

The Synod of Eastern Australia



Minutes

**Of the 169th Annual Meeting
Held at Mt Druitt NSW
3rd May to 5th May 2016**

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

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16.1 OPENING

Within the Mt Druitt Church building of the Hawkesbury Nepean congregation, on Tuesday 3rd May 2016, at 4.30pm, the Synod of Eastern Australia met. The Moderator Rev Jim Klazinga had tendered his apology since he had a funeral to attend to in his local congregation. The previous moderator Rev RS Ward took the chair and extended a welcome, and those gathered joined in praise singing from Psalm 124. The Moderator constituted the meeting in prayer.

16.2 MODERATOR'S SERMON

Mr Ward read from Luke 5:27-32 and 7:29-50 and spoke on the classes of people as defined by the Pharisees as the righteous law keepers and the sinners. Among the sinners were tax collectors and prostitutes and in fact all who didn't follow the letter of the law as they understood it... The sinners received Jesus' words with gladness, the Pharisees believed they had no need. At the home of Simon the Pharisee Jesus affirms his ministry to the sinner. Would Simon be challenged to consider who this Jesus was, as one who claims to forgive sin? A true prophet reaches out to sinners. A saved sinner finds peace in relationship with Jesus. The Moderator invited Mr Ball to lead in prayer.

16.3 THANKS TO INTERIM MODERATOR

The Clerk thanked Mr Ward for his sermon, and for his willingness to step into the role of moderator at short notice.

16.4 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
G Hamilton
R Campbell

Northern Presbytery Appointment WJW Hanna †

Central Presbytery

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

DK Muldoon
R Tso
GD Ball
JA McCallum*

TM Reeve
AH Steel
DP Smith
DA McIntosh

Synod Appointment: TI Leggott (Seconded to AIM)

*JA McCallum indicated that he would not be attending

Southern Presbytery

Geelong
Knox
All Nations
Narre Warren
Ulverstone

Vacant
AA Miranda
TW Yoa
S Bajema
JA Scheepers†

DPT Manly
J Dekter
RS Ward
S Louden
I Hamilton

16.5 WELCOME

The Moderator welcomed Mr Louden as a new member of synod.

16.6 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

The Moderator welcomed Mr Douglas Field and his wife Sandra of the United Reformed Churches of North America; Rev Graeme Hart, delegate from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia, Rev David Waldron delegate from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. It was resolved that these brothers be associated with the court.

16.7 ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

The Clerk presented the Administration Committee's Report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Clerk presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved that:

1. That Correspondence Item 1 be taken with the Finance Committee business.
2. That Correspondence Item 2 be taken with the Report from Central Presbytery.
3. That Correspondence Item 3 and 4 be taken with the Report from Northern Presbytery
4. That the Committee Structure as noted in the report be adopted, [but see adjustments page 19] with provision that Mr Ian Conley has resigned from the Mission Committee, and Mr Loudon has been added to the Law and Advisory Committee. The 2015 suggestion that Mr Stuart Carswell take on the convenership of the Youth and Fellowship Committee was to be clarified. [see 16.23]
5. That the following examiners of records be appointed:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Northern Presbytery | Rev GD Ball and Narre Warren elder. |
| Central Presbytery | Rev A Miranda and Brisbane elder. |
| Southern Presbytery | Rev R Tso and Manning Elder. |

16.8 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and read and the session was closed with praise, singing from Psalm 133, and closing with prayer at 5.39pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

RS Ward
Moderator

SESSION 2

TUESDAY 3RD MAY 2016

7.00PM

The session was opened with praise singing from Psalm 119: 9-16 with Mr Muldoon leading in prayer at 7.00pm.

16.9 MINUTES

The minutes of Session 1 were read and confirmed.

16.10 ELECTION OF MODERATOR

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

16.11 MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

The Moderator addressed the Synod and led the court in prayer. He then read from Jeremiah 5:20-6:21 and spoke of 19th Century rational thinking and morality, with this today being expressed by relativism, secularism and covetous consumerism.

Our Church at the end of Christendom: We need to be aware of what confronts us. We need to be prepared to confront the world with the Word of the Lord. The Reformation introduced freedom of conscience to worship God, but over time this has regressed to an insistence on total freedom. Secular humanism has embarked on a downhill spiral into depravity of all kinds. The freedom of conscience to worship God will not be tolerated by such a society. We need to apply the wisdom as given by the Sovereign Lord, confidently trusting that nothing is beyond his plan and purpose.

The court joined in praise singing Psalm 60:1-6 and 9-12 and Mr Bajema led in prayer.

16.12 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*”.

16.13 PRESBYTERY REPORTS

The report Northern Presbytery was presented. It was resolved that the report be received.

16.14 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 3

Overture from Northern Presbytery re seconding of Rev George Ball to the Northern Presbytery as Assessor for the impending Interim Moderator ship of the Hastings River Charge.

The prayer of the overture was granted in the following terms: Synod appoints Rev Trevor Leggott as an Assessor to the Northern Presbytery for the specific purpose of undertaking the position of Interim Moderator to the Hastings River Congregation on the departure of Rev John Kerridge and the vacating of the charge.

16.15 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 4

Overture to Synod to allow Rev WJW Hanna to retain a seat on Presbytery for the purpose of strengthening the Court.

The prayer of the overture be granted in the following terms: That Rev Dr Hanna retain his seat on Northern Presbytery, to be reviewed at the next meeting of Synod.

16.16 PRESBYTERY REPORTS (CONTINUED)

The report of Southern Presbytery was presented and received. The Presbytery had brought a proposal to Synod as recorded in the reports:

Mr Muldoon presented his notice of motion: *That the proposals attached to the report of Southern Presbytery be referred to the relevant Synod Committee and/or be brought by approved procedure before being considered by Synod.*

In being put to the vote the recommendations included in the Report of Southern Presbytery was favoured over Mr Muldoon’s motion. It was resolved in terms of the recommendations:

RECOMMITMENT OF SYNOD & WORK OF PRESBYTERIES

1. Mindful of the serious decline in vital Christianity and in Christian standards in public life, Synod acknowledges our many failures to live and serve him as we ought. We also acknowledge that despite this the good hand of the God of all grace has been upon us and others in proclaiming the Good News. We resolve afresh to act in the assurance that, since Christ has gained the victory and has all authority in heaven and earth, the future is bright with the promises of God for those who go forth in his name to evangelise the nations.

2. Synod urges all Presbyteries to ensure they are meetings of encouragement, spurring office-bearers and the churches to effective Christ-like ministry. To this end Presbyteries should aim to meet at least three times a year, at least two of these meetings in person, and at the personal meetings endeavour to include a theological or pastoral and/or training paper as well as a presentation on what Gospel ministry in the 21st century should look like.

3. Presbyteries need to keep well in view the importance of church revitalisation and extension, as well as on-going training for office-bearers which should include ministers attending a suitable conference at least once every two years. Sessions should be meeting regularly, including by electronic hook-up where a local quorum is not available, with particular attention on pastoral care, outreach strategy and mutual encouragement.

4. Prayer for local mission (ie Australian congregations) should be included in the Prayer Notes prepared by the Missions Committee and congregations are encouraged to provide relevant material.

16.17 PRESBYTERY REPORTS (CONTINUED)

The report of Central Presbytery was presented and after some questions the report was received.

16.18 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 2

Petition from Stewart Upton re Anna Bay Union Church Funds. Mr Upton presented his petition:

To The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia:

This petition of Douglas Stewart Upton, Trustee of the Union Church at 4187 Nelson Bay Road, Anna Bay vide Deed of Trust dated 11/4/1933, respectfully shows;

THAT WHEREAS the former Union Church at, Anna Bay was constructed in the 1930's using funds contributed by the members at Anna Bay of the Church of England, Methodist and Free Presbyterian denominations, with each group having the right to appoint up to two Trustees from among its worshippers;

AND WHEREAS Title Deeds to the property have always been held on behalf of the Trustees by the Newcastle law firm now known as Sparke-Helmores Lawyers;

AND WHEREAS construction and maintenance of, and improvements to the church building and property were carried out by the members at Anna Bay of the three denominations, with no costs incurred by their respective denomination;

THAT WHEREAS in recent years the Hunter-Barrington Deacons Court agreed to include the church building at Anna Bay in its Church-wide insurance policy, since the Anglican and Uniting congregations had discontinued holding services at Anna Bay approximately thirty years earlier. These premiums have been repaid in full to the Deacons Court;

THAT WHEREAS sale of the property was finalized in 2015, the building having been unused for a number of years;

THAT WHEREAS the 2015 meeting of the PCEA Synod determined that the one-third share of nett sale proceeds due to be held on trust by the surviving Trustee for existing members at Anna Bay of the PCEA be directed to the Hunter-Barrington Congregation.

NOW THEREFORE I Douglas Stewart Upton prays the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia to take these recitals into consideration and to rescind its previous decision (Minutes 15.42.3) and direct Hunter-Barrington Deacon's Court to forward the subject sale proceeds to me as surviving Trustee to be held on trust for the existing members of the PCEA at Anna Bay in terms of the Deed of Trust, or do otherwise as in their wisdom they may deem fit, And your petitioner will ever pray.

Dated this 29th day of February 2016.

Douglas Stewart Upton

The petition was received and questions addressed to the petitioner. It was resolved to defer further consideration to a later Session of Synod. Mr Upton was released from the bar.

16.19 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and read and the session was closed at 9.45pm and the Session was closed with the signing of Psalm 65:1-4 and Mr Lawson leading in prayer.

TI Leggott
Clerk

DJ Kerridge

SESSION 3

MODERATOR

WEDNESDAY 4TH MAY 2016

9.00AM

The session was opened with prayer and the singing of praise from Psalm 20 at 9.00am. The Moderator read from 2 Corinthians 3:7-4:18 and spoke on The Church in the Kingdom of Christ. As Christ's Church we must be united, we must boldly proclaim Christ through the Word preached, and all we do as the Church must boldly proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord. There is great encouragement, confidence and comfort to be found in the preaching of the Gospel. Mr Campbell led in prayer.

16.20 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

The Moderator welcomed Rev Andrew Nugteren, delegate from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, and he was associated with the court.

16.21 MINUTES

The minutes of Session 2 were read and confirmed.

16.22 SYNOD ATTENDANCE

After inquiry from his elder Mr McCallum had given indication that he would not be attending Synod.

16.23 YOUTH AND FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE CONVENERSHIP

Mr Carswell indicated by phone that he would be prepared to take on the convenership of the Youth and Fellowship Committee.

16.24 LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Convener Mr Ward presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. Mr Lawson tendered a simple dissent. The Convener presented proposed deliverances and it was resolved:

1. Under Examination of records by Presbyteries (Handbook 4.41) add: "f) ensures minutes appear at least once a year showing that the questions of office-bearers specified by Synod 2013 re the Guidelines for Church Workers and the matter of sexual abuse and pornography have been satisfactorily answered." Similarly, the report of examiners of the records of Presbyteries (Handbook 5.32) is to specifically cover this point.

2. Handbook 3.21a & b is now to read as follows:

3.21a. The Synod maintains Australia-wide **Public Liability** insurance in respect of the activities of the church except liability arising from the properties of St George's Congregation at Lindfield. Renewal date is 30 September. Each deacons' court is allocated an appropriate share of the premium. Appropriately skilled and qualified members (or qualified external contractors with appropriate insurance) must conduct activities such as archery, beach and water activities, bike riding, flying foxes &c, and have risk management procedures in place to ensure adequate supervision, first-aid kit, emergency contact details &c. Unless otherwise agreed there is no cover for liability arising from major building works. There is NO cover for sexual molestation arising from persons known to have been previous offenders or against whom a complaint has been made which has not been appropriately investigated. [A record of historical Public Liability insurance cover appears in Law & Advisory Committee Report, Synod 2016.]

b. Guidelines for **insurance** cover generally (including vehicles) were set by Synod 1982. In 1990 the Synod effected a group insurance scheme for all church, manse and other **buildings and church-owned contents** allowing St George's Congregation to opt out and make their own arrangements. In 2015 the renewal date was changed from 2 July to 30 September, and each congregation contributes according to the insured value of its property.

3. Add to Handbook 2.5 before last sentence: "An elder who wishes to demit his duties and responsibilities as elder in his congregation because of 'age, sickness or other accidents' [Second Book of Discipline (1578), 7.17] may be accorded recognition as elder emeritus. In a manner similar to a retired minister the elder retains status as an elder but ceases to be a member of the Session although he may be invited to sit in on Session meetings to offer advice. An emeritus elder is entitled to be held in

honour by his fellow elders and the members of the congregation which he has served. Should the disability which led to him retiring from active duties be removed he may of course be re-elected a serving elder.”

4. Synod draw attention of affected congregations to the requirement of Synod 2012 that a fair value of assets and liabilities appear in the annual financial accounts.

5. For the more clear understanding of the procedure in regard to matters requiring approval by Barrier Act procedure the Synod summarise the procedure as follows. Synod resolved to approve items 1-9 with the exception of item 5 in the report, with renumbering as follows:

Limitations

1. The Barrier Act is a means of regulating the lawful exercise of the Synod’s powers not of changing anything that enters into the fixed constitution of the church. In making rules and laws the Synod is always to aim to apply the mind of Christ as given in the Holy Scriptures and thus to seek in an orderly way the building up of the people of God.

When it applies

2. The requirements of the Barrier Act apply to new legislation of church-wide significance and binding nature affecting the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the church, that is to say, it applies to Class 1 legislation but not to Class 2 legislation (see Handbook 5.37). In practice it mainly applies to rules regarding discipline, ministers, students and oversight of congregations.

Procedure

3. The norm is for the overture to be transmitted to Presbyteries for consideration. It includes the proposed rule or law and the grounds for it. The Presbytery decides to either ‘approve’ or ‘disapprove’ the content of the proposed legislation, with the liberty to add comments when thought appropriate and with the result of voting being recorded.

4. An overture approved by a majority of Presbyteries may be passed into law by the Synod, but Synod is not bound to do so, and cannot do so if a majority of Presbyteries do not approve. It is competent for the substance of remarks by Presbyteries which in no way modify the substance, sense or intention of the overture to be adopted by the Synod. An ‘approved’ overture may be passed into law notwithstanding such changes, or other minor changes made by the Synod which are not at variance with the spirit and purpose of the overture.

5. If Synod twice transmit an overture to Presbyteries in terms of the Barrier Act, the Synod may take the matter into consideration and enact or reject as she sees fit so long as those Presbyteries that have approved and those who have neglected to send in their opinion form a majority of Presbyteries. (cf. Act 5, Class 1, Assembly 1758).

Interim Authority

6. The Synod may immediately convert an overture that is to be transmitted under the Barrier Act into an Interim Act which has authority only until the next Synod deals with the returns from Presbyteries, but this may be done only if an immediate change in the law is considered of urgent practical importance.

Rescission of Class 1 legislation

7. Acts passed under Barrier Act procedure may only be rescinded by that procedure. (cf. Act 8, Assembly 1736).

8. This Act may be cited as ACT REGULATING PROCEDURE UNDER THE BARRIER ACT, 2016, and replaces Sections 5.39 and 5.40 in the Handbook.

The Convener presented proposed deliverance 5.5 as printed in the reports: After discussion and with the agreement of the Committee members the Committee fell from the proposed deliverance.

6. The Synod note the procedure for bringing ministers from overseas set out in the Report.

16.25 TRAINING OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Kerridge, vacated the Moderator's chair to present the report and Mr Ward took the chair. Mr Kerridge presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. It was resolved to meet in closed court to meet with student Mr Duncan Hickey. Mr Hickey answered questions and shared about his studies, preaching opportunities and family circumstances. Mr Ward led the court in prayer and commended Mr Hickey to his studies. It was resolved to meet in open court.

The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved:

1. That the Synod again commend the excellent progress of Mr Duncan Hickey in his studies and recommit to supporting him and his family in prayer.
2. That the Synod authorise the implementation of the Candidate Placement Scheme (CPS) as described in the Report from the rising of this Synod and that our current student be advised of his initial placement after consultation with the Training of Ministry Committee, the Student's Presbytery and Session (Facilitators), and not less than six months in advance.
3. That the Synod encourages the development of the Eldership Training Course as an online and paper-based resource for the edification, growth and strengthening of the Eldership within the PCEA.

The Moderator returned to the chair.

16.26 CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Muldoon, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and after discussion it was resolved that:

1. We thank the Lord that the Federal Marriage Act has not been changed, and continue to pray there will be no change that legalises homosexual marriage.
2. Synod write to the Prime Minister reminding him of our prayers, and urging him to stand against any moves to change the Federal Marriage Act which would legalise homosexual marriage.
3. Synod write to the Prime Minister urging him to cease Federal Government funding of abortion on demand services.

16.27 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and the session was closed with Mr Smith leading in prayer at 12.38pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

DJ Kerridge
Moderator

The session was opened at 2.00pm with praise singing from Psalm 85 and Mr Leggott leading in prayer.

16.28 MINUTES

The minutes of Session 3 were read and confirmed.

16.29 CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

The Convener continued with proposed deliverance 4:

4. Substantial changes in the 2011 edition of the New International Version of the Bible mean that while maintaining approval of the NIV 1984 edition, Synod does not recommend the 2011 edition of the NIV for use in our churches.

The moderator invited representatives from other churches to speak on this issue.

Mr Waldron spoke on the RCNZ position and indicated that the church approved the use of the KJV, NASB and 1984 NIV and more recently approved the ESV and the NKJV and not approved use of the NIV 2011 as a pulpit Bible.

Mr Nugteren spoke on the CRCA position and indicated that the ESV has been approved as an additional Bible translation. The Synod is still giving consideration to acceptance of a dynamic equivalent translation.

Graham Hart spoke on the RPCA position and indicated that there had been some pastoral issues relating to the introduction of newer versions.

Mr Douglas Field spoke briefly on the position of the URCNA and indicated that the church approved use of the ESV for pulpit purposes and that the church position would be similar to that of the RCNZ.

16.30 NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr Ward presented his motion and it was seconded:

Synod does not disapprove of the KJV 1611/1769, the NKJV 1982, the NASB 1971/1995, the ESV 2001/2011, or the NIV 1984/2011, and considers one or other of these the most suitable choices in our churches. Those accustomed to the NIV 1984 will find transition to the NIV 2011 natural, but of course no translation can always capture perfectly the nuances of the original Hebrew and Greek texts which are the final court of appeal. Whatever translation is used Synod urges ministers and elders to be diligent in encouraging regular family worship that the Word of God may dwell abundantly in the life of all.

On being put against the notice of motion the proposed deliverance 4 was favoured.

It was resolved in favour of proposed deliverance 4. Mr Ward dissented with the following reasons:

1. The NIV 2011 and ESV 2011 are both acceptable translations each with their own strengths and weaknesses.
2. To disapprove the NIV 2011 on the basis of an inadequate Synod report does not speak well to our people.
3. The decision of Synod is not binding as it would require Barrier Act procedure as it relates to worship.

16.31 MEDIA COMMITTEE

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

1. To warmly encourage our congregations and members to pray for and actively support the ministry of *The Presbyterian Banner*.

16.32 WEBSITE

Mr Ward took the chair to allow the Convener, Mr Kerridge, to present the report. After discussion it was resolved that the report be received. Mr Kerridge presented the proposed deliverance. It was resolved:

1. That the Synod commend the PCEA website to delegates and congregations and they be encouraged to participate in the life of the church online by active registration, collaboration and comment.

The Moderator returned to the chair.

16.33 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

The Moderator welcomed Rev Don Burgess, delegate from the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia, and he was associated with the court.

16.34 ARCHIVIST

Mr Ward presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The proposed deliverances were presented and it was resolved:

1. Synod records it's appreciation to Mr Alex Neil, elder Mount Druitt, for assistance in locating missing copies of early magazines and for the gift of the *Australian Witness* 1853-54.
2. Synod records its appreciation to Mr Robert Hingston, deacon Ulverstone, for his detailed and painstaking work in scanning church magazines.

16.35 YOUTH & FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

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

1. Synod recognises the importance of giving special attention to children and youth in the Church and commits to keep praying for the work of Sunday-school teachers, and youth leaders, serving God in our local congregations.
2. Synod thanks Mrs Margaret Kinder and Mrs Irene Steel for their dedication to create new and fun ways for children to learn the truths of the gospel.
3. In addition to the responsibilities of shepherding God's flock, Synod members are also invited to enthusiastically encourage church members to participate in the next Family Camp.
4. Synod through Youth & Fellowship Committee supports the decision to provide financial assistance (\$500) to young persons interested in seeing the activities of God and the church in Central India.

The Synod joined in praise singing from Psalm 46 and Mr Steel led in prayer.

16.36 MISSIONS COMMITTEE

In the absence of the Convener, Mr Klazinga, Mr Smith presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. 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 adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2016 – 2017 and expresses its general agreement with the estimates for the aforementioned period.
3. That Synod express its continued prayerful support and interest in the work of Rev Trevor Leggott in his ministry with Australian Indigenous Ministries, and confirms his secondment as General Director of Australian Indigenous Ministries until the end of 2017, with a review of his ministry and support at Synod 2017.

16.37 INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Ball, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The convener welcomed delegates from other churches. After questions and discussion and comment from delegates from other churches present, the convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved that:

1. 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 resolve to pray for the Lord's blessing upon their work and witness.

2.1 The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) acknowledges its long association with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) – a relationship dating back before their first Synod in 1952. We note that this relationship has never been formalized on our part, though delegates have been exchanged at Synod level over the years.

2.2 The Synod notes in reference to two points of concern that were recorded in the PCEA Synod minutes of 1987 and 1999 that the CRCA withdrew from the World Communion of Reformed Churches (into which the Reformed Ecumenical Council merged in 2012); and we believe the CRCA has done what it could reasonably do to overcome differences with the Free Reformed Churches of Australia.

2.3 The Synod notes the constructive discussion that took place between representatives of our two churches in November 2013; the gracious invitation which was renewed by the CRCA in 2014 to formalize the relationship between our two churches; and note that the CRCA since the Synod 2000 has recognized the PCEA as a church in full ecclesiastical relationship.

2.4 The Synod therefore cordially extends Fraternal Relations to the CRCA in the following terms: - Fraternal Relations should exist between Churches that openly and practically profess the true faith of Christ as summarized in one or more of the classical Reformed symbols e.g. The Westminster Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort.

Certain duties and courtesies devolve upon churches sustaining fraternal relations.

A. There should be a spirit of cordial love and trust as becomes brothers in the faith.

B. There should be an attitude of mutual helpfulness. Each should be willing to share problems and difficulties with the others. By the same token each should be allowed to exhort to more exact obedience any who appear to relax faithfulness to their avowed confession. This should not invite an inquisitorial interference but to strengthening one another in love for Christ.

C. There should be willingness to accept certificates of communicant membership, normally without examination.

D. There should be in the highest courts of the Churches a cordial welcome to visiting delegates from other Churches recognized as in fraternal relationship. This need not amount to according membership in the court to the visiting delegate.

E. There should be a willingness to allow ministers of one Church access to the pulpits of fraternal Churches as a matter of courtesy.

F. Churches should exchange copies of the Acts and Proceedings of their highest courts or at least inform one another of major decisions.

2.5 Synod supports the admission of the CRCA to membership of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) when it is scheduled to meet in Canada in 2017, and agrees to be a co-sponsor.

2.6 Synod note that the next Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of the ICRC is planned for Melbourne in 2019 and invite the CRCA to participate on an equal basis with the PCEA in hosting the event; and

expresses the hope that this will enhance co-operation between the two churches for mutual benefit and the furtherance of the cause of Christ.

3.1 Synod note that the next meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches is planned to meet in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada in 2017.

3.2. Synod acknowledges the work of Rev. Dr. R.S. Ward in assisting the organizers of the fifth Asia Pacific Conference 2015 in Korea.

16.38 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Mr Ball introduced Mr Douglas Steel, delegate from the United Reformed Churches in North America, and the Moderator invited him to address the Synod. Mr Field extended a greeting and shared about the church's history, practice, life and testimony. (See address in appendix to minutes)

Mr Ball introduced Rev David Waldron, delegate from the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and the Moderator invited him to address the synod. Mr Waldron brought greetings from his church after sharing some of his personal reflections and connections with Australia, and noted some of the particular issues that the church is seeking to deal with. (See address in appendix to minutes)

The Moderator thanked the speakers.

16.39 CLOSURE OF SESSION

The session was closed with Mr McIntosh leading in prayer at 6.00p.m.

TI Leggott
Clerk

DJ Kerridge
Moderator

The session was opened with praise singing from Psalm 47 and with Mr Ball leading the meeting in prayer at 7.20pm. The Moderator welcomed visitors to the meeting.

16.40 MINUTES

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

16.41 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES (CONTINUED)

Mr Ball introduced Rev Don Burgess, delegate from the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia, and the Moderator invited him to address the synod. Mr Burgess brought the warm greetings of the church, noting some small differences but there was much in common, especially the emphasis on the Word of the Lord. The church was working on a document on the nature of true marriage. Mr Burgess asked that he might share the contents of the Synod Reports with his church and members gave him that assurance.

The moderator thanked Mr Burgess.

16.42 MISSIONS EVENING

The Moderator invited Mr Muldoon to introduce the mission speakers. Mr Muldoon introduced Robert Flinders from the Seamen's Christian Friend Society. Mr Flinders shared about his ministry with a presentation. He noted that worldwide there were 80000 ships and 6000 ports. Australia has 60 ports, and the showed the various types of ships. There were a number of workers visiting ships in Australian ports. 500 seafarers come into Port Botany every week. The Gospel is shared with many different nationalities. Shipboard life is hard, lonely and dangerous. The mission is evangelical and pastoral in nature and makes good use of Christian literature. Mr Muldoon thanked Mr Flinders for his presentation and led the court in prayer.

Mr Muldoon introduced Tut and Elizabeth Yoa and invited them to share about their ministry with the Sudanese community at All Nations in Melbourne. Work commenced in 2006 and Tut worked with many he had known from the refugee transit camps. Establishing the work was hard but with the help of Elizabeth and through prayer Tut was encouraged to press on. After a time there were up to 240 attending but some did not respond well to a Bible teaching centred ministry. Now there are 60 faithful members attending with many young people. Elizabeth spoke of the difficulty since the Sudanese war when those who went through the transit camps developed an unhelpful thinking that the church would be a source of providing goods.

Mr Muldoon thanked Tut and Elizabeth for their presentation.

Mr Muldoon introduced Trevor Leggott and invited him to share about his work with AIM. Trevor shared about his work with AIM and expanded with some more detail on matters mentioned in the missions report.

Mr Muldoon thanked Trevor and led the court in prayer.

16.43 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and read and the session was closed with praise singing from Psalm 72:16-19 and the Moderator closed the meeting in prayer at 9.26pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

DJ Kerridge
Moderator

The session was opened with praise singing from Psalm 84:1-7 and the Moderator leading in prayer. The Moderator read from Revelation 4 and spoke on looking forward to the coming Kingdom of Christ. Mr Miranda led the court in prayer.

16.44 MINUTES

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

16.45 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES (CONTINUED)

Mr Ball Introduced Rev Graeme Hart, delegate from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia, and the Moderator invited him to address the synod. Mr Hart extended his warm greetings and shared regarding the present situation of the RPCA. (See address in appendix to minutes)

Mr Ball introduced Rev Andrew Nugteren, delegate from the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, and the moderator invited him to address the synod. Mr Nugteren extended a warm greeting on behalf of the church and spoke on some personal connections with the PCEA. He shared regarding the new relationship between our two churches and shared regarding the present situation of the CRCA. (See address in appendix to minutes)

The Moderator thanked the men for their addresses. Mr Yoa led the court in prayer. Synod joined in singing praise from Psalm 87 and Mr Ward led in prayer.

16.46 PETITION FROM MR STEWART UPTON RE ANNA BAY UNION CHURCH FUNDS

The Law and Advisory Committee proposed the following response:

That the prayer of the petition be granted in the following terms:

1. The members and adherents past and present in the Anna Bay district since 1923 have always been members of the Hunter Barrington Charge and under its Session and Deacons' Court. Even the name "The Union Church of Anna Bay" was a matter the Anna Bay members and adherents sought approval to use from the Hunter Barrington Session (Session Minutes, 19th October 1930).
2. No evidence has been produced that all the funds for the PCEA share of the Anna Bay Union Church opened in March 1931 were contributed by the Anna Bay members and adherents, but even if that was so the funds were given not to persons but for a purpose.
3. This purpose being one that can no longer be carried out, and the joint trust being dissolved upon the settlement of the sale on 3rd July 2015, the PCEA share automatically vests in the PCEA by virtue of Section 2 of the Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act, 1918, a provision Mr Upton said he was not aware of.
4. Noting concurring legal advice from Spark Helmore on 5th September 2014 and Brian D Bayston OAM, B Comm, LLB (until recently Law Agent of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria), on 19th March 2016, Synod is satisfied the decision of last Synod (Minute 15.42.3) is sound, and declines to rescind it. Synod further notes that Mr Upton knew of the Synod decision before completing the Transfer but nevertheless signed it.
5. Synod express appreciation for Mr Upton's attention to matters related to the property since his appointment as a trustee and notes that the allocation made to the Hunter Barrington Charge will assist in the continued ministry to the members of the Charge resident in the Anna Bay district.
6. Synod ex gratia and as a final decision in this matter varies minute 15.42.3 to permit the Hunter Barrington Deacons court to allocate \$10,000 of the capital proceeds from the Anna Bay sale to charitable purposes as nominated by Mr Upton, chief beneficiaries to be ministries supported by the PCEA Synod.

16.47 NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr Steel presented his motion and it was seconded:

That the prayer of the petition be granted in the following terms: that resolution of Synod 15.42.3 be rescinded and that Sparke Helmore, Lawyers of 7/28 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle NSW be requested to:

- 1. Review the Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act 1918 Section 2 “Vesting of all property in the trustees without Conveyance and Transfer” AND advise if the Deed of Trust dated 11th April 1933 field as 16581 and recorded in Certificate of Title Reference 1/328869 as T 1706145 constitutes a “Charge” as described in section 2 of the Act.*
- 2. AND if so does the Synod of Eastern Australia through its Trustees have the right to instruct the surviving trustee of the Union Church of Anna Bay in regard to the holding on trust for the members at Anna Bay of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia the proceeds of the sale of the church property situated 4187 Nelson Bay Road, Anna Bay.*

The lawyer’s costs to be charged to Synod General Funds.

After discussion the Notice of Motion was put against the proposed response of the Law and Advisory Committee and the court resolved in favour of the Law and Advisory Committee response.

It was resolved in favour of the response of the Law and Advisory Committee as printed above, and that the Clerk furnish Mr Upton an extract minute of this decision of Synod.

Mr Reeve tendered a simple dissent.

16.48 SUPERANNUATION COMMITTEE

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

1. The Superannuation Levy on congregations be reviewed and adjusted on 1st July and 1st January in accordance with the minimum stipend review. The figures to be advised by the Committee in due time.

2. The current system of stepped superannuation contributions for ministers based on years of service be replaced by a flat rate of superannuation contribution of 16% for all inducted ministers in a charge up until the age of 70 years. Maintaining the current government regulated superannuation guarantee level of 9.5% for ministers between the ages of 70 and 75 years.

3. The Superannuation Levy be:

From 1/7/16 to 30/6/17

- Self supporting congregations: 15%
- Aid receiving congregations: 9%
- Vacant congregations: 3%

- Rising to 16% for self supporting congregations from 1st July 2017.

- In situations where the number of aid-receiving congregations rises, the Committee may request all congregations to contribute additional 1% for self-supporting, and 2% for vacant charges.

4. Handbook regulations be amended by replacing:

SECTION B - THE FUNDS ADMINISTERED

with:

“1. Superannuation Levy

With effect from 1 July 2016 all self supporting congregations pay an annual base levy of 5.5% of minimum stipend increasing to 6.5% from 1st July 2017 for each minister in the charge. In addition to the base levy, each congregation with an inducted or supply minister pays the equivalent of the *Superannuation Guarantee* (SG) for each of its ministers as required by government legislation (9.5% of minimum stipend as at 1/7/16). The annual levy for Aid-receiving congregations being 9% of minimum stipend and vacant congregations 3.00%.

In situations where the number of aid-receiving congregations rises, the Committee may request all congregations to contribute additional 1.00% of minimum stipend for self-supporting, and 2% for vacant charges.”

and

CHURCH CONTRIBUTIONS

with:

“ 5. With effect from 1 July 2016 the contribution for inducted ministers is 16.00% of the minimum stipend until the age of 70 years. From the beginning of the quarter following a member’s attainment of age 70 years the current government regulated *Superannuation Guarantee* (SG) applies (9.5% of minimum stipend as at 1/7/16).

For an ordained PCEA minister eligible for call giving full time residential pulpit supply the current SG is to be paid; all others giving pulpit supply the SG is to be paid on actual earnings so long as they meet the legal threshold (\$450 per month as at 1/7/16).”

5. 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.

16.49 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 blessing for another year and pray for wisdom in the administration of such in 2016.

2. Adjustment of the Minimum Stipend, Cash and Non-cash components (Excluding Manse, Car and Telephone) for 2016/2017 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 2016/2017 be granted to Deacons’ Courts as follows:

\$12,000 Narre Warren

\$15,000 Ulverstone

\$27,000 Total

- Strictly on a quarterly needs basis.
- Applications be submitted to the General Treasurer on a calendar quarter basis ie commencing 1st January/April/July/October and be accompanied with a Budget for the quarter being applied for.
- Be subject to the availability of funds.

4. Presbyteries bring the need of Synod in meeting requests for Stipend Relief to its members.

That Deacons’ Courts be encouraged to contribute to the Synod *Stipend Relief Fund*, if possible, for this purpose.

5. The Synod Finance Committee review the current legislation for *Congregational Financial Records & Auditing* (Handbook 3.15) taking into account relevant obligations as detailed in the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission* and report to Synod 2017 with updated draft regulations.

16.50 GENERAL TREASURER'S REPORT

The General Treasurer, Mr AH Steel, presented his report. It was resolved that the report be received. Mr Bajema led the court in prayer giving thanks for the Lord's provision.

16.51 OVERTURE FROM BRISBANE CONGREGATION RE PURCHASE OF A MANSE

An overture from Brisbane Congregation and passed on by Northern Presbytery was taken under notice seeking leave to borrow from the Capital Assistance Fund in the order of \$500,000 towards the purchase of a manse. :

Synod resolved that, having considered the overture from Brisbane Session requesting approval in principle to borrow in the order of \$500,000 from the Capital Assistance Fund resolves the prayer of the overture be not granted.

Synod further resolved that the Session and Deacons' Court further research and determine a more specific plan for the extension of the Lord's work in the Brisbane area, bearing in mind that there is existing legislation in the church [Handbook, Capital Assistance Fund point 6] for loan applications to be submitted for consideration between annual Synods.

The Moderator Mr Kerridge apologised and indicated his need to be excused from the meeting to catch his flight home. Mr Ward took the chair.

16.52 NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr Muldoon presented his notice of motion and it was seconded:

That Mr Muldoon and Mr Bajema be appointed to give answers to the reasons for dissent by Mr Ward in 16.30 above (Church and Nation, Bible versions).

The mover withdrew the motion with the consent of the seconder.

16.53 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 1: OVERTURE RE STIPEND RELIEF

Mr Bajema presented the overture and it was moved and seconded that the overture be received.

Overture Regarding Stipend Relief

To the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia meeting May 3-5, 2016, at Mt Druitt PCEA, New South Wales:

WHEREAS

1) There is a present inequality amongst our congregations regarding the access to investments, assets, and other monies held under Deacon's Courts. This means that while there are congregations larger in number than other congregations, and who give more in their plate offerings more than other congregations, yet by means of their lack of resources in investments, assets, and other monies held in their Deacon's Court, are required to request Presbytery to go to Synod, which may not have the funds available;

2) There are situations that have arisen and presently exist where congregations and mission posts are funded independently of aid granted through a request to the Presbytery to Synod because of a single Deacon's Court. This means that there are situations where a congregation or mission post is not financially accountable to Presbytery and thus to Synod;

NOW THEREFORE we respectfully overture the Synod to take these premises into consideration and so move that this may be the united position amongst us all that in regards to Stipend Relief of a congregation that does not have the resources or assets within its Deacon's Court to continue paying all of her minister's stipend, that:

1) Appeal must first be made to the Presbytery to which the said congregation belongs. Presbytery is to consider this request and if it deems it lawful use Presbytery funds available or/and encourage the Deacon's Courts of those congregations within the Presbytery blessed with assets and investments to help support the said congregation. This is consistent with the Presbyterian understanding that all within the denomination is shared together.

2) *If a Presbytery and/or the Deacons' Courts within the bounds is unable to so support a congregation for the matter of Stipend Relief, after deeming it a lawful request, the matter is passed on to Synod or the appropriate Synod Committee, but not only to possible access from the Synodical fund for Stipend Relief, also for possible support from other Deacons' Courts within the wider denomination, which are blessed by our Lord to be in a position to support gospel work in this way.*

3) *In future this would be the way all aid-receiving congregations to present their requests for assistance and so there is no inequality between the brethren but that all may be received, prayed for, and helped in an equal way;
or do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.*

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

16.54 NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr Steel presented his motion and it was seconded:

That requests for financial assistance of Deacons' Courts are to be submitted to the Presbytery and supported by a budget for the ensuing year. A copy of the request and budget are to be sent to other Deacons' Courts within the charge by the Clerk of Presbytery in sufficient time for them to consider it prior to the next meeting of Presbytery. If Deacons' Courts are able to contribute to the Stipend Relief being sought, Presbytery is to take such into account and forward their recommendation to the Synod Finance Committee. (See 4.79)

Handbook 3.17d to be amended by replacing the last two sentences with the motion now approved.

On being put to the vote the Notice of Motion was favoured over the terms requested in the overture. It was resolved in terms of the motion 16.53 above.

16.55 NSW TRUST CORPORATION

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

Mr Steel reported that the NSW Trustees had received notice from the Land and Property Information section of the Registrar General for NSW regarding title to land at Putty Road, Glenridding, near Singleton NSW. It was a church cemetery, adjoining the later PCNSW cemetery, and was conveyed to trustees for the PCEA on 17 January 1860. It was automatically vested in The Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia by virtue of the operation of Section 2 of the 1918 Act. The Old System title was being converted to Torrens Title by the Registrar without cost to the church. The NSW Trustees would follow this through and report to Synod 2017.

16.56 QUEENSLAND TRUST CORPORATION

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

16.57 THE TRUSTEES FOR VICTORIA

The Secretary Mr RS Ward, presented the report on behalf of the Trustees. It was resolved that the report be received. Mr Ward presented the proposed deliverance and it was resolved that:

1. Synod commend to our people giving by bequest to aid the extension of the Gospel in Australia and overseas.

16.58 REPORTS OF EXAMINERS OF RECORDS

The minutes of the Northern Presbytery for 2015-2016 were reported to be in order. The minutes of Central Presbytery for 2015-2016 were reported to be in order. The minutes of Southern Presbytery for 2015-2016 were reported to be in order. It was resolved that the reports be received and the records attested.

16.59 MODERATOR-ELECT FOR SYNOD 2017

The Clerk nominated Rev DK Muldoon. It was resolved that Mr Muldoon be appointed Moderator-elect for Synod 2017.

16.60 TIME AND PLACE OF SYNOD 2017

The Clerk reported that the Hawkesbury Nepean Congregation had indicated their willingness to again host Synod in 2017. It was resolved that Synod 2017 be hosted by the Hawkesbury Nepean Congregation at Mt Druitt from Tuesday 2nd to Thursday 4th May 2017.

16.61 TREASURER'S REPORT RE COSTS INCURRED BY SYNOD 2016.

The General Treasurer, Mr AH Steel, gave an indication of costs incurred by Synod 2016 which, due to the generous provision of meals by the Tongan members, was at modest figure.

16.62 THANKS

Thanks were expressed for the generous hospitality provided by the local congregation.

Mr Ward expressed his thanks to the members of Synod for their participation, the Clerk and the Treasurer for their work. The Moderator, David Kerridge, was thanked for his leading of the Synod and for his address and devotional messages.

16.63 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

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

16.64 CLOSURE OF SYNOD 2016

Synod 2016 was closed with praise singing from Psalm 133. Mr Ward closed with prayer at 3.00pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

RS Ward
Moderator

ACTS OF SYNOD 2016
Appended by the Direction of Synod (09.50)

Class 1 (Barrier Act Procedure)

| No | Act | Reference |
|----|------|-----------|
| | None | |

Class 2 (Others)

| No | Act | Reference |
|----|---|-------------|
| 1 | Act concerning Recommitment of Synod & Work of Presbyteries | 16.16 |
| 2 | Act updating Handbook re Guidelines for Church Workers | 16.24.1 |
| 3 | Act updating Handbook re Insurances | 16.24.2 |
| 4 | Act re Recognition of the Position of Elder Emeritus | 16.24.3 |
| 5 | Act re Clarification of Procedures Under Barrier Act | 16.24.5 |
| 6 | Act re Candidate Placement Scheme (Training of Ministry) | 16.25.2 |
| 7 | Act re Development of Eldership Training Course | 16.42.3 |
| 8 | Act re Use of the 2011 Edition of the NIV | 16.29.4 |
| 9 | Act re Fraternal Relationship with the CRCA | 16.37.2.1-5 |
| 10 | Act re Hosting the ICRC Regional Meeting in Melbourne 2019 | 16.37.2.6 |
| 11 | Act re Response to Petition re Anna Bay Church Funds | 16.46 |
| 12 | Act re Changes to Superannuation Funding | 16.48.4 |

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

There was minor adjustment to the Committee Structure:

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

Law and Advisory: RS Ward (Convener), TI Leggott, R Tso, T Reeve, R Lawson, S Loudon

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

Church and Nation, Media: DK Muldoon (Convener Church and Nation), S Bajema (Convener Media and Banner), D Kerridge (Website), TW Yoa.

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

Finance: AH Steel (Convener), DJ Ramsay, T. Buck, DE Kerr, J Audet.

Superannuation: R Tso (Convener), DP Smith, DJ Ramsay, J Audet.

Missions: JD Klazinga (Convener), DP Smith, TI Leggott, DK Muldoon, J Greensill.

Training of Ministry: D Kerridge (Convener), JA McCallum, AA Miranda, D Manly, S Bajema.

Address From The United Reformed Church in North America

Brothers and Sisters of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia:

It is truly a pleasure for me to be present here with you in Mt Druitt on the occasion of your 2016 General Assembly. The privilege of representing the United Reformed Churches in North America is a foretaste of what the Apostle John saw in Revelation Chapter Seven where he describes the church gathered from every tribe, nation, people and language. It is a joy for Sandy and me to be here in Australia, together with you good PCEA brothers and sisters, enjoying your generous hospitality and sharing together our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the hope of the coming kingdom of heaven and the life of love instilled in us through the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A brief word about the URCNA: We are a comparatively young federation whose first Synod was celebrated in Lynwood, Illinois in 1996. Our story does not begin there, however. We share the same beginning as all other Christian churches that submit to the authority of the Scriptures and the early creeds of our fathers, including the Apostle's Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. We find our foundation in the writings and preaching of the Apostles, who in turn had built upon the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, the main subject of the Old and New Testaments. In summary, United Reformed Churches are biblical, historical, and Reformed churches.

The URCNA gathers at least every three years and in current practice every two years, for synodical meeting. The federation is divided into eight classes. Each classis ordinarily meets semi-annually. There are currently approximately 120 congregations, including mission works not yet formally organized, spread throughout the United States and Canada. The federation consists of approximately 16,000 communicant members and over 24,000 members in total, including baptized covenant children.

We have our own church order that draws largely on church orders of previous generations dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries. Ministers in the URCNA graduate from several different seminaries as we do not have our own federational seminary. Each candidate minister undergoes a rigorous oral exam before a classis. Upon the sustaining his classical examination he becomes an ordained minister of the Word and Sacraments.

The federation has constituted a number of synodical committees, two of whose mandate is to initiate, respond to and cultivate ecumenical relations with other denominations and federations. These are the Committee for Ecumenical Relations and Church Unity (CERCU) that devotes its attention to churches in North America and the Committee for Ecumenical Contact with Churches Abroad (CECCA) which oversees our relationships abroad.

The URC NA, through CERCU, is in corresponding relations with 7 churches and in ecclesiastical fellowship with 5 churches in North America. Abroad, through CECCA, we are in ecumenical fellowship with two churches including the Reformed Churches in New Zealand. We are in ecumenical contact with seven churches worldwide. Finally, we are corresponding with two churches including with you in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia with a view toward establishing ecumenical contact. Our relationship with the PCEA is our first in Australia and we are grateful for it and anxious to pursue it further.

In this young 21st century, the URCNA has been working to establish mission fields and church plants numbering up to seventeen in various cities in the United States and Canada, from Washington D.C. to Prairie, Alberta. URCNA congregations support missions in various world-wide locations including Trinidad, India, Latin America and Canada, as well as several locations within the United States. URCNA churches vary in race, nationality, location, and occasionally even language. More importantly, though, we are united in historic Reformation teaching, teaching that emphasizes the biblical truths of sin, deliverance from it in Christ alone, and gratitude for that deliverance in biblical worship.

Our next biannual synod plans to meet from June 13-17, 2016, in Wyoming, Michigan, which is near

the larger city of Grand Rapids. At our upcoming synod, the hymn section of a new Psalter Hymnal (a joint effort of ours with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church) is scheduled to be approved. If all goes as planned, the new Psalter Hymnal will be printed and distributed in the fall of 2017. Needless to say, this will be a liturgical milestone for our still young church federation.

We hope the PCEA will be able to send a fraternal delegate to our 2016 synod so that he can have a similar experience as we have had with you. Please pray for the brothers and sisters in Wyoming, Michigan as they make their final preparations to host this synod.

We have been immensely well taken care of here in New South Wales during the past number days by our dear brother Tom Reeve. He, Sandy and I have had ample opportunity to get to know each other during this past week. And in getting to know him better, we have also gotten to know you better.

The PCEA is a church federation that undoubtedly experiences many of the joys and sorrows that we do in the URC NA. We will lift you up in our prayers and remember you before the throne of God's grace that you will receive the grace you need to continue to be a faithful federation of churches in here Australia.

In conclusion, the United Reformed Churches in North America are a federation of believers and their children who are under spiritual development as is the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. We travel the journey to the new heaven and new earth under circumstances in which we need to support each other and encourage each other to live in Christ, remain in Christ and mature in Christ through faith, especially when it may not be easy to do. I wish you the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit as you continue to be the church.

Thank you.

Douglas L. Field
Fraternal Delegate of the URCNA

Address From The Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Thank you brother moderator for the opportunity to address this Synod. Kia Ora Whanau. G'day family.

Brothers, I bring you warm greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of your trans-Tasman sister – the Reformed Churches of New Zealand ‘across the ditch’. I am thankful to the perfect providence of our Lord in enabling me to be here at this Synod of the PCEA. I am looking forward to bringing a report back to our Interchurch Relations Committee and subsequently to our next triannual Synod in 2017. Your churches are not so well known to many of our 3000 members, but I personally feel quite at home among you.

When I was studying for the ministry at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong in the early 2000s, we attended the Coppards Road congregation. During the whole period of my studies, there was no minister. The Moderator at the time, George Ball, graciously offered me many opportunities to preach as a student for the ministry, allowing me the flexibility to fill the pulpit more frequently in the earlier stages of each semester and then less often as exams approached. I remember the first time I went out to lead worship for a small group in Hamilton. There was no presenter there and when we got to the first psalm all eyes were on me! When it came to singing at that time, I was a follower, not a leader! I am thankful to our Lord for providing me the opportunity to grow in psalm singing which is a great blessing now when leading session members at meetings in song. When worshipping in the PCEA, my wife Jenny and I have always appreciated the congregational singing, often with four part-harmony. It has been a delight to sing praises together with you from the psalms during this Synod.

After finishing my studies, Jenny, myself and our seven children spent six months with AIM. For half of this time we were stationed in Alice Springs before heading up to Arnhem Land and down the east coast, visiting Trevor Leggott on our way back to Geelong. I fondly recall the warm hospitality of David and Marie Manly with whom the Waldron clan stayed before returning to New Zealand in 2006. We then moved to the Reformed Church of Hastings in the eastern North Island where I ministered for seven years before taking a call two years ago to Christchurch, our main South Island city.

I remember a couple of years after our sister-church fraternal relationship was formed. Hearing one of your esteemed PCEA ministers unabashedly stating that the aim was to ‘get some of your ministers’! Well congratulations brothers! Sjirk, Jim and Andre have all made their way over here from us! Recently I’ve been preaching through the ‘Sermon on the Plain’ passage in Luke’s gospel in my home congregation in Christchurch. There Jesus endorses the ‘Golden Rule’: “just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise” (Luke 6:31). We have a number of ‘vacant pulpits’ at present, brothers. Reciprocity? Do unto others?

On a more serious note. A brief update on our Reformed Churches of New Zealand. We have 3 presbyteries, 2 North Island, 1 South Island, with 20 churches; Whanganui recently becoming instituted. Church plants are currently underway in Rangiora and New Plymouth with the possibility of a preaching post being established in Tauranga currently in discussion. We do continue to pray for more workers for the harvest and are thankful for a number of men who are currently training for the ministry and others who are actively pursuing this path. A number of our local churches have been involved in building projects over the past few years, including my own congregation in central Christchurch where our building was rendered unusable following the February 2011 earthquake. The Lord has been very good to us.

I note in the distributed Standing Committee Report on Interchurch Relations (page 41):
“There should be an attitude of mutual helpfulness. Each should be willing to share problems and difficulties with the others. By the same token each should be allowed to exhort to more exact obedience any who appear to relax faithfulness to their avowed confession”.

In keeping with an attitude of mutual helpfulness, I note that some of the challenges we face include continuing to adjust to our New Zealand setting; being a church comprised predominantly of a generation of Dutch immigrants who came to New Zealand after the end of the 2nd World War, together with their offspring. There is a need for us to clearly separate in our thinking Biblical imperatives for

our practices from cultural traditions so that if these historical practices become an obstacle to the gospel we have the wisdom and the courage to change them for the sake of our witness for Christ.

In New Zealand, like you we experience the ‘darkening plain’ at the end of the age of Christendom. In 2013 our government passed the NZ Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act which states that: “marriage *means the union of 2 people, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity*”.

In Scripture we read of the imprisonment and subsequent execution of John the Baptist who spoke out against the unlawful marriage of Herodias who left her husband Philip for his brother Herod Antipas. In this week’s Tabletalk magazine devotion I read the statement ‘Preachers and teachers of God’s Word are not to let powerful people who are involved in gross sin off the hook’. Defending the truth and continuing applicability of God’s Truth has always been a potentially dangerous task for faithful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to societal pressure for the normalisation of homosexual lifestyles, other battlegrounds we face in NZ are the abortion law and the drive to legalise patient assisted suicide and euthanasia.

As we are the church at the end of Christendom, proclaiming the gospel, we will at times, unavoidably look foolish in the eyes of an unbelieving world. 1 Cor 1:18 “*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*” {1 Corinthians 1:18}.

As churches in NZ we have found the Doctrine of Creation under attack and we see the need to actively proclaim the supremacy of Scripture, God’s special revelation over man’s interpretation of general revelation.

Brothers, let us not ‘retreat into our own silent corner’ fearing that if we speak the truth, the church will look foolish in the eyes of a fallen world. Fellow ministers and elders of the PCEA I humbly exhort you all to hold firmly to the historicity of the Word of God, Creation, Fall, Redemption; to affirm a literal historical Adam and Eve as those created on the sixth day by the direct intervention of God into His creation, to confess a literal historical fall into sin by our first ancestors and to continue to defend a literal historical substitutionary atonement by Christ on our behalf. Creation, Fall, and Redemption are at the heart of the gospel message.

We share with you, as one of our four forms of unity, the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Larger Catechism 15 asks the question “What is the work of creation?” With the answer “The work of creation is that wherein God did in the beginning, by the word of his power, make of nothing the world, and all things therein, for himself, within the space of six days, and all very good”.

I warmly invite you brothers to come to NZ, for ministers to come and preach the Word. To elders to come and visit our churches, get to know us better.

I would further encourage you to read your denominational magazine, ‘The Presbyterian Banner’. Also I invite you all to learn more about our churches and commend to you our own churches magazine which is called ‘Faith in Focus’. Brother George Ball reads this publication and Sjirk Bajema is a past-editor. Denominational magazines with good articles and news from the churches are very helpful for the cohesion and unity of churches.

Thank you for your warm hospitality and fellowship here during this Synod. May our Lord continue to bless your churches as you faithfully labour in the service of our Risen King.

Rev David Waldron

Address From The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia

Thank you for the invitation to attend the Synod of PCEA.

I bring warm greetings from your brothers in Christ from the RPCA.

As I was reading through the 57 pages of Synod documents I must say I was quietly relieved that our Presbytery AGMs do not multiply pages upon pages of documents for their meeting. However, I must also confess that my quiet relief quickly evaporated when I received all the documents for our AGM this Saturday...all 103 pages! Maybe the Reformed Presbyterians do, after all, know how to multiply pages upon pages for their annual meetings!

Well, for those of you who do not know, the RPCA has three congregations: Frankston, Geelong, and McKinnon. Each Lord's Day morning among our three congregations 210 gather for worship. In the evening that drops down to 145. However, just like your statistics, we also record the "total attendance if everyone present who worships at least once a month plus the housebound but not including visitors passing through" average Lord's Day attendance increases to nearly 280.

One exciting statistic (and challenging statistic) is that 40% of that number (110) represents those under 18 years old. That's *exciting* because it means the next generation of leaders, elders, deacons, Sunday school teachers, mums and dads is growing up in our congregations. It's also *challenging* because it means we ought to be seriously discipling the next generation to prepare them for service and maturity, and in their love and commitment to the Lord and his church. In order to facilitate this, two years ago the Presbytery of the RPCA initiated a youth weekend retreat for young people between ages of 15 and 20 for the purpose of Biblical training in specific areas related to young people. These included: *Choosing friends and close friendships; sexual purity and relationships with the opposite sex; work and career choice*. More general topics covered include: *The gospel; How to handle the Bible; Other dominant worldviews*. We pray God will use these to help mature the next generation in love and commitment to Christ.

That said, a quick perusal of our denominational statistics reveals a more somber picture. Our average morning attendance has decreased by 9% over the past two years (about 4.5% each year). The reasons vary, ranging from some families feeling isolated and not enfolded into or embraced unconditionally by the church family to things like ongoing, unresolved issues between members and session or minister. As a result, our Presbytery has endeavoured to address these matters so that we learn from them and avoid these mistakes in the future. On top of all this, there is also the stark and conveniently overlooked, uncomfortable truth that we are not breaking any land speed records when it comes to evangelistic, mission-minded outreach.

Last year our Presbytery agreed to a bold and daring vision: *That the RPCA consist of 5 self-sustaining, self-governing healthy churches by 2020*. As Reformed Presbyterians we are not known for our daring visions or strategic thinking prowess. We also realise, that if we aim at nothing, that's what we usually get and there is no benefit speaking lofty platitudes when no specific plans are laid down. So to put legs on this vision our strategy committee laid down a helpful process to assist each session to engage with the vision, to have their plans reviewed and assessed annually, and importantly, fund it. We realise that these efforts require the blessing of God to be successful because unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain - and we don't want to labour in vain.

We give thanks with you that God is raising up young men in your midst, stirring their hearts for gospel preaching and pastoral ministry. Much like Mr Duncan Hickey, we also have a young man studying for the pastoral ministry. Brandon Fisher and his wife Megan, originally from USA, arrived on this fair soil of Australia with a missionary heart and an attitude to help where they could. They committed themselves to at least five years in Australia. Ten years later, Brandon is now an elder in McKinnon and studying for the ministry.

The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps (Prov 16:9)

Like you, we also are concerned with the rapid moral decay of our culture. We could bemoan the quickening movement such moral malfeasance, yet maybe God has brought this moral slippage about

to awaken the Australian church from its own moral slumber, spiritual laxity, and good and easy living. Maybe God is in fact helping us to lose our love of the world and rather “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” Maybe God is orchestrating this moral depravity so that we would be encouraged to “set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For we have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God.” No doubt God wants us to get our eyes off the world and back on to Christ, the lover of our souls. Times of refreshing may come, but most likely in parallel with times of persecution. Whatever the case, surely God has put us here at such a time as this that we might clearly, compassionately, unashamedly shine forth the gospel light of Christ. In such a day of gathering darkness, the light of the gospel shines brighter and clearer, providing real hope for the hopeless. So I want to encourage you all with the well-known truth of Who is ultimately in control of all things for the glory of His magnificent name and godly good of His blood-purchased Bride. Everything we see on the news and hear in political arena is playing out according to the divine plan and will eventually result in the glorious praise of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

As I draw this greeting to a close, we know the building of mutual fellowship occurs at various levels. We elders can take for granted the unity we enjoy at a synodical or presbyterial level, but readily forget that at the congregational level our enthusiasm is not necessarily shared. This could be primarily because of lack of inter-congregational connections. At McKinnon we have worked at developing mutual fellowship with Knox and Narre Warren PCEA at a congregation level through different means, whether pulpit swaps, joint youth group activities, sharing weekly bulletins, or invitations to annual youth camps. I know we can build on this and bring into the loop the All Nations congregation. Personally, I'd love to receive more information about the annual family camp of your denomination. I could envisage some of our families using their annual holidays to attend. There are, no doubt, other ways in which mutual fellowship at the congregational level could be developed and enjoyed. I would certainly be delighted to speak with anyone who has further ideas.

May God in his eternal kindness in Christ Jesus bless and enable you with his Spirit so you might proclaim the good news to dying people in and outside the church, and to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Rev Graeme Hart

Address From The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

Dear brethren,

It is a joy and delight for me to address you today and bring greetings to your Synod on behalf of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia [your newest relative!].

For those of you who have not met me before, it may surprise you to learn that I have preached in nearly half of your pulpits! A little over 15 years ago, my wife and I began attending the Geelong congregation while I was completing my studies at the RTC. I was a student for the ministry in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and my pastor at the time encouraged my wife and I to worship at the PCEA to help develop the sister-church relationship we had just entered into between our two churches. David Waldron and his family joined us at the Geelong PCEA. And now, 15 years later, in the providence of God we are *both* delegates to your Synod – and I am a delegate seeking to help develop a *different* inter-church relationship than my former pastor had in mind!

You are probably somewhat familiar with our churches. We consist of some 65 congregations and church plants, comprising approximately 6000 communicant members and 2700 baptised members, spread across six Classes. Church planting is a significant emphasis for our churches at the present time. While our overall membership has remained fairly static over recent years *despite* many new church plants, our experience has shown that our Classes in which extensive church planting has taken place have been growing strongly, indicating that church planting is not simply shuffling people from existing congregations into church planting works.

As the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, we are very thankful for the renewed spirit of cooperation and friendship that has been witnessed between our denominations in recent years. We're especially thankful for the turning point in our relationship that began with the recent joint meeting of our ecumenical committees back in November 2013, and for the misunderstandings and miscommunications of the past that could begin to be overcome in a spirit of graciousness and love – and that led to the recommendation of your inter-church relations committee to receive us into fraternal relations and to sponsor our application to join the ICRC.

We pray that our relationship will deepen and grow through the years as it begins this new phase, and that the work of Christ will be strengthened through this. Lord willing, we look forward also to taking up membership in the ICRC and working in cooperation with other like-minded denominations around the world to further the work of Christ's Kingdom.

In practical terms, our most recent delegate to your Synod, Rev. Geoff van Schie, noted in his report to our churches that a highlight of attending your Synod was the phenomenal degree of support for missions that exists in your churches – your big heart to reach out with the gospel both at home in remote areas through the work of AIM, as well as overseas. Noting this, our Synod has given our committee for ecumenical relations the additional mandate to explore ways in which the CRCA and PCEA may join together in missional work (especially in Australia, but also overseas). If you have any ideas as to how we might do so, I would love to hear from you today or tomorrow so we can explore this together as a practical fruit of our new relationship together.

On a separate subject and relating to same-sex marriage matters that have already been alluded to thus far at your Synod, your Church & Nation committee may also be interested in considering work that our Same Sex Marriage Committee is finalising – the formulation of a Biblical position on same sex marriage and a public statement. We are preparing these statements, not because we lack a common mind in regards to Scriptural teaching, but because it is a subject not mentioned specifically in our confession and therefore we have a view towards protecting the church from anti-discrimination legislation and activists.

It has already been mentioned at your Synod your difficulty in staying in touch with developments in sister-churches overseas (mention was made of the Reformed Churches [Liberated] of the Netherlands, with whom you have a fraternal relationship). In this light, it is possible that you will learn of a decision of a church in South Africa with whom we have a relationship, which voted at their Synod to permit

homosexual clergy. I mention this in order that you can be aware that this deeply concerns us and we hope to use our relationship with that church to urge them to rescind their decision as being contrary to Scripture. If no change is forthcoming, it is likely that our next Synod will consider a recommendation to end that relationship.

Our recent Synod also received a proposal for us to consider whether our ministers should withdraw from being marriage celebrants should an unacceptable change to the definition of parliament be enacted into law – our Synod did not reach a decision to take this step, but it is something we did discuss and would be interested in the views of like-minded denominations such as yourselves, if you have given this matter any consideration.

Thank you once again for extending to us a formal relationship, and for your willingness to sponsor our application to join the ICRC. We pray God will be pleased to use the decision you have made at your Synod to bless both of our denominations. And this is our prayer for you, from Paul's letter to the Philippians:

“That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God”.

Philippians 1:9-11

May God bless your remaining deliberations.

Rev Andrew Nugteren