 which is to be inserted at the front of each minute book of each Congregation.)

3. At least once year the an affirmative answer to the following questions shall be given by all Session members and all members of Presbyteries and duly minuted in Session and Presbytery records: *Ministers and elders are reminded of their obligation to keep watch over the flock of God and in particular to the care of the young and the vulnerable. Are you familiar with the Guidelines for Church Workers passed by Synod? Are you faithfully keeping to them? Are you aware of your*

*obligations under State and Church law concerning the reporting of suspected or actual cases of child abuse or child pornography?*

### **B. Basic Principles**

1. In the event of a disclosure or allegation that there is reasonable ground to suspect a child has been, or is being harmed the matter must be reported to the Police. In addition, any particular requirements of Federal or State law must be followed.

Generally, reasonable grounds are a belief that a child may be in need of protection based on situations where:

- A child states that they have been sexually assaulted or abused.
- A child states that they know someone who has been sexually assaulted or abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
- A relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the child, states that the child has been sexually assaulted or abused.
- Professional observations of the child's behaviour or development lead the professional to form a belief that the child has been sexually assaulted or abused.
- Signs of sexual assault or abuse lead to a belief the child may have been abused.

At this stage allegations of child sexual assault when the alleged victim is still under 18 years of age, must not be investigated further by the church and neither the child/young person or the accused should be questioned by the church. The matter involves criminal behaviour and, like other criminal offences, must first be investigated by the Police as soon as possible.

2. Where the victim is now an adult, the Church encourages the offence to be reported to the Police but where adult victims do not wish to proceed or be identified because of the victim's fear of not being believed, or being not comfortable with, or trusting of, authority figures, or because of a sense of isolation by their own fear, shame and self-persecution, an alternative process of reporting to the Police in a non-confronting way without having to give a detailed statement **and/or** which will facilitate the passing on of information regarding alleged offenders and offences to police should be used, subject to any applicable State legislation.

3. Whether or not the offence is admitted at the time the offence comes to notice, the alleged offender is suspended from church privileges as an interim measure until Police investigations (if applicable) are completed. If no admissions are made the suspension is not disciplinary but for good order pending establishing the facts one way or another. Any Police investigation has priority. If clear admissions are made they should be secured in writing, and the church court may proceed with appropriate discipline in accordance with the Handbook of Practice and Procedure. If sexual abuse is involved the Session refers to the Presbytery before final sentence (cf. *Handbook* 7.26).

4. The accused person must have no further contact with the person making the accusations until the investigations have been completed. This is especially important if the offence alleged is one involving a minor or minors. In such a case, the accused person must have no further official contact with, or control of, any minors.

5. It is possible that charges arising from the Police investigation may not be proved to the satisfaction of the civil court. Nevertheless, the standards of conduct required by the Word of God are to be maintained by the Church. Irrespective of any other action that may be taken, the Church reserves the right to exercise its own powers of discipline over adherents, members and office-bearers, according to the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure*.

a. Allegations against a minister or licentiate must be dealt with by his Presbytery. The allegation should go immediately to the Clerk of Presbytery, (or to the Moderator if the Clerk is the one accused) who will inform the other members of the Presbytery and arrange with them to conduct a preliminary investigation into the matter, with Police investigation having priority as in 1 above.

b. Allegations against other office-bearers, members and adherents are dealt with by the local session in the first place. The allegation can be taken to any elder, who must immediately inform the

remainder of the session which will arrange to conduct a preliminary investigation, with Police investigation having priority as in 1 above. If the Session concludes that a *prima facie* case exists against the accused person, it should deal with him or her with a view to confession, but, if the allegation involves the sexual abuse of a child, then, whether or not the person confesses, the matter must be referred to the Presbytery of the bounds in terms of section 7.26 of the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure*.

5. The Law and Advisory Committee shall ensure Sessions and Presbyteries are kept up to date with the legal requirements in their State with regard to offences of child abuse, and shall assist in the clarification of procedure or securing of legal advice as may be necessary.

3. Synod approve the revision of Section 4.55 in the Handbook as stated in the report.

Mr Kerridge registered a simple dissent. Mr Steel registered dissent with reasons: The resolution embodies regulations at variance with the principles contained in Matthew 18:15-17 and existing legislation contained in the Church Handbook 4.45 *Allegations Against a Minister*. Further, it makes provision for a retired minister to act as Interim Moderator of a vacant congregation who is not a member of Presbytery vide Handbook 4.2. It was resolved that a Committee of Mr Ward, Mr G Smith and the Clerk be appointed to give answers to the dissent.

The Convener presented proposed deliverance 4

#### **NOTICE OF MOTION**

Mr Muldoon presented the motion: That proposed deliverance 4 be amended: That the final sentence beginning "The local Session" be deleted. The motion was defeated.

It was resolved that:

4. Synod resolve that there be added to the end of 3 (ii) in Act 16 of Synod 1983 (as amended) the following words: 'The Training of Ministry Committee prescribe additional written work on the history and distinctive principles of the PCEA, and ensure Pastoral Care in theory and practice is included in his College course (by supplement if necessary). The local Session are to provide a satisfactory report on the student's involvement with the congregation before certifying completion of the course.'

The Convener continued with the proposed deliverances. It was resolved that:

5. a) That the beginning of paragraph 5 of Act 6 1975 as amended and recorded at 4.50 in the Handbook be amended to read: 'All students shall be examined thoroughly by the presbytery on the following subjects. In view of the importance of the matter and to ensure thorough consideration without undue pressure on the presbytery or the candidate it is strongly recommended that the examination be spread over more than one sitting/meeting of the presbytery. If a public meeting to licence the student is planned it should not be arranged until the examination is concluded.'

b) That in paragraph 5 of Act 6 1975 as amended and recorded at 4.50 (f) in the Handbook the sentence 'The Presbytery must be assured of the student's ability to preach the Gospel and normally a sermon preached in the hearing of the Presbytery is to be included as part of the examination.' be replaced by the following. 'The Presbytery must be assured of the student's ability to conduct public worship appropriately, preach the Gospel with clarity and commitment, and exercise pastoral care with a loving and faithful attitude. To that end members of Presbytery as far as practical should take opportunity to attend a service or services conducted by the student and/or to otherwise inform themselves of his competence in these areas. In addition, the Presbytery normally prescribes a sermon on a specified passage to be preached in the hearing of the Presbytery.'

6. a) Synod approve the addition of the following words at the end of the first paragraph under 4.53 in the Handbook: 'To assist the congregation as it enters the vacancy it may be desirable that a presbyterial visitation be held.'

b) The following section 2.42 is added to the Handbook of Practice and Procedure and also replaces the last sentence of the first paragraph of 4.53.

#### 2.42 SUPPLY DURING VACANCY

The Interim Moderator (cf. 4.53) is responsible to the Presbytery during a vacancy and particularly for the pulpit. A person proposed for residential supply who is not a minister in good standing of the PCEA must be first approved by the Presbytery as a person of knowledge and capacity who is sufficiently familiar with the position of the PCEA and able to work in harmony with it, and the terms of occupancy of a church residence must be so arranged by the Presbytery so as to ensure the church will not be prejudiced by overstaying when the period of supply ends.

7. When a Presbytery has satisfactory information from the Interim-Moderator as to the harmony of a congregation and its financial viability it may proceed to meet with the congregation in accord with Handbook 4.61 without a separate meeting to consider the request for moderation as in 4.60, but records its satisfaction on harmony and financial viability in its minutes.

8. That a group submission consisting of applications from all entities be prepared at this Synod seeking to retain the calendar year as the accounting period for the purposes of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission on the grounds that: “(a) the denomination’s long-standing financial year end date is 31st December; (b) the Church’s Synod (governing body) meets in April or May each year. This allows completion of financial reports and auditing, in a less busy period in the Accountancy profession, in time for presentation to the Church’s Synod.”

9. Synod authorize the use where appropriate of the Statement on the Constitution as follows:

#### **STATEMENT ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA**

[The constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia is of common law type  
and cannot readily be digested into a single document.]

1. The religious denomination known as the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, founded in Sydney on 10 October 1846, holds the same principles and adheres to the same standards of doctrine, worship, discipline and government as did the religious denomination in Scotland known as the Free Church of Scotland in the year 1843 following the event in Scottish history known as the Disruption. The supreme governing body subject to its constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia is known as the Synod of Eastern Australia.

2. The basic doctrinal standard of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia is the Westminster Confession of Faith as explained by the Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647, and of the Synod of Eastern Australia in 1952, together with the Formula and Questions set out by the Synod of Eastern Australia in 1952 and 2008.

3. The other standards of the Church are as follow:

Church Government

Second Book of Discipline 1578

Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church Government 1645

Worship

Directory for Public Worship 1645

Directory for Family Worship 1647

Catechisms

Larger 1648

Shorter 1648

These standards are to be understood in the light of the Acts passed by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland when they were adopted.

4. The by-laws governing procedure in Church courts are set out in the Handbook of Practice and Procedure of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia first published in 1992 and revised from time to time, and accessible by download from [www.pcea.org.au](http://www.pcea.org.au)

5. Church property is held by one of three corporate trustee bodies: The Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia (pursuant to an Act of NSW Parliament 1918); The Trustees for Victoria of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (pursuant to Act 5691, Victoria 1953; or under the name Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia in terms of the Queensland *Religious Educational and Charitable Institutions Act* (Register of Patents No. 35 Page 9).

This Statement on the Constitution was approved by the Synod on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013

**10.** Synod record its thanks to the Parliament of Victoria for granting the amendments to the Property Act requested, and for remitting the costs normally applying to a private Bill.

**11.** Synod approve the proposed amendment of *The Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act* (NSW 1918) as set out in the Committee Report, and authorize the Law & Advisory Committee in consultation with the NSW Trustees to take into consideration any minor adjustments that may be notified to the Committee by Central or Northern presbyteries by 30 September 2013, and to submit the proposed amendment to the New South Wales Parliament with a view to enactment in the terms requested or with such variations in form as the Parliamentary Draftsman requires but that still provide for the operation, scope and legal effect requested.

The resolution was passed with none opposing.

**12.** Synod resolve in regard to the appointment of five trustees under the *Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Property Act* (Victoria, 1953) and the proposed amendment of *The Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act* (NSW, 1918):

(i) the persons from time to time holding the office of Clerk of Synod and of Treasurer of Synod shall by virtue of their appointment be trustees and the provision for substitutes for these officeholders in Act 7 Synod 2009 and Act 7 Synod 2008 shall continue to apply with the necessary changes.

(ii) the other trustees will be ministers, elders or deacons of some experience and capacity for the task and shall hold office at the pleasure of Synod in accordance with Section 3 (11). However, they shall in any case cease to be trustees, *inter alia*, at midnight on 30 June following their completion of five years service, but are eligible for reappointment for further periods of up to five years at a time. As a general rule any appointment will cease at midnight on 30 June occurring after the person's attainment of the age of 75.

**13.** Synod appoint the following five persons to be the initial trustees in terms of Section 4 of the proposed amendment of *The Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act* (NSW 1918), and from the rising of this Synod these five persons to be the trustees pursuant to the *Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Property Act* (Victoria 1953):

Alex Henry Steel (Treasurer) (9/1942)

Rowland Skipsey Ward (12/1945)

Trevor Ian Leggott (Clerk) (3/1949)

Ronald Arthur Lawson (10/1950)

David John Kerridge (7/1970)

**14.** Pursuant to Sections 3 (7) and (8) of the *Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Property Act* (Victoria 1953):

(i) Synod appoint that the quorum for a meeting of trustees shall be three not two. Such meetings may be held by electronic means and must be suitably documented.

(ii) Pursuant to Section 3 (5) the affixing of the common seal shall be attested by two persons.

(iii) The attestation clause for the affixing of the common seal shall be in the form: 'The Common Seal of the Trustees for Victoria of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia was hereto affixed in accordance with the provisions of the *Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Property Act* (Victoria, 1953), Section 3.'

**15.** That on the commencement of the amended *Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act* (NSW 1918) the following changes in Synod legislation shall become operative:

(i) rules for the application of the seal of the NSW trustees precisely parallel in requirement to those under the Victorian legislation (Act of Synod 1954) shall come into force. The sealing clause shall be in similar form to that for the Victorian Trustees, two trustees being sufficient to attest the seal.



### **13.23 MEDIA COMMITTEE**

The Convener, Mr Bajema, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received.

### **13.24 WEBSITE**

The Convener, Mr MG Smith presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverance and it was resolved that:

1. Synod appoints Rev David Kerridge as webmaster responsible for the church website (www.pcea.org.au) with effect from the end of this Synod meeting.

It was further resolved to thank Mr Gavin Smith for his services as webmaster over recent years and the resolution was passed with acclamation.

### **13.25 YOUTH & FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

The Convener, Mr Miranda, being Moderator invited Mr Klazinga to present the report. Mr Klazinga present the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved that:

1. Synod thank all Sunday-school teachers and youth leaders for their incalculable service to God by teaching the children the truths of the gospel.
2. Synod thank Mrs Margaret Kinder and Mrs Irene Steel for their commitment to enrich the lives of children with the encouragement of Scripture.
3. Synod thanks God for moments of refreshing fellowship and growth during family camps.
4. Synod commits to pray for the continual spiritual development of our children and youth and for them to find their identity in relationship with Christ and glad involvement in their local churches.

### **13.26 MISSIONS COMMITTEE**

The Convener, Mr Klazinga, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved that:

1. That Synod express its ongoing commitment to missions by encouraging the congregations to give generously and continue praying for the mission works we support.
2. That Synod allow Rev Trevor Leggott's superannuation contribution to be paid from the Synod Superannuation Support Fund.
3. That Synod adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2013 - 2014 and expresses its general agreement with the estimates for the aforementioned period.

### **13.27 INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

The Convener, Mr Ball, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Convener read from letters of greeting that had been received from other churches. (These are included as an appendix to the minutes). The convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved that:

1. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia meeting in Wauchope 2013 expresses its sorrow at the divisions between the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in Australia and resolves as the Lord enables us to do all that we practically can to maintain and promote brotherly relations.
2. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia gives thanks to God for the churches with whom we have formal fraternal relations and for those churches with whom we have contact and resolves to pray for the Lord's blessing upon their work and witness.

3. The Synod gives thanks to God for the good relationships with the Southern Presbyterian Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, and encourage the Southern Presbytery to continue to strengthen ties in the hope that greater unity may come in due time.

### **13.28 NOTICE OF MOTION**

Mr Muldoon presented his motion: That proposed deliverance 4 be amended: That “our delegates, Rev RS Ward and Rev GD Ball” be changed to “our delegates, the Moderator of Synod and the Convener of the Interchurch Relations Committee.” The Moderator ruled the motion out of order. It was moved and seconded that the Moderators ruling be set aside. The motion was defeated and it was resolved that the Moderator's ruling be upheld. The Committee’s proposed resolution was presented. It was resolved that:

4. The Synod Clerk is authorised to provide credentials to our two voting delegates, Rev Dr RS Ward and Rev GD Ball, to the ICRC in Cardiff.

### **13.29 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES**

Mr Ball introduced Mr Peter van der Wel, delegate and Stated Clerk of the RCNZ, and he was invited to address the Synod. (This address is included as an appendix to the minutes)

The Moderator introduced Mr John Coles delegate from the Southern Presbyterian Church and Mr Coles addressed the Synod (This address is included as an appendix to the minutes)

The Moderator thanked both men for their addresses.

### **13.30 CLOSURE OF SESSION**

The session was closed with prayer at 6.00p.m.

TI Leggott  
Clerk

AA Miranda  
Moderator

## **SESSION 5**

**WEDNESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2013**

**7.10PM**

The session was opened with praise and prayer at 7.10pm.

### **13.31 MINUTES**

It was resolved to defer the confirmation of the Minutes of Session 4 to the next session.

### **13.32 MISSIONS EVENING**

The Moderator invited the Convener of Missions Committee to introduce the speakers for the Missions Evening. Mr Klazinga read from Ephesians 2:11-22. Mr Klazinga asked Mr Muldoon to introduce Mr Vijay Tagore of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Dehra Dun, North India. Mr Tagore was invited to address the Synod and he shared about the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India and the work of the Seminary.

Mr Klazinga invited Mr Ward to introduce Rev Bruce Christian and his wife Pat for Bruce to speak about the work of Christian Witness to Israel. Bruce shared about his interest in Jewish evangelism and particularly from his time at Rose Bay where there was a large Jewish community. CWI continues with their book table and literature ministry at Bondi despite opposition from local Jewish leadership. Bruce encouraged prayerful interest in the work of CWI and to pray that the Lord would touch the hearts of many Jewish people. There is a need for a new Field Director and finances to support that work. Kaychan Park and his wife continue with the work in Sydney mainly reaching out to back-packers in evangelism and hospitality. Steven and Lana Holmes are keen to commence a ministry in Melbourne. Bruce thanked the PCEA for the ongoing support of CWI.

Rev Trevor Leggott was invited to address the Synod regarding his work with Australian Indigenous Ministries and Trevor shared about the encouraging signs of revival in the NT, the growth of ministry in Western NSW and Qld, and that indigenous leaders are taking up the challenge of ministering to their own and responding to calls to provide ministry in a growing number of centres.

### **13.33 CLOSURE OF SESSION**

Notices of motion were called for and the session was closed praise and prayer at 8.40pm.

TI Leggott  
Clerk

AA Miranda  
Moderator

The session was opened with praise and prayer. The Moderator read from Matthew 13:44-46 and shared devotions considering the parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price. The Moderator led the court in prayer.

**13.34 MINUTES**

The minutes of Session 4 and 5 were read and confirmed.

**13.35 SUPERANNUATION COMMITTEE**

The Convener, Rev Dr Ward, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved that:

1. Deacons' Court should note the levy for self-supporting charges is \$1,705 per quarter that is 14% of the estimated minimum stipend for 2013 (\$48,700). For aid-receiving charges with PCEA ordained supply it is 10% (\$1,217 per quarter) and for vacant charges without a supply minister 5% (\$609 per quarter).
2. Synod remind fund members of the advisability of seeking professional advice in regard to both choice of Fund and investments within any particular fund, and the effects of recent changes in Government legislation, so that it meets their particular needs, as this is their responsibility and not that of the church.
3. Synod request Sessions and Deacons' Courts to keep a close eye on ministers' leave entitlements to ensure ministers do not suffer burn out through failure to take it, and that Presbyteries keep this in mind in the annual examination of records to ensure outstanding entitlement is minuted at least once a year.

It was resolved that Mr Ward be thanked for his long service of 36 years on the superannuation committee, the motion passed by acclamation.

**13.36 FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Convener, Mr A Steel, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved that:

1. We record our thanks to God for temporal blessings granted for another year.
2. Adjustment of the Minimum Stipend, Cash and Non-cash components (Excluding Manse, Car and Telephone) for 2013/2014 be made on 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> 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 relief of \$7,750 be granted to Hawkesbury-Nepean Deacons' Court on a strictly needs basis.

**13.37 GENERAL TREASURER'S REPORT**

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

### **13.38 ANSWERS TO REASONS OF DISSENT SUBMITTED BY MR STEEL (MINUTE 13.18.3)**

1. If there are prejudicial reports or rumours the prescribed procedure to deal with them must be followed. But if there are no such reports or rumours it is not only fully consistent with established procedure to record this, it is in the interest of all parties to do so.
2. The eligibility of a retired minister for various tasks, including interim-moderatorship, is summarised in Section 5 of the Law and Advisory Committee Report of Synod 2012.

Respectfully submitted, TI Leggott, MG Smith, RS Ward.

### **13.39 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

The Administration Committee presented proposal for Committee Structure.

### **13.40 NOTICE OF MOTION**

Mr Steel presented his motion: That the Law and Advisory Committee be separated from the Administration and Inter-Church Relations Committees and that the members of the Committee be RS Ward (Convener), TI Leggott, T Reeve, R Lawson, R Hingston. It was resolved that this proposal be confirmed.

### **13.41 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

After discussion it was resolved that Committee Structure for 2013-14 be as follows:

*Administration:* Clerk (Convener), Moderator, Moderator-elect, Treasurer.

*Law and Advisor:* RS Ward (Convener), TI Leggott, T Reeve, R Lawson, R Hingston.

*Inter-Church Relations:* GD Ball (Convener), A Scheepers, J Klazinga, S Bajema, with power to coopt an elder.

*Church and Nation, Media:* D.K.Muldoon (Convener Church and Nation), S Bajema (Convener Media and Banner), D.Kerridge (Website), T.W.Yoa.

*Youth and Fellowship:* A.A.Miranda (Convener), A Scheepers, G.Hamilton, S.Carswell, T. Reeve.

*Finance:* A.H.Steel (Convener), D.J.Ramsay, T. Buck, D.E.Kerr, J.Audet.

*Superannuation:* S.Bajema (Convener), R Tso, DP Smith, D.J.Ramsay, J.Audet.

*Missions:* J.D. Klazinga (Convener), D.P.Smith, T.I.Leggott, D.K.Muldoon, I.Conley, J.Greensill.

*Training of Ministry:* D Kerridge (Convener), J.A.McCallum, A.A.Miranda, D.Manly, S Bajema.

### **13.42 TRAINING OF MINISTRY UPDATE REPORT**

The Convener gave an update report to synod following consideration of work submitted by Mr Denver Boehret and having had a meeting with him.

### **13.43 NSW TRUST CORPORATION**

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

### **13.44 QUEENSLAND TRUST CORPORATION**

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

### **13.45 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.

#### **13.46 NOTICE OF MOTION**

Mr Steel gave notice that he wished to resign as Secretary of the Body Corporate of the Trustees for Victoria of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. It was resolved to accept the request and the motion was passed with applause in appreciation of the work done. It was further resolved that Synod appoint Rev RS Ward as Secretary of the Body Corporate of the Trustees for Victoria of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

#### **13.47 REPORTS OF EXAMINERS OF RECORDS**

The minutes of the Northern Presbytery for 2011-2012 were reported to be in order. The minutes of Central Presbytery for 2011-2012 were reported to be in order. The minutes of Southern Presbytery for 2011-2012 were reported to be in order. It was resolved that the Presbytery Minutes be received and the records attested.

#### **13.48 MODERATOR-ELECT FOR SYNOD 2014**

The Clerk nominated Rev J Klazinga. It was resolved that the Rev J Klazinga be appointed Moderator-elect for Synod 2014.

#### **13.49 TIME AND PLACE OF SYNOD 2014**

The Clerk reported that the Hastings Congregation had indicated their willingness to host Synod again in 2014. It was resolved that Synod 2014 be hosted by the Hastings Congregation at Wauchope in the first half of May 2014, with the date being determined by the Administration Committee and notice given by the end of October 2013.

#### **13.50 TREASURER'S REPORT RE COSTS INCURRED BY SYNOD 2013.**

The General Treasurer, Mr AH Steel, gave an indication of costs incurred by Synod 2013.

#### **13.51 THANKS**

The Moderator expressed his thanks and best wishes to Mr Gavin Smith and his wife who were leaving in June to return to Scotland, and they were committed to the Lord in prayer.

The Moderator was thanked for his leading of the Synod and for his address and devotional messages.

The Moderator expressed his thanks to the members of Synod for their participation, the Clerk, the Treasurer and the Precentor during Synod for their work, and expressed the thanks of the court to the Hastings congregation for hosting the Synod and for their hospitality.

#### **13.52 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of this closing Session 6 were read and confirmed.

#### **13.53 CLOSURE OF SYNOD 2013**

Synod 2013 was closed with the singing of Psalm 72:16-19 and prayer and the benediction at 1.15pm.

TI Leggott  
Clerk

AA Miranda  
Moderator

**ACTS OF SYNOD 2013**  
**Appended by the Direction of Synod (09.50)**

**Class 1 (Barrier Act Procedure)**

<b>No</b>	<b>Act</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1	Act concerning Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct (Interim Act)	13.18.2

**Class 2 (Others)**

<b>No</b>	<b>Act</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1	Act concerning Guidelines for Church Workers	13.17.1
2	Act concerning Revision of Section 4.55 in the Handbook: Procedure Upon Intended Resignation or Retirement of a Minister	13.17.3
3	Act concerning Additions to 3 (ii) Act 16 of Synod 1983 (as amended) Training of Ministry Regulations	13.17.4
4	Act concerning Additions to 4.50 in the Handbook: Student Licensing Trials	13.17.5 a & b
5	Act concerning Additions to 4.53 in the Handbook: Vacancy	13.17.6 a & b
6	Act concerning Modification to Handbook 4.60: Presbytery Meeting with Congregation	13.17.7
7	Act concerning Submission re Accounting Period	13.17.8
8	Act concerning Statement on the Constitution of the PCEA	13.17.9
9	Act concerning Amendment to the NSW Property Act	13.17.11
10	Act concerning Number of Trustees for Vic and NSW	13.17.12
11	Act concerning Names of Trustees for Vic and NSW	13.17.13
12	Act concerning Quorum for Trustees for Vic	13.17.14
13	Act concerning Changes to Take Place on Commencement of the Amended NSW Property Act	13.17.15

## ADDRESSES AND GREETINGS FROM DELEGATES FOR OTHER CHURCHES

### Mr Peter van der Wel, Delegate from the Reformed Church of New Zealand Fraternal Address to PCEA

Mr Moderator, delegates and visitors, it is a pleasure and privilege to be here and to have fellowship with you and to bring you greetings from the RCNZ in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Lord of the church. We appreciate that together as sister-churches, though in different nations, we can express the unity of the saints as unity in a common faith in Jesus Christ and the Word of God. We thank you, brothers, for your fellowship in the Gospel and for your faithful witness to his Word here in Australia in the various cities and towns you minister, through your work with the Australian Indigenous Mission, as well as the work you do in various overseas locations.

The Tasman Sea unfortunately prevents easier face-to-face communications between us, but occasions such as these give opportunity to occasional good contact. The ICRC conference in Wales later this year will no doubt give opportunity for your delegates to catch up with our delegates, Rev. Bruce Hoyt and Rev. Dirk van Garderen. Personally I am thankful for to see a small number of familiar faces in your midst and I pray that the men the Lord has led from New Zealand to come and serve in your churches may serve well in this part of God's kingdom. I also had the privilege to meet Rev. Trevor Leggott whom I met at our Synod in 2008. It is actually quite pleasant to attend a synod where I don't have to keep and do the minutes and can just observe the proceedings. I could help notice that Trevor was back before most to attend to clerical chores.

The Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand held in September 2011 expressed its desire to continue our sister church relationship with you and we pray that the Lord may bless our desire to become more and more united as his people in the way we live before him and express our faith in and to the world around us, a world which is more and more focusing on itself and less and on less on God who is the creator of heaven and earth.

As you may be aware that Synod also proceeded to institute another level of ecclesiastical relationship, called Ecclesiastical Fellowship, and currently that is our relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches. The Rules for this relationship have been accepted provisionally by our churches and are currently on the agenda of our Interchurch Relations Committee for further definition. One of the potential problems is the fact that the OPC uses that name (*Ecclesiastical Fellowship*) for its concept of *sister-church relationship*. So this matter is still a work in progress.

Now for those who are not so familiar with our churches, we have 3 presbyteries:

- South Island Presbytery           6 + 2
- Wellington Presb.                 7 + 1
- Auckland Presb.                   6

For various reasons, but also due to numerical growth 6 congregation have been or are involved with building programs recently:

- Silverstream and Bishopdale have completed extensive renovations
- Hastings has moved to a larger more suitable complex of buildings
- Pukekohe and Palmerston North are currently in the process of demolition and rebuilding
- Christchurch are hoping to start soon with rebuilding what was demolished by the earthquake two years ago.

There are 2 vacant congregations (RCs Hukanui and Wellington)

In the next few years, with some ministers close to retirement and other congregations looking for an additional pastor, as a denomination we are looking for at least up to 5 or 6 men to serve as pastors in our churches. Or more, there is always a need for labourers.

**Mr John Coles, Delegate from the Southern Presbyterian Church**

Thank you for the kind invitation from the Synod to the Southern Presbyterian Church to provide a delegate to the 2013 PCEA Synod. The brethren from the SPC send greetings in The Lord Jesus Christ. As a Clerk for around 30 years I normally have to decline such requests because of resources but we are pleased to accept on this occasion and I come as a delegate from the SPC.

It reminds me of another delegate, Barnabas, who was sent from Jerusalem to the Church at Antioch to report on the situation following the dispersion after the martyrdom of Stephen. The account is given in Acts 11.19 to 23. He was very pleased to report that he found grace through the powerful operation of the Lords blessing on the preaching there.

As I view your deliberations and find that same grace it is to Gods praise and our blessing. These folk were first called Christians at Antioch, verse 26, and we have the privilege of carrying that distinguishing name to this day.

Some history of the SPC: About 60 years ago the work started in Tasmania from a zealous band of evangelical Arminian believers who then found the reformed faith in the late 1950s. The PCEA was instrumental in helping establish the Tasmanian church by providing two ministers to form a Presbytery to ordain 3 local men - Rev Hugh McNeilly, Rev Charles Rodman and Rev Eric Turnbull.

The EPC church, as it became, was disrupted in 1986 with a split from outside influences that resulted in two congregations forming the Southern Presbyterian Church - Hobart and Launceston. The Lord has blessed us greatly with increased numbers and our own church buildings and Manses in both locations. There is a good range of ages in the congregations and a good eldership and diaconate.

We face similar issues as the PCEA with Government intrusion and experimental social policy. This is particularly the case with the closed population in Tasmania. We are now one minister short with the call of Rev Terreth Klaver accepting a call to British Columbia Heritage Reformed Congregations. Rev Iain Smith continues in Hobart.

We commend you to The Lord for your work and witness and pray the Lords blessing to bring that same grace that Barnabas found at Antioch.

**Letter of Greeting  
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland**

George,

Thank you for your correspondence. I do not envisage anyone being in your vicinity in May. Please convey the greetings of our Synod to your denomination. We may be on different sides of the globe but we all face the same task and a common enemy who seeks to destroy at every opportunity. As a denomination we have been thankful for a sense of unity and peace within our fellowship and we pray that that may continue in the years to come that we might present Christ to the many needy and ignorant people of this island.

We pray that your own work will be prospered by God and that we will hear of a mighty movement of His Spirit in Australia.

We do anticipate meeting up at the ICRC in Cardiff and pray that the conference there will be a fruitful time for all involved.

Greetings to you and Rhoda and best wishes for 2013. (whats left of it, It is amazing that the first month has gone already)

Edward McCollum Clerk of Synod

**Orthodox Presbyterian Church  
Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations**

May 5, 2013  
The Rev. G.D. Ball,  
9 Craiglea Close,  
Taree, NSW. 2430.  
Australia

Dear Brother,  
Greetings in Christ, our common Lord and Savior.

Thank you for the kind invitation for the Orthodox Presbyterian Church to send a fraternal delegate to the forthcoming Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia which will be meeting from 7-9 May, 2013 in New South Wales.

I regret that we are unable to be represented at your meeting. And in light of the memorable warmth and welcome with which our OPC delegation was received into your midst and accepted into your pulpits in September of 2011, it is indeed a sincerely felt regret. I wish to thank the brothers who hosted us. It was a blessing!

May the good Lord, our Savior and King, bless and establish the labors of your Synod, to the Glory of His name and the advance of His kingdom.

In the meanwhile, might I inquire if you will be represented at the forthcoming ICRC meeting in Wales? If so, I am sure our delegates would appreciate a consultation. If the Lord wills, we are hoping to send another delegation down under in 2014, attending the RCNZ Synod in Christchurch, and continuing to cultivate relationships among the other antipodean churches of precious like faith. We hope this might be agreeable to you and a means to continue to deepen our relationship, and explore possible shared ministries.

Finally, I am attaching our annual report to NAPARC ( the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council) that you might get a glimpse at how things go with us. Of course there is a standing invitation for you men to attend our General Assembly. We still recall brother Rowland Ward's visit of 2007, fondly.

Cordially in Christ,  
and for the OPC CEIR,

The Rev. Jack W. Sawyer Administrator Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations /OPC  
2522 Military Highway Pineville, LA 71360

*Sit gloria in Ecclesia per Iesum Christum, in omnes aetates seculi seculorum. Amen.*

**Letter of Greeting**  
**Free Church of Scotland**

Rev George Ball,  
Convener, Inter Church Relations Committee,  
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia,  
9 Craiglea Close,  
Taree, NSW. 2430

24th April 2013

Dear Brethren,

Thank you for your very kind invitation to the Free Church of Scotland to send a delegate to your forthcoming General Assembly. I regret that we are unable to send a delegate on this occasion but we wish to thank you and send you greetings by way of this letter.

The Free Church of Scotland is grateful for its bonds with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, extending back many years, and greatly values this relationship with a sister church in the Lord, sharing a commitment to “the faith delivered once for all to the saints” and to its promulgation through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through the International Conference of reformed Churches we are pleased to be able, along with yourselves and other sister churches, to give tangible expression to this unity of belief and purpose.

We are very conscious that you face challenges to the gospel and to the authority of God similar to those we meet with in Scotland in an age very much driven by a secularist, unbelieving agenda. In the current financial recession the resources available to the Free Church are limited and this is having a detrimental effect on its ability to extend the work of the gospel. This is one of the main issues currently dominating the deliberations of Committees and Boards and there are no easy answers, although we recognise that the power of the Holy Spirit is our greatest need.

In the political sphere the spirit of independence is strongly in the air, with a referendum on whether to leave the Union due in 2014. It is far from certain how independence for Scotland would affect the Church but it seems likely that should it come about the establishment principle would not be a feature of the new “secular” Scotland. We are also currently facing the prospect of same-sex marriage being legalized in Scotland. While the majority of citizens are against it, according to the polls and consultations carried out, the Scottish government is strongly in favour of this change. The Westminster government also favours this change for the rest of the UK. We continue to hold out the teachings of God’s word and the message of the gospel, confident that it is still “the power of God unto salvation.”

Please convey to the brothers in General Assembly our prayerful remembrance of them and warmest good wishes. May our Lord guide your Assembly by his Holy Spirit, in all their deliberations, to decisions which will glorify his name and be to the increase of his kingdom.

With warm regards in the Lord,

Yours sincerely,  
James Maciver  
Principal Clerk of Assembly

**COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH CHURCHES ABROAD OF THE REFORMED  
CHURCHES IN THE NETHERLANDS**

To: Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

e-mail: [gdball2@tpg.com.au](mailto:gdball2@tpg.com.au)

George D. Ball  
9 Craiglea Close  
Taree 2430 NSW  
Australia

Date: April 2013

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the first place we thank you for the invitation to attend your annual meeting of Synod. This year we are unable to send a delegate to East-Australia again. On behalf of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands we send you Christian greetings. May God bless your Synod with wisdom, loving care for the churches in and peace and may the Gospel spread in your country. All this to the glory of His precious Name.

Here after you will find our yearly “Springletter” to inform our sisterchurches about our churchlife.

**Spring Letter**

*The bride belongs to the bridegroom.  
The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him,  
and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice.  
Joh 3:29*

*Abuse in the church*

John the Baptist was a great prophet. Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:11) Who is he? The least in the kingdom of heaven? John knows Him. He saw Him face to face, Jesus the Messiah, when he baptized Him. When Jesus accepted to become the least, everyone's slave, taking upon Him the burden of the sins of the world. John at that moment proves to be the greatest prophet, when he recognizes in that humble Jesus, the least in the kingdom of heaven, his Master to whom be all honor. Full of respect he points to Him and explains to his disciples: Behold, the Lamb of God. (John 1:29, 36). The Messiah who humbles himself to death, but whose star is already shining at the sky. He who from God will receive a name above all name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10, 11)

And this matchless prophetic vision becomes also apparent in John's attitude. He knows his place, compared to this least in the kingdom of heaven. He is the first to testify about Jesus, that He is the bridegroom of God's people! According to the Old Testament no one less than God himself was the bridegroom of his people. Therefore this testimony once more shows the vision and respect of John, the greatest of all the prophets.

And according to that he is also positioning himself. He does not admit himself to be laid down by his disciples, who advocate the honor and the name of their master, at the moment that Jesus is attracting people and making many disciples. (John 3:26) Instead he is grateful to be the friend of the Bridegroom and rejoices in his glory. Modestly he steps back to a place among the public, being part of the lane of honor for the Bridegroom. Full of respect for Him who offered his life as bride price to obtain his Bride.

We as churchleaders all over the world, let us remind ourselves and each other time and again of this example of modesty and respect of John the Baptist. And let us learn from the metaphor he uses for the relationship between Jesus and his church. That we always may think of that relation in deep respect. He is the Bridegroom and she is the Bride. No one should dare to come in between. Let it be carved in our conscience that He alone is and deserves to be the Bridegroom and that she is only his Bride. In order to be preserved from attracting her attention and to claim her admiration for ourselves as churchleaders. To

make her obey our commands, to abuse her for the sake of our honor. What else is that than adultery with Christ's Bride.

In our days there is much publicity about sexual abuse by leaders in the church. That is a horrible evil. But let us not, through all the attention for that evil, close our eyes for the more common and widespread evil of abuse of which churchleaders and pastors can be guilty, when through their ambition or aggressiveness and their private insights and targets, they place themselves in between Christ and his Bride. You should not think about the judgement that they are calling about themselves by such abuse in/of the church. (Ezekiel 34:10)

May John's prophetic vision and attitude more and more become ours. Let us rejoice in and contribute to the happiness of the Bridegroom and his Bride, by caring for her with all the dedication that is in us, and make her, by God's grace, increase in love and faithfulness for her Bridegroom.

May we as servants in Christ's worldwide church also be involved in each others circumstances. Let us show the willingness to assist each other with word and deed. Prepared as well to accept each others help and encouragement and also, if needed, each others reproofs.

For this reason we write you this Springletter, as we did in the past years, being aware of the fellowship that binds us together as reformed churches, as a means to inform you about the situation of our churches and as an appeal to pray for us, and finally as an invitation to inform us mutually about the situation of your churches.

#### *Our churchlife*

Gratefully we inform you about the development of our churchlife in the year gone by.

First of all, there is a great deal in which we experience the Lord's blessing. As Christians and churches in this country we feel blessed and privileged with freedom and prosperity as a gift from God. He provides greatly in our needs and in resources and facilities to worship Him and to help our neighbours, as well as to contribute in the needs of our sisterchurches in poor circumstances. He enables and inspires us and our churches to all kind of missionary ministries, in our locals churches and abroad, in different continents.

We also feel blessed with the fellowship within the federation of reformed churches in the Netherlands. In good cooperation we can develop insights, means and tools needed for our sundayservices, for education of our members, diaconal projects etc. Also to keep eachother faithful to our reformed standards.

Our churches also feel blessed with the Theological University. The number of students that wants to become pastor is increasing. To be more usefull for churches abroad the university is in the process of developping an English medium master programm. Recently a coordinator for this project has been appointed.

As churches we also rejoice in the ongoing rapprochement of churches whom we know ourselves to be united with in the same faith, especially the Christian Reformed Churches and Netherlands Reformed Churches.

Worth to mention are also the preparations for the next general synod of our churches. As soon as deputeereports on important topics will be published, we will inform our sisterchurches about it and invite them to give their comments. We are also taking the first steps to prepare the weekprogramm for the foreign delegates to our synod. According to the draft schedule of the synod this will be the last week of March 2014.

Apart from gratitude, there are also concerns. Many churchmembers show a lack of faithfulness. For instance when it comes to attending the Sunday(-afternoon) services or christian education in the family. Many show a lifestyle equal to that of the secularised world around us. Our churches experience also a decrease of financial contribution of the members for the sake of God's kingdom, which can only partly be explained as a result of the economic crisis in Europe. Our churches also suffer from the influence of the evangelical movement through which many members leave our churches and join evangelical and charismatic groups.

Another matter of concern is the actual political climate in the Netherlands in which many privileges which we as christians have enjoyed in this country for ages, are in danger nowadays.

These are only a number of examples of matters of concern which we have and for which we ask our brothers and sisters abroad to pray. Pray that the Holy Spirit may continue to work in our churches dedication to Christ Jesus as his holy Bride. Pray that we as christians in this country may continue to enjoy freedom of religion and to have means to our disposal to build the church and spread the gospel. Please keep praying for our churches and request from the Lord to make us faithful to his Word and the confession, give us dedication to his kingdom and help us keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

As churches in the Netherlands we highly value the relations we have with churches abroad. Many contacts with the churches abroad are a source of inspiration and encouragement for the brothers and sisters in our churches and for our federation as a whole. But also when it comes to these relations there are concerns.

On one hand globalisation makes it much easier to maintain worldwide ecclesiastical relations, on the other hand modern media can easily cause much confusion by spreading invalid information or even blackmailing. To preserve the benefit of foreign relations and to avoid misunderstanding and even insinuations, a christian way of communication is needed, according to which we should communicate directly with eachother, instead of communicating about eachother. Let us pray for such christian communication

Finally, we as churches look forward gratefully to the upcoming meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches in the course of this year in Cardiff, hoping to meet delegates of many of the memberchurches and enjoy the taste of the worldwide reformed fellowship

#### *Greetings*

We would like to end this letter by greeting you all in the name of the tri-une God. May He, the Father who created, sustains and rules everything, and who in his Son Jesus Christ ransomed and delivered us by his sacrifice on the cross and defends and preserves us in the redemption obtained for us, may He, through his Spirit, the Giver of life, continue the work of salvation which He has begun in you and glorify his name among you and through you in the year 2013. May He keep us united in the bond with our One Lord of the Church and make us faithful as his Bride and as his servants in the church in humble devotion, until the day of our invitation to the wedding supper of the Lamb! (Revelation 19:9)

Your brother in Christ, on behalf of deputies BBK,  
Dr. M.H. Oosterhuis, General Secretary

Kampen, April 26, 2013