

The Synod of Eastern Australia



To meet at the
Mt Druitt Church Facilities
Hawkesbury Nepean Congregation
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

2nd - 4th May 2017

Standing Committee Reports

“God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us,
That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations.”

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TIMETABLE FOR SYNOD 2017

Time	Tuesday 2 nd May	Time	Wednesday 3 rd May	Thursday 4 th May
	Synod to Commence with Session 1 at 4.30pm	9.00am M/Tea 10.30am	SESSION 3 Devotions and Prayer Law and Advisory Training of Ministry Church and Nation	SESSION 6 Devotions and Prayer Superannuation Finance Trust Corporations Reports of Examiners of Records. Appointment of Moderator-elect Time and Place of Next Synod Closure of Synod
		12.30pm	Lunch	Lunch
4.30pm	SESSION 1 Constitution of Synod Retiring Moderator's Sermon. Thanks to Retiring Moderator Presbytery Rolls. Welcomes (New members, guests, associations as required). Administration	2.00pm A/Tea 3.30pm	SESSION 4 Media (Banner & Website) Archivist Youth and Fellowship Missions Inter-Church Relations Delegates from Other Churches	Synod Closes at the end of Session 6 at 12.30pm Lunch to follow before delegates depart
6.00pm	Dinner	6.00pm	Dinner	
7.00pm	SESSION 2 Election of Moderator for 2017/2018	7.00pm	SESSION 5 Missions Speakers	
7.30pm	Moderator's address. Thanks to Moderator. Presbytery Reports			
8.30pm	Close	8.30pm	Close	

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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

Ministerial Movements: Rev David Kerridge translated from Hastings Congregation and was inducted into the Northern Rivers Congregation on May 20th, 2016.

Timetable: This year follows a similar format as last year with a commencement time of 4.30pm.

Congregational Statistics: See the table appended to this report.

Expression of Sympathy: Rev Edwin Lee died on 26th October 2016. Mr Ward will prepare a memorial minute for Synod.

Correspondence: There has been no correspondence received for transmission to Synod .

Committees: The suggested Committee is as below after some amendment.

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), R Tso, 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, 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, R Ball

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

Proposed Deliverances:

1. That Committee structure as noted in the report be adopted.
2. That the following examiners of records be appointed:

Northern Presbytery	Rev R Tso and Geelong elder.
Central Presbytery	Rev R Ward and Northern Rivers elder.
Southern Presbytery	Rev D Kerridge and St George elder.

CONGREGATIONAL STATISTICS AS AT 31.12.2016

	Communicants				Typical Attendance of different persons each LD		Church Community By Age Total attendance if everyone present who worships at least once a month plus the housebound but not including visitors passing through.						Baptisms	Sunday-School classes/ pupils	Youth midweek participants	
	2015	+	-	2016	2015	2016	>4	4-11	12-18	19-64	65+	Total				
Congregation elders/deacons																
Brisbane 3/1	39	0	2	34	50	62	3	17	8	28	6	60	1	0/0	0	
Nthn Rivers-4/4	42	0	1	41	39	40	1	3	3	9	31	47	0	1/3	0	
Hastings 3/1	33	0	4	29	44	44	0	1	2	30	11	47	0	1/2	0	
North P 10/6	114	0	7	104	133	146	4	21	13	67	48	154	1	2/5	0	
Manning 5/4	46	1	0	47	50	47	0	0	3	23	30	56	0	1/3	0	
Hunter 3/5	43	2	2	43	53	56	8	4	4	26	17	59	1	2/5	11	
St Geo's 3/2	35	0	1	34	75	76	3	5	0	52	16	76	1	1/2	0	
Mt Druitt 3/1	39	0	0	39	50	50	5	12	14	22	6	59	1	3/15	17	
Syd Sth 0/0	6	0	2	3	7	5	0	0	0	2	3	5	0	0/0	0	
Cent P 14/12	167	3	5	166	235	234	16	21	18	125	72	255	3	7/25	28	
Knox-2/0	32	0	2	30	40	38	1	7	3	14	13	38	0	1/7	14	
All Nations 1/0	60	2	3	59	115	115	25	40	15	85	3	143	0	1/25	11	
Narre W-2/1	39	2	3	38	50	60	3	8	6	34	18	69	1	3/15	0	
Carrum D 0/0	15	0	4	11	12	11	1	0	0	7	6	13	0	0	0	
Geelong-2/0	15	0	0	15	10	9	0	0	0	2	7	9	0	0	0	
Ulverst-1/1	21	2	3	20	34	36	2	2	5	21	8	38	0	2/5	18	
South P-9/2	182	6	15	173	251	269	16	47	27	166	55	310	1	7/50	43	
TOTALS 33/20	463	9	27	443	619	649	36	89	58	358	175	719	5	16/80	71	

Deaths reported: Northern Rivers 1, Hastings 2, Manning 1, Sydney South 1, Knox 1 Total: 6

NORTHERN PRESBYTERY REPORT

Brisbane

We give thanks for the ongoing mercy of the Lord and his continuing providential care for us as a congregation demonstrated in 2016. Two services were held every Lord's Day at our Emma Street building at 10 am and 5 pm, except for the afternoon service on 30 October (cancelled because of the annual combined Reformation Celebration Service), and the two services on 4 December, which were held at Camp Drewe in Lennox Head.

Most services were led by Pastor Jim Klazinga. When he was unable to do so, Dr. Wes Hanna would normally lead the morning services, with elders leading in the afternoon.

Services: Rev. Klazinga had a pulpit swap on 10 July with Rev. David Kerridge of the Northern Rivers congregation. Rev. Kerridge administered the Lord's Supper during the morning service. A pulpit swap was also had on 13 November, with Rev. Ralph Adams preaching for us, and Rev. Klazinga preaching in the Christian Reformed Church of Australia in Tivoli. During most of the afternoon services, Pastor Klazinga continued a series of sermons working through the books of the Bible in order, with one to five sermons each, preaching on texts that help summarize the major themes of the books. Beginning in June, for the morning services, Pastor Klazinga preached two different series of sermons from the Gospel according to John: the first highlighting the doctrines of grace and election, the second focussing on Jesus' understanding of himself as articulated in a number of "I Am" statements. We continue to accommodate a number of our members needing to join with us for worship via their phones. The Lord's Supper was celebrated six times. We continued the practice of having extra Thanksgiving collections for synodical causes on Lord's Supper Sundays. We also had a Missions Offering at the church camp.

Membership: During 2016, two of our older members died: Miss Peggy MacLennan, who died after a very long struggle with dementia, and Mrs. Margaret Green, who died after a relatively brief illness. We had one new family begin attending our services: Lawrence and Mary Buckingham, with their two sons, Chris and Ian. Near the end of the year, one older person also began attending again after many years away: Beth Anderson. There were no births or new communicant members.

Session: The congregation continues to be served by the session, with three elders and the pastor participating. Our fourth elder, John Anderson, was not able to participate in either Session or the Deacons' Court because of his deteriorating condition due to Parkinson's disease. Mr. Ron Lawson served as the representative elder at Presbytery and synod.

Deacons' Court: The Deacons' Court has three elders, the pastor, and one deacon participating. We continue to have to dip into our savings, as our weekly offerings are not able to meet all our expenses. Discussions were held in the Deacons' Court and with the congregation regarding what to do about this. Once again, we would note the outstanding contribution being made by the small group of retired people in Rockhampton, who worship regularly with us via phone.

Education and Fellowship: A number of members, led by Miss Julie Schmidt, gather together for a few minutes before the morning worship services to learn tunes and harmonies. Sunday School classes continued to be held each week during the school year after the morning worship services. We give thanks for those leading and participating, for their study and projects, and for their ongoing efforts in doing the Youth and Fellowship Committee prescribed work. The minister held a Pastor's Class during the Sunday School time for anyone interested in joining in. During this class, participants would discuss issues connected to the morning sermon, along with confessional statements relating to the theme of the text. Each Sunday a fellowship lunch would be held after the Sunday School time. Two fortnightly Bible Studies, normally led by the pastor, met on alternate weeks. This year we began using video courses available through Ligonier Connect. We continued having occasional Spiritual Growth Discussion Groups following the Sunday evening worship service. Males and females would meet separately, with young and old participating together. The pastor continued his practice of sending daily text messages to over thirty phones, with a brief prayer Bible text, along with prayer requests focussing on the members and activities of the congregation.

Camp Drewe: The Annual Family Camp was held again at Lennox Head in December. The speaker was Rev. Robin Tso. He led a number of studies and the Sunday morning and afternoon worship services, all connected to the first few chapters of Matthew. We were blessed again to have members from other PCEA congregations attending.

Northern Rivers

In the first part of the year, the vacancy continued in the Northern Rivers, with Elders and various Ministers supplying the weekly services. We are thankful to the Lord for their labours in supporting the work during this time.

In May of the year, Rev. David Kerridge accepted the Call to become minister of the Northern Rivers Congregation after a near five-year vacancy. Along with his family, he translated from Hastings Congregation and was inducted into this charge on May 20th, 2016.

The congregation meets each Lord's Day in Grafton at 9 am, and Maclean at 11am and 4pm, with a combined attendance of 30 to 40 for the two services (approximately 10-12 in the afternoon). Mid-week Bible Studies are held in both Grafton and Maclean. A Live Telephone Service has been implemented, with help from the Hunter Barrington Minister, whereby people are able to dial a phone number and receive the service, this allows anyone access to the services without the need for a limited, and pre-arranged, group being dialled into a conference call by the Elders before services. After initial teething problems the new system has been very well received and regularly used by members at Evans Head and Ballina, as well as for those unable to attend occasionally.

In November, the minister conducted the funeral service of Mrs Vera Montague (d. 13th November, 2016). Mrs Montague (previously Mrs Don Baker) had been a long-standing and faithful member of the congregation, and had served with distinction as a nurse in World War 2.

We continue to make the Manse in Maclean available without charge to the Lower Clarence Christian Education Board for the operation of an Op-Shop which ensures a regular contribution of \$10,000 to the work of Special Religious Education in the High Schools in Grafton and Maclean, as well as providing for a full time SRE teacher in Maclean. As a gracious recognition of our provision they make a donation to the congregation of \$5,000 per year. We wish to remind PCEA congregations that this money is available for assistance to other congregations or worthy causes. The Church Hall at Maclean continues to serve a number of groups in the community as well as the needs of the congregation. The Church and Hall in Lismore is leased to the child minding centre – Care-Ring.

The Bethesda Retirement Units are operated by a management committee under the supervision of the Deacons' Court. All units have been occupied throughout the year and there is a long waiting list. We are grateful for the financial position, with more than sufficient funds to cover any foreseeable demand in the future.

In the last term of the year, the Minister was able to work as a temporary Chaplain at the Pacific Valley Christian School and has developed positive relationships with students and staff. He has also been invited to lead staff morning devotions before school, is on a roster to lead devotions in School Assemblies, and will, as of 2017, have a role on the school Board.

Hastings

During the year the Minister, Rev David Kerridge, accepted a call to the Northern Rivers congregation and left in May 2016. Synod appointed Rev Trevor Leggott to be the Interim Moderator. The vacancy still continues. The Interim Moderator has been able to arrange supply diligently and most acceptably to the congregation. The supply has mainly been from the Manning River congregation, for which we have been most grateful. One call was initiated but declined during the year.

As can be seen from the statistics, the roll has been updated. Many of our members are aged. During the latter part of the year, Mrs Sybil Tripovich, wife of Rev Alan Tripovich, died. Her struggles with chronic pain in recent years had been debilitating. Rev Tripovich himself officiated at the funeral service. In November, the death took place of Elder James Eric [George] Bain at the age of 100 years, who had been a member since 1948. Rev. Kerridge (Northern Rivers) took the funeral service which was very well attended by many in the town – a sign of the esteem in which Mr Bain was held during his long life.

We continue to support a student in Kenya, and following the India Awareness Tour have become interested in giving support there. We give thanks to God that we have been able to maintain the witness here, with the help of the congregation and particularly the Interim Moderator.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERY REPORT

Sydney West (Mt Druitt)

Two worship services are held each Lord's day, at 11am and 6pm. The minister is preaching from the Wisdom Psalms and the Book of Acts. Sermon series on Isaiah, Luke Romans, Revelation, Joshua and Judges, and Daniel are available in print and audio form, and on the website. Bible classes and prayer times in English and Tongan are held before the morning service. Singing from the metrical 'Sing Psalms' is led by any of three precentors. Two Sunday school classes and a crèche are conducted at 11.30am with up to 20 children. On Friday evenings 12-14 primary age children attended the Lighthouse Club, and 6-8 youth attended the Youth Club. We have a Bible study and prayer time on Fridays. One infant was baptized. A local couple have begun attending worship.

On New Year's Eve we held a special service, and time of praise and prayer until midnight. On January 30 we had a day of prayer. The congregation was pleased to host the 2016 PCEA Synod in May. A special ladies meeting was held with Mrs. Waldron from NZ speaking. Rev David Waldron was a visiting preacher. September 16 was the centenary of the Mt Druitt church building. We had a special thanksgiving service the next day, with visitors from other churches and a local councilor attending.

The minister assisted in organizing and leading a PCEA mission awareness tour of 11 people to India in December. Rev Don Burgess and the elders took services in his absence. Church members regularly attend three nursing homes to conduct worship services and/or minister to the aged and terminally ill. May the Lord be pleased to continue to bless his word in this very needy region.

Manning

We record our thankfulness to God for another year of ministry and service in the Manning. All the regular services and mid-week meetings have been maintained with good support. The Gospel has been preached and believers enjoy meeting for Bible study, prayer and fellowship. Our church sign has proved to be an effective means of witness in the town. We are thankful for the unity we enjoy in session and for the attentiveness of the deacons in carrying out their work. We are thankful for the level of fellowship and caring evident in the congregation; for the interest and support there is for mission including work among the indigenous folk; and for the support of Scripture teaching in the local high schools. 'Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth'

Hunter Barrington

Lord's Day Worship Services were conducted weekly at Raymond Terrace (am) and Cardiff (am & pm). Rev Tso conducted the Worship services with occasional relief being provided by suitably gifted men. Weekly live telephone & internet broadcasts of Worship services to our sick and/or aged or to those further afield have been made available. Lord's Day sermons have been uploaded to the website weekly.

This past year we have established live stream for all of the services and have seen an increase in the number of online listeners (to 1155 from 676 in 2015). Also since the update on the congregation's website there has been an increase of visits (551 views in the last 90 days).

Prayer Meetings/Bible studies were held regularly in both centres. Rev Tso diligently & faithfully conducted all such meetings. Bible study has focused on the book on Galatians. The participation of the brethren in studying the word & associated fellowship has been an encouragement. Prayer for local & wider mission and our sister PCEA congregations has continued to be a priority.

Ladies Bible studies were conducted fortnightly at both centres by Mrs Tso. The beneficial series of studies was based on the book of Romans. An All Age Sunday School was conducted at Cardiff each week during school Terms. Psalms tunes, the Shorter Catechism and the Scriptures have been taught faithfully to the children. Adult participants have been studying the Westminster Confession of Faith. Youth/Young Adults Fellowship was conducted by the Minister & his wife. Meetings have been conducted monthly in the afternoon each third Lord's Day. By the Lord's grace, some of our youth have become more open to spiritual matters. Two of our young adults made a credible profession of faith & have been admitted to communicant membership.

Local mission activities included the distribution of tracts, the conduct of informal worship meetings by the one of our families at a local aged care facility & the Samaritan's Purse Operation. Friendly contacts were established & a total of 58 boxes were collected at Raymond Terrace which operated as an area collection centre.

Mission presentations (Seaman's Christian Friendship Society, Mukti, India, and the Presbyterian Free Church in Central India) provided insight into mission beyond the Hunter Barrington area. Other mission support was afforded by the PCEA Prayer Notes and our financial contributions. Nic & Amelia O'Dell participated in the Missions Awareness tour to India. Amelia has subsequently been appointed to administer the sponsorship scheme for the Chhapara School.

Our gratitude is expressed for our Minister's faithful and relevant exposition of the Scriptures as well as his supportive pastoral care. The significant contribution of Mr Alex Steel (Assessor Elder) to the work of Session and Deacons' Court is gratefully acknowledged. We are thankful to our Almighty, Sovereign God who has wonderfully blessed us, a small flock of His people. Seeking His grace we face the challenges of the future knowing that He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).

St Georges

In 2016 St Georges congregation worshipped at the church three times a week, with the exception of the addition of Thursday and Saturday evenings Preparatory services, and Monday Thanksgiving services for our two communion seasons. On Lord's Day meetings the pattern is [with the exception of school holidays and communion seasons]: 9.00am to 9.45am- a psalm and a prayer, followed by separate Bible Class and Sabbath School sessions, 10.30am Worship service, 5.15 pm Psalmody Class practice, 6.00pm Evening Worship service.

On Wednesday nights we met at 7 pm for our Midweek Service. At all services we had our regular worshippers, many of whom travel long distances. We also had international visitors from many parts of the world to worship with us, as well as from interstate and intrastate churches. There was a good cross section of old and young including young families in our midst.

Our Website has played a major part in attracting visitors; with on-line sermons of J. McCallum, as well as the promotion of our Standards, form of worship and our location in the city. Many, if they returned to Sydney, came back to worship with us. Because of St Georges ideal location in Sydney CBD, these visitors were able to attend our services. The visitors from overseas comprised mainly of business people, students, tourists and those attending various conferences in the city. There has been good feedback of interest being shown in our Website, and our minister's sermons are being downloaded. CDs of the services continued to be distributed weekly with good response from congregational members, adherents, visitors and orders from some who don't worship with us, but do enjoy the sermons, readings and prayers.

We celebrated the Lord's Supper twice in 2016. Communicant members for the year ending 31st December 2015 were 34. Attendances at worship services were between 48 to 60 at the Lord's Day morning services, with 28 to 32 at the evening services, and 18 to 22 at the midweek Services. Some aged and infirm cannot attend because of their physical state. There are 8 children attending with their parents.

A small group of ladies knit rugs for the poor of our city.

Repairs and restoration work preparations for the steeple have been progressing slowly. The DA for repairs was finally approved at the end of the year with 18 conditions attached.

The congregation continues in good spirits generally and we are thankful to God for His graciousness to us in providing the means whereby we can gather together for public worship.

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY REPORT

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY

Although the originating legislation (*Act 13 Synod 1986* now *Handbook 4.77*) envisages a Presbytery Report it has become customary for the reports of Congregations to Presbytery to be passed on to Synod as received. Accordingly this practice is followed here. It remains to add that the Ulverstone congregation will become vacant at some point before 31 May 2017, and Mr Andrew Bajema's application for recognition was deferred until the July meeting of Presbytery. Overall membership 10 years ago was 186 and 173 today; typical attendance 330 five years ago 310 today. – Rowland S. Ward, Clerk 5/3/2017

KNOX

Knox church, under the direction of the Session has begun the year with a clear understanding of where we are going, and what we want to achieve for the Lord in 2017. By keeping that goal in mind, we have taken concrete steps in that direction. One of them is the expected addition of another elder to the pastoral team of Knox church. The elders recognise in him an encouraging level of devotion to Christ, competence in the organisation of church activities, and a personality that is congruent with the call of God. The congregation has also been encouraged through the preaching of the Word to think carefully about three main themes: the importance of trusting in God, the importance of radiating the character of God, and what exactly is the purpose of God's gospel in Christ. The elders are strengthening the spiritual life of the church by the practice of regular home visitations, and private prayers for brothers and sisters at Knox.

As elders we are also very thankful to God for small but exciting blessings on our ministry. Since late last year, a lady - who had been away from the church for many years - was driven by God to make worship a priority. She now comes to the church consistently and testifies every Sunday about the love and goodness of God in her life. In addition to that, we have the joy of experiencing fellowship with an Iranian family, who had to escape from their country of birth due to constant political / religious harassment and even legal detention by the authorities. They gave their lives to Christ approximately four years ago; they became members of the Presbyterian Church in Reservoir, and have already expressed the desire to be permanent attendants in Knox (they currently live in Wantirna).

Despite the size and demographic of the congregations, we continue to create opportunities to develop rich relationships, meet spiritual needs, and we continue to do our best to create a space for children and youth to grow their faith in fellowship with other like-minded believers. We thank God for his help and support in providing exactly what we need as a Christian community in Wantirna.

NARRE WARREN

We have again been blessed by the Lord in Narre Warren this past year of 2016. We have seen that in the continuing good physical health of many of us. But this is also evident spiritually with an increasing attendance in the morning service, particularly with three young families now worshipping regularly with us. This has meant our Sunday School classes have increased with the Intermediate Group having an extra two children and the Junior Group an extra four – so from nine to fifteen students.

The four Study groups have become three – the bi-monthly Ladies Bible Fellowship, the Men's Monthly Study Breakfast, and the bi-monthly Wednesday night Adult Bible Study meeting at various home. The small group meeting at the church ceasing with a couple now having committed to a local evangelical Anglican church (they were Roman Catholic before), for which we're thankful.

A particular highlight was the public Profession of Faith of two young men – Mitchell Buck and Ollsi Mataj in November. Both had undergone a preparatory course with our minister consisting of a summary of the Reformed Faith, with Mitchell having been brought up within the congregation and Ollsi coming to faith from a nominal Roman Catholic-Muslim background. Out of this, and with the number of other young adults we have, together with those in Knox and All Nations, have come plans for a monthly Young Adults Fellowship to meet in 2017.

Andrew Bajema continues to do well with his theological studies at the Melbourne School of Theology, and has indicated a desire to make application for reception as a student for the ministry in 2017. He

and Terry Buck have ably provided supply for our minister when he has been on leave or supplying Geelong PCEA.

Our overall giving picked up during 2016 and we were able to be self-sufficient. We pray for this to continue through 2017, so we will not be making an application for Synod funds.

Due to the age related frailty of a number of our seniors the afternoon worship service has dropped off in size of attendance, from an average of 20 to 15, although we are heartened with having regular visitors from other congregations in the afternoon.

It has been a blessing having a full complement of elders locally. However, various work situations have meant that visiting in the congregation hasn't been able to be more ongoing.

Through the internet and email our minister's sermons are of benefit around the world, together with printed copies, C.D.'s and MP3's being locally distributed. We are thankful, too, for the ministry of *The Presbyterian Banner* which our minister serves as editor and a team of local members helps to compile and mail out.

ALL NATIONS

The congregation has continued steadily throughout the year with two young people becoming members in full communion. The combined service in English was discontinued because when it occurred the afternoon service was not held so overall attendance dropped. It is encouraging to see some South Sudanese folk attending the small English service. There is a Ladies Bible Study on Wednesdays with 10 attending and a Youth meeting on Fridays with 9 to 11 attending. Particularly encouraging was the lift in offerings by 42% during the year due to the congregation adopting an envelope scheme in May. While the rental of the office in the church ceased in August the net effect was a reduction of \$10,000 in the subsidy provided by Knox. Mr Yoa has not had great health during the year and has been able to catch-up on some holidays while maintaining a significant pastoral load. Dr Ward took 20 morning services during the year and preached at 2 Nuer language services.

CARRUM DOWNS

Services continued in the Lyrebird Community Centre. The congregation has seen changes in composition during the year with some leaving but others replacing them. Mr Kumnick's treatment during the year did not prove successful with a re-occurrence evident by year-end. PCV minister Stephen Giles conducted 6 services and Dr Ward 14 during the year. Income was almost exactly the same as 2015 at \$18,887 and expenses were \$3,060 less than 2015 at \$13,715. The building project was delayed at Planning stage over questions related to the Aboriginal Heritage Act, but these appear to have been resolved so works can be undertaken in a couple of months utilizing the building compensation funds of \$300,000 received in March and some \$5,000 in the CD Building Fund which should be sufficient. An extensive housing subdivision is proceeding in William Road.

ULVERSTONE

The Ulverstone Congregation continues to meet for the two Lord's Day worship services and a range of other regular meetings. Rev Andre Scheepers has been preaching recently from 1 Kings and this has opened to us some very rich passages of God's word that speak directly into our lives. Following the morning service there is a time of fellowship over morning tea. This is followed by the Sunday School and adult catechism class. More recently the adult class has been going through the Heidelberg Catechism. Each month there is a church luncheon which continues to be a happy time of fellowship.

Our attendance over the year increased slightly with the arrival of additional Keast family members. A number of members of this family have moved to Tasmania from New Zealand and other parts of Australia. We have been enriched by their fellowship. The Lord has also blessed them with employment and housing.

A number of mens' and ladies' meetings take place together with a monthly fellowship night. We also continue to enjoy the athletes overnight camps. Each of these occasions represents opportunities for the many parts of the congregation to contribute in both practical and spiritual ways. The winter car rally enjoyed an excellent day in August.

The missions interest of the congregation continues to be evident with WMU meetings and other guest speakers coming to the congregation when possible. In December three of our members greatly enjoyed the missions awareness tour to India and were recently able to report to the congregation on this. Our

pastor has now been with us for five years and has indicated plans for retirement sometime this year. We recently farewelled his wife Sue who moved to Brisbane with new employment. We continue to enjoy good fellowship with like-minded churches in Tasmania and thank God for His daily provisions in the word and Spirit.

GEELONG

By the grace of God, the Geelong congregation has continued to meet throughout the year for worship and fellowship each Lord's Day. We have enjoyed the blessings of sound preaching from God's Word, joyful praise, and earnest prayer. The number of communicant members remains constant although some adherents are not able to attend regularly. Rev Sjik Bajema, our interim moderator, has been able to organise supply for the pulpit from local ministers, students, PCEA ministers and elders. The Session and Deacons' Court meets as required as well as corresponding via telephone and email. Our Sunday morning worship service has consistent attendance from a small group of faithful and committed members and adherents. A midweek Bible study has continued throughout the year. A KYB group, which has met for many years during the warmer months, also uses the church hall to meet for weekly Bible studies.

The consistent giving of the congregation, together with income from the rental of the manse, has kept the congregation financially self-supporting. It should be noted that the RTC student currently renting the manse with his family will be finishing his studies at the end of 2017. There is a close fellowship between those who meet regularly for worship, with members supporting each other, particularly in times of need.

LAW & ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr Rowland Ward (Convener 2007), Trevor Leggott, Robin Tso, Tom Reeve, Ron Lawson, Stewart Loudon.

The Committee as usual has met by email beginning immediately after Synod.

1. Speeches longer than 20 minutes?

In the *Handbook* printed in 2013-2015 a few lines dropped out in the record of Synod Standing Orders 5.48 creating some humour when noted at last Synod (page 85 of the 2015 print) as the text seemed to require speeches longer than 20 minutes. These lines, which dropped out when the Decision book was incorporated in the Handbook in 2013, have been restored and we are now duly limited!

2. Seat on Presbytery if lacking a quorum

At Synod 2015 there was a question about providing a seat for an ordained minister within the bounds who was not inducted if it was necessary to provide a quorum. The relevant section of the existing legislation of 1986, [Act 18 Class 1, Handbook 4.3] is as follows:

An ordained minister of the church giving regular full time residential supply in a Church Extension or Fully Sanctioned Charge is for that period under the oversight of the presbytery of the bounds, and, if he gives extended service of more than three consecutive months, he has a seat on the presbytery automatically if necessary to give a quorum (or by the decision of the presbytery otherwise [ie. if not necessary to provide a quorum]) provided that in all cases he sign the formula.

This legislation provides that an ordained minister receives a seat automatically if necessary to provide a quorum, but only if the conditions stated are fulfilled.

Giving a seat to an uninducted minister not appointed to a pastoral charge is a serious matter with potential impact on our Presbyterian polity. Indeed, one of the objections to the 1864 Union by Messrs William McIntyre and James McCulloch was that a person was given a seat 'while he is neither a settled minister nor an acting ordained minister' which act they regarded as a 'vitiation' of the constitution of the Synod.

However, it is certainly lawful to appoint assessors in extraordinary circumstances, and this is a matter for Synod. Handbook 4.12, which has Class 1 status, reads:

4.12 Three of the members on the roll of the presbytery of whom two must be ordained ministers constitute the quorum of a presbytery. If membership is such that a quorum is difficult or impossible to obtain, the Synod appoints assessors from the membership of other presbyteries.

While meetings by correspondence are possible, where there are only two serving ministers the death or incapacity of one will mean inability to form a quorum. The question is, Can we make a provision for assessors in the event the inability to form a quorum occurs between Synods so avoiding the need for a special Synod?

Suggestion: Addition: to 4.12: *To obviate the necessity of a special Synod if the difficulty occurs between Synods, Synod directs that other Presbytery Clerks be notified in order that each of the other two Presbyteries may appoint an assessor (with a substitute if desired).*

This solution is consistent with existing legislation, and maintains the principle that non-serving ministers do not have a seat (unless in the capacity of representative elder). It also covers the situation if such an assessor is unable to attend by allowing for substitute (See Proposal 1.) Of course attendance by skype or the like is always a possibility to limit costs.

3. Marriage rites

Current civil law is that a registered minister of religion may solemnize a marriage 'according to any form and ceremony recognized as sufficient for the purpose by the religious organisation or body of which he is a minister.' One minister has asked if the commonly used statement, to the effect 'If anyone here may show any lawful impediment to this marriage, let him now declare it or forever hold his peace' is legally required. The answer is 'No' since we have not prescribed it or any other rite. Nevertheless it appears appropriate that we do spell out some requirements, particularly given the changing views in society, to ensure our testimony is understood. (See proposal 2)

4. Non-cash benefit ie. non-taxable fringe benefits

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Deacons' Court requested clarification of this matter in June 2016. Presbyterian ministers in the normal parish situation are not employees (Handbook, 3.21c). However,

the fringe benefits provision specifically intends to provide a benefit to religious workers in such a position as ours (also students intending the ministry). Presbyteries properly speaking do not employ ministers either but the Presbytery is the body to whom ministers are accountable and which receives resignations, approves transfers. A stipend is not a retainer but a periodic payment made for services rendered and intended to be not what the services are worth in money terms, but, originally at least, what a man needs to support himself and his family in a reasonable manner.

Nowadays with working wives, social security etc., things get a bit confused, but that ministers should pay tax is entirely in accordance with our position. That the fringe benefits legislation exists reflects the value of the work *bona fide* religious practitioners contribute to society.

The position is summarised as follows:

1. The PCEA is clearly a religious institution under the Fringe Benefits Tax Assessment Act, 1986.
2. There is no question that our ministers engaged in pastoral ministry are eligible under the FB legislation for, while they are not employees in the ordinary sense, they are reckoned as such for the purpose of fringe benefits (note para 16 in Tax Ruling TR92/17). Students in theological college training for pastoral ministry are also eligible.
3. Exempt fringe benefits do not apply to administrators of churches so if a minister is spending other than an incidental amount of time on this (eg. a church building programme) the exempt fringe benefits would need to be adjusted pro-rata.
4. Family Tax Benefit does not include exempt fringe benefits in their calculation of income, but for Centrelink purposes such exempt benefits are generally included.
5. Theoretically 100% of remuneration could be paid as an exempt fringe benefit provided that there were eligible expenses incurred to this amount. In practice no more than 50% of minimum stipend should be treated as exempt fringe benefits. The provision is a generous one and should not be abused as a tax minimisation scheme.
7. GST on exempt fringe benefits accrues to the church *not* the minister (there's an advantage therefore in the minister providing to the church copies of invoices for significant items acquired through exempt fringe benefit so the GST can be recovered).

The practicalities of payment are

1. Via a church credit card with no cash withdrawals or
2. To a credit card the minister can use on which no cash withdrawals are made providing eligible expenses match or exceed the exempt amount (if minister's own card is used statements to be available if church is ever subject to ATO audit) or
3. From a Minister's Benefits account on which the minister is not the sole signatory or
4. By direct payment of suppliers.
5. No benefit that can be converted to cash is allowable.

Items allowable:

Most things but not (1) fines; (2) payments to a mortgage if redraw is available/used; (3) personal super (synod super is handled other than under FB rules); (4) shares, investments etc.; (5) child support (6) tax.

5. Church Privacy Policy pursuant to Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 (as amended 2012)

The church and any person or organisation affiliated with the church are bound by privacy and data protection legislation in Australia. As a result, anyone who deals with the collection, management and transfer of personally identifiable data on behalf of the church will need to understand and comply with the terms of the church's privacy policy. These guidelines are specifically for the privacy policy applicable to the church and its retirement facilities. Personally identifiable information includes information which can identify you as a person, such as your name, your address and other specific details about you. This collection and use of personally identifiable information is regulated in Australia and in other countries by specific legislation.

All church staff and volunteers should be regularly reminded that both personal information and sensitive information such as health, financial status, and marital status are regulated by law and by the church's privacy policy. Consent from persons disclosing the personal information and the sensitive information should be gained before providing that information to others.

Appendix 1 sets out a proposed Privacy policy which, except in those matters necessary to adapt to our church, follows the Privacy Policy of the Presbyterian Church of Victorian, whose Safe Church unit has graciously given us permission to so use it.

6. NSW Property Act [TSEA]

We have not made further progress via the Hon. Fred Nile's office and we will need to approach the Department of Justice directly. Accordingly we have considered ways in which to make the existing Act more satisfactory pending the new legislation. While we cannot give more powers to the TSEA than it has there are two areas we can address:

i Banking; use of assistants etc.

Under Section 6 of the existing Act the Synod may make regulations for any matter or thing concerning the property vested in the trustees and under Section 14 may employ others, including assistants, to carry out any of the duties arising under the Act.

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

a) Sometimes there has been a question about congregations opening bank accounts. We spell this out in the terms in the proposed amendment of the 1918 Act already approved. If there is ever a query the Synod Clerk can provide a suitable extract minute. Deliverance 5a refers.

b) The two continuing members of the trust corporation in NSW (Messrs Steel and Leggott) are advancing in years as is Ward on TVIC, and there is need to introduce others to the work so as to facilitate effective transition and operation when retirements occur or age cut-off dates arise. The three persons designated in the decision of Synod 2013 are therefore referred to in proposal 5b.

c) Mr Stewart Loudon of Narre Warren Congregation has a banking background and recently qualified LLB. He is well fitted for eventual role as a trustee and proposal 5c, and has agreed to the proposal going forward.

ii The \$300 limitation

The Synod Of Eastern Australia Property Act - 29 March 1918 - Sect 12 reads:

12 Disposal of rents and profits or other income of property

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

The force of this section is that £150/\$300 of property income is to be paid to the minister to supplement his stipend. This was not in the original draft submitted by the PCEA nor was it suggested by the PCEA, but was inserted on the motion of the Hon. John Garland (also Procurator of the PCNSW) [vide our Solicitors' (Lobban & Lobban, Sydney) letter to the Synod dated 23 April 1918], presumably to secure some minimum provision for our ministers whom he might have thought (with reason at the time) were poorly paid and/or we had large property. [The PCEA stipend was £250/\$500 compared to PCNSW *minimum* £300/\$600.

It is of no interest now except for Bradshaw's view that the way the change was drafted limited supplementing the stipend from property income to the said £150/\$300. He never elaborated to the Synod or to the present Convener the argument for this position but one supposes he may have taken 'other' in the phrase 'other religious or educational purpose' as other than the \$300 supplement, whereas we think it more natural to refer it to other than building or maintaining the church or manse belonging to the congregation. Or he may have made something of the phrase 'exclusive of stipend from other sources'. On our view the supplement of \$300 must be paid but using property income towards stipend generally is not excluded *if approved by Synod*. You can appreciate that with greater reliance on investment income (which in NSW comes mainly from property rather than shares and property as in Vic) Bradshaw's interpretation is a severe limitation. Mind you, he may have offered it not only as nicety of interpretation but also as an incentive to us to obtain a more modern Act in NSW.

On 26 December 2016 the Convener received the following advice from the former Law Agent of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Brian Bayston, OAM, BComm., LLB, as follows:

The meaning of “other”. I speak from first impressions of the meaning of language without recourse to authority or even a legal dictionary. Does it refer back to the dwelling-house purpose or to the stipend purpose or to both? After the stipend purpose there are two alternative applications. In one the consent of synod is required, in the other the consent of synod is implied since it is determining the charitable application. The repetition of “place” (“first” and “next”) divided up the language of the provisions. I see “other” as being “other” than the [church and] dwelling house purpose. The application by the trustees to Synod is limited to the dwelling house purpose but once there (before the synod) the synod has total dispositive power limited only “to “religious and charitable” purposes. That was my first reading. But I have been unsettled in putting it in writing!!!

On Mr Bradshaw’s interpretation Congregations could invest in shares and apply the proceeds generally for congregational purposes, but if they invest in property they cannot, even with the consent of Synod, apply rents for ordinary stipend purposes. So they are forced to retain property or sell it and keep proceeds in cash using the income, subject to Synod’s approval, for stipend and other purposes. If Mr Bradshaw is correct, it is correct only because of sloppy drafting not intended to have such a meaning. We have a deliverance #6 to suitably clarify the matter and give authority to Deacons’ Courts re the application of property income.

7. Safe Church Policy

Our existing provisions broadly cover the major areas although a bit of updating of wording is appropriate. However, at this stage Victorian legislation seems ahead of other states in some areas and legislative changes applicable in Victoria in 2017 necessitate more formal procedures so that we are seen to be a child safe organisation. The Safe Churches Training Agreement (SCTA) is an initiative of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) with both NCCA and non-NCCA churches participating in the agreement. [<http://www.ncca.org.au/scta>] It helps facilitate quality, sustainable, accessible Safe Church workshops for local leaders, both paid and volunteer. Presbyterian Church of Australia member churches (other than Queensland) are current members. The Safe Church unit of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria has graciously offered to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding so that Victorian congregations of the PCEA can benefit from their resources. The unit already has such understandings with the Christian Reformed Churches in Victoria and the Baptist Union of Victoria, although such an MOU cannot be finalised until the PCXV Assembly meets in October 2017. The Presbyterian Church in New South Wales has a ‘Breaking the Silence’ policy and procedure which extends to Tasmania as well. The Presbyterian Church in Queensland utilise the training provided through childsafegroup.org.au, a ministry connected with Scripture Union which provides literature and on-line resources. Given the many complexities that can arise, liaising with another body appears the wisest option, also for the long-term safe keeping of relevant confidential records, including referee reports on those appointed to roles in the church.

Christians are required by the Lord to think, speak and act in ways that are God-honouring, biblically obedient and motivated by the Christian values of love, mercy and justice. Churches in the past have very commonly thought that Christians would not commit abuse against children or vulnerable adults. Unfortunately, perpetrators often seek out churches because they are welcoming while Christians can also backslide into serious sin. In recent years there has been a rude awakening on the part of most denominations and better procedures have been put in place.

The Victorian Parliament’s *Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations* was set up in 2012 and its Report was tabled on 13 November 2013. The *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* is a royal commission established in January 2013 by the Australian government pursuant to the Royal Commissions Act 1902 to inquire into and report upon responses by institutions to instances and allegations of child sexual abuse in Australia.

Sexual abuse has long been a crime but additional legislation has resulted recently with a view to minimizing risk. In Victoria legislation has resulted as follows:

<p>Grooming</p> <p>Section 49B of Crimes Act, 1958 Operative Date: 9/4/2014</p>	<p>A criminal offence for a person 18 years or over in person or on line to engage in predatory conduct with a person under 16 years with a view to facilitating later sexual activity. Max penalty 10 years. [Also see NSW Section 66EB of Crimes Act 1900]</p>
<p>Failure to Disclose</p> <p>Section 327 of Crimes Act, 1958 Operative date: 27/10/2014</p>	<p>A person of or over the age of 18 years (whether in Victoria or elsewhere) who has information that leads the person to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child under the age of 16 years by another person of or over the age of 18 years must disclose that information to a police officer as soon as it is practicable to do so, unless the person has a reasonable excuse for not doing so. Max penalty: 3 years. Some limited reporting exemptions; protection for those who report in good faith.</p>
<p>Sexting</p> <p>‘Sexting’ is sending nude, sexual or indecent photos (or ‘selfies’) using a computer, mobile phone or other mobile device.</p> <p>Sections 68,69 & 70 of the Crimes Act 1958 Operative Date: 3/11/2014</p>	<p>Sexting is a crime if you intentionally send an intimate image of a person under 18 to others, even if they agree to the sext message being sent. You could also be charged by police with child pornography offences. In Victoria since 3 November 2014 it is also an offence to send a sext message of an adult (18 or over) to others if they do not agree to the image being distributed. (Max penalty: 2 years.) Also since 3 November 2014 under the <i>Summary Offences Act 1966</i> you may be charged with an offence if you threaten to send an intimate image of a person to others if the person believes that you will carry out the threat. The maximum penalty for this offence is one year in jail. [See also Sec 91(H)2 of the NSW Crimes Act 1900]</p>
<p>Failure to Protect</p> <p>Section 49C of the Crimes Act, 1958 Operative Date 1/7/2015</p>	<p>Failure by a person of authority to reduce or remove a known substantial risk of a sexual offence by a person of or over the age of 18 years associated with the organisation against a person under 16 years (eg. by not reporting, not excluding from contact with children &c. Max penalty: 5 years.</p>
<p>Wrongs Amendment (Organisational Child Abuse)</p> <p>Bill Introduced 22/11/2016 amending Wrongs Act 1958.</p>	<p>An organisation will be held liable in negligence for child abuse committed by individuals associated with the organisation, unless the organisation proves that it took reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse. (ie. current onus of proof reversed).</p>

While we need to avoid being paranoid about the risk of abuse, we have to recognize that in the past many churches either ignored abuse or covered it up to avoid reputational damage, embarrassment &c. That was wrong and Caesar has made churches and other organisations put their house in order. *Building on Scripture we must protect relationships.* We shouldn’t need the State to remind us of that. The Victorian rules are likely to become the standard and in part already apply in other States. The latest Victorian proposal, to take effect in 2017, will *require* organisations that may have children to have a detailed code of conduct and to train *all* office-bearers and other leaders in the code, legal environment and the nature of abuse. The Presbyterian Church of Victoria [PCV], has already been meeting the new standards through their SafeChurch unit for about 2 years and some 2,000 people have been trained. The basic training is 3 hours, with annual updates via youtube and a refresher and advanced session after 3 years. So it’s not all that onerous. The Convener has done the basic training and so has John Audet, a deacon at Narre Warren. Christians of all people should be ahead of legislation at the high Scriptural standard.

The effect of the proposed agreement with the PCV Safe Church Unit would be that any incident in Victoria would be reported to their Safe Church unit. Immediate advice could be obtained on procedure. If it’s an allegation of a crime it goes straight to the Police and the PCEA Session would have access to independent advice. If it’s not a crime that advice is still there plus record will be kept to protect against future claim. (There is typically 22 years between abuse and the victim reporting it.) We are grateful that the PCV Safe Church Unit has allowed us to make full use of the resources on their web-site. Our suggestion is that the PCEA Australia-wide adopt the Policy and Code of Conduct of the PCV with the minor adjustments to relate it to the PCEA (The Southern Presbytery adopted it on 4/3/2017); that the PCEA in Victoria into an agreement with Safe Church unit of the PCV to use

their resources; and that other States, through the Clerk of Synod, arrange for training and related resources through another provider. This could include the Scripture Union sponsored scheme at childsafes.org.au although liaising with the PCA state church seems likely to be the most suitable option. *The Policy and Code of Conduct is suitable Australia wide and is consistent also with that endorsed by the Australian Council of Churches.* We did look at the Policy recently adopted by the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia. As a policy it covers the bases but devolves training and record keeping to local congregations. We don't think this is so satisfactory as having these matters under the supervision of a well resourced outside body. Nor is it satisfactory for a national church like the PCEA to have different policies and codes of practice in different states.

'Role Description – Children's ministry', 'Initial Registration' and 'Confidential Record of Reference Checks'

Three forms with these titles are available at <http://www.safechurchpcv.org.au/forms/> We propose that, after minor modifications to relate them to the PCEA and perhaps combining the first two into one, these be used by all congregations of the PCEA so meeting current community standards and legislative requirements.

8. Applicants for ministry

There is a related matter to the previous in that the application for ministry has only two relevant questions: 'Have any criminal or civil proceedings been taken against you?' and 'Have you clearance under Working with Children or similar legislation?' This is now quite inadequate and more specific questions, even though intrusive, need to be asked. We referred the proposal to the Training of Ministry Committee and received some feedback. Any concerns would be adequately safeguarded by the qualification that a 'yes' answer would not automatically exclude an applicant as explanation would be furnished which might be fully satisfactory. But at least there will be a formal written record to show we are discharging our responsibility which otherwise may not be the case. We propose accordingly with an adjustment to the section on Family and an addition to the declaration signed by the applicant.

Proposed Deliverances:

1. The following sentence is added to Handbook 4.12: To obviate the necessity of a special Synod if the lack of a quorum occurs between Synods, Synod directs that other Presbytery Clerks be notified in order that each of the other two Presbyteries may appoint an assessor (with liberty to also specify a substitute if desired).

2. The PCEA regards solemnizing a marriage between people of the same sex as contrary to Scripture, the Confession of Faith and the vows of officebearers. The PCEA requires of those who solemnize marriages in her name that the public preliminaries to the vows include a statement of the basis of Christian marriage as ordained by God as a union of a man and a woman, voluntarily entered into, for life until dissolved by death or by divorce on grounds founded on the Word of God.

3. Synod note the rules for the payment of Fringe Benefits set out in the Report and rule that Fringe Benefits (excluding car and telephone expenses) may be allowed for eligible expenses not exceeding 50% of the minimum stipend, each minister to arrange with his Deacons' Court including payment method and retention of records for seven years. It is emphasised that there must be eligible expenses for the benefit to be tax exempt.

4. The Synod approve the Privacy Policy set out as Appendix 1 to the Report, direct it to be inserted in the Handbook and an electronic copy in DL size be provided to Sessions so they may be available in convenient form in congregations.

5. Synod notes the continuing delay in securing amendment to the Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act 1918, and also notes that under Section 6 of the existing Act the Synod may make regulations for any matter or thing concerning the property vested in the trustees and under Section 14 may employ others, including assistants, to carry out any of the duties arising under the Act. Accordingly:

- a. Pursuant to Section 14 of the Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act 1918, Synod declare that any congregation or the session or deacons' court or any committee or organisation thereof may subject to the constitution of the Church and its laws from time to time manage its

own affairs and open and operate such bank accounts as are deemed expedient without reference to the body corporate.

b. With a view to facilitating succession planning as existing members of the trust corporation retire and to prepare for the eventual passing by Parliament of the amendment of the 1918 Act already approved by Synod, the Synod direct that the additional trustees envisaged by Synod 2013 (Lawson, Kerridge and Ward) forthwith participate in meetings of the three regular members of 'The Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia' as assistants but signing powers of the corporation be unchanged.

c. Synod invite Mr Stewart Loudon to participate in the meetings of the trust corporations in Victoria and New South Wales as an observer and advisor, signing rules of the corporation to be unchanged.

6. Synod declare that it understands Section 12 of the Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act to (a) require \$300 of net rents and other income from congregational property to be paid to the minister of the congregation as a supplement to his stipend; and (b) the balance of such property income is to be applied to the maintenance of church and manse, and to such other purposes of the congregation as the Synod may approve, not excluding ordinary stipend expense. Accordingly the Synod hereby approves congregations applying property income towards the stipend of the minister as set by Synod from time to time.

7. The Synod transmit the following overture to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act and meantime pass the same as an Interim act in force until next Synod.

Whereas Christians are required by the Lord to think, speak and act in ways that are God-honouring, biblically obedient and motivated by the Christian values of love, mercy and justice;

and whereas the incidence of child and other abuse in the community in church and welfare institutions has been highlighted of recent years;

and whereas the measures the PCEA already has in place address the problem, particularly the mandatory reporting of abuse and the interviewing of vulnerable children and adults, but do not take full account of recent civil legislation or fully specify the standards expected in this area (as illustrated in the Law & Advisory Committee Report to Synod 2017);

1. Synod adopt for the PCEA Australia-wide the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct set out in Appendix 2 of the Law and Advisory Committee Report 2017 and direct that it be carefully followed; approve the PCEA in Victoria entering into an agreement with the Safe Church unit of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria to use their resources; and that other states, through the Clerk of Synod, promptly arrange for training and related resources (record keeping) through another provider and advise the Law and Advisory Committee accordingly for subsequent report to next Synod.

2. Synod approve the proposed use of the forms entitled '*Role Description – Children's ministry*', '*Initial Registration*' and '*Confidential Record of Reference Checks*' and directs the Law & Advisory Committee to prepare these and have them and the Safe Church Policy and Safe Church Code of Practice available for download on the PCEA website under the heading 'Safe Church'

8. The Guidelines for Church Workers 2013 as amended and set out in Appendix 3 be approved.

9. The following changes be made forthwith to the Application for Recognition as a Student/Candidate for the Ministry:

a. Section 7 Family: insert note "The PCEA believes that the Scriptures prohibit the practice of homosexuality and so does not admit practising homosexuals to office nor permit homosexual marriage (so called)."

b. Section 8: rename "Financial Matters" and delete last two questions. Insert the following Section 9: and renumber existing section 9 to 10:

9. Safe Church Matters

(A Yes answer does not necessarily mean the application will be rejected but please attach explanatory material.)

a. Have you ever had disciplinary action of any kind taken against you by a licensing board, professional or community association, employer, educational institution, Church or any other body, or ever been asked to resign or been terminated by a training body, employer or Church body?

b. Have you ever had any allegations of criminal conduct made against you relating to sexual misconduct, breaching fiduciary duties in any capacity, or any other criminal matter?

c. Have any civil proceedings been taken against you arising out of any alleged professional misconduct or alleged criminal conduct, or is any such pending?

d. Have you now, or have you ever had since the age of 18, any history of drug abuse with prescription, over the counter, recreational or illegal drugs, or any history of drunkenness, or of excessive use of alcohol?

e. Have you ever had a driver's licence revoked or suspended, or a licence to own firearms refused or revoked?

f. Have you ever since the age of 18 accessed pornographic materials involving children?

g. Have you done anything in the past or present that may result in allegations of sexual misconduct, abuse or harassment?

h. Have you any health issues, including any associated with past abuse of drugs or alcohol, that may affect your ability to relate well with others, or which may affect your ability to work with children?

i. Have you clearance under Working with Children or and similar legislation? If yes, attach details.

j. Have you read the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct of the PCEA and do you and will you abide by them at all times?

c. Amend the signature declaration by adding after "I certify that the above information is correct and no matters material to the application have been omitted" the words "and I am ready to swear a statutory declaration to this effect." and provide space for a witness to the applicant's signature.

APPENDIX 1

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Privacy Policy

1. Introduction

The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia is an unincorporated association. The church collects data from users of church services, and from persons and businesses that provide services to the church and its organisations.

The data collected by the church includes information which can identify you as a person such as your name, your address and other details about you. This information is referred to in Australian Government legislation as 'personally identifiable information'.

The church may also collect sensitive information about or related to you from time to time. Sensitive information includes information which may not personally identify you but is related to a person's:

- health
- financial status
- racial or ethnic origin
- political opinions
- membership of a political association
- religious beliefs or affiliations
- philosophical beliefs
- membership of a professional or trade association
- membership of a trade union
- sexual preferences or practices
- criminal record.

The collection and management of personally identifiable and sensitive information is regulated in Australia and other countries.

The church will take every reasonable measure to protect your information. The church's approach to your privacy conforms to the Australian Privacy Principles extracted from the Privacy Act 1988 (as amended in 2012), which provides guidance about the collection of personal information, how it should be used and disclosed and its storage and security.

The church is committed to protecting your privacy and any personally identifiable and sensitive data you supply to us. This Privacy Policy sets out:

- how and why we collect data including personally identifiable and sensitive data
- what we do with data we collect
- how we manage collected data
- with whom we share that data

If you have any questions about this policy please contact us as set out at the end of this document.

2. Scope of this Privacy Policy

As required by government registration or accreditation obligations, certain organisations and activities that may be operated by the church in the future may have separate privacy policies in place.

This Privacy Policy for the church will apply to the collection of data by the church where no other church privacy policy applies.

3. Collection and use of personal information

The church will use collected data including personally identifiable and sensitive information in furtherance of the mission and activities of the church. The church will include some of the information it collects in the church's permanent archival records.

The church will review information not included in the church archival records, and delete information no longer required for church activities.

The church will use data it collects to promote all of the spiritual, pastoral, social, educational, administrative, legal, and historical functions of the church and for the business requirements of the church.

These church purposes include but are not limited to administration and communication throughout the church, analysing the role of the church in society, recording the histories of church members, adherents, and persons in regular contact with the church, and maintaining records in the public interest, including baptism rolls, wedding registers and other related purposes.

Data collected by the church will only be shared with third parties where such parties have agreed in writing to abide by this policy and to only use such information disclosed for the purposes for which access has been given. In general, information provided to third parties should not be able to identify you as an individual; such information can only be disclosed with your express written consent.

Anyone seeking access to any sensitive information will need to be authorised by the Law & Advisory Committee Convener and the Synod Clerk to ensure there is a specific need for such information and provision of such data does not breach any legislative or confidentiality requirements.

Whenever we share information with third parties, the church will take all reasonable efforts to make sure that these third parties keep such information in the same manner as it is kept by the church, and consistent with the principles as set out in the Privacy Act 1988 as amended.

The majority of the service providers used by the church are based in Australia and are therefore subject to the Australian laws. However the church may from time to time work with service providers such as charities and other church related bodies who are located outside of Australia.

Confidential Pastoral duties

If a minister, other church staff or another body of the church intends to record personal and sensitive information arising from deputations or counselling sessions, any person whose data will be collected should be informed of this and advised that:

- a) the records will be kept pursuant to the church's privacy policy;
- b) the purposes for which the collected information will be used; and
- c) information collected will not be disclosed to any third party and securely destroyed when the purpose for collection is no longer relevant or it is no longer appropriate to maintain the record(s). For example, the minister has moved parishes or retired.

4. Security and disclosure of information

The church will take all reasonable steps to keep personal, sensitive, and all other confidential or restricted information secure, and to prevent its unlawful use and/or inappropriate disclosure.

The church will, as far as practicable, develop and implement practices and procedures in respect to church archival records. These policies will address:

a) Requiring researchers seeking access to archival records to acknowledge prior to access being granted to the archival records, that:

i) the archival records made available to them are subject to this privacy policy and all applicable legislation; and

ii) the researcher is solely responsible for obtaining any further consent required if the information is to be used outside of the purposes for which it was collected; and

iii) the researcher will be responsible for any breach of this privacy policy and/or relevant legislation caused by the use of information made available by the church; and

iv) the researcher will be required to indemnify the church and the Synod, and/or its agencies in respect of liability for such breach.

b) Require all applicants/researchers seeking access to personal and sensitive information from registers of baptism and/or marriage prior to the provision of such information to:

i) produce evidence that he/she is a subject of the record concerned, or holds the consent of the subject(s) of the record to obtain the information; or

ii) establish that the subject(s) of the record are deceased, or can reasonably be presumed to be deceased.

Where the subject of data collected by the church seeks access to his or her personal information or sensitive information collected, it is the policy of the church to

grant access, subject to the production of appropriate identification. Such identification must meet the 100-point identification test as used by banks and government organisations.

5. Archival records

From time to time in order to assure the preservation of data collected by the church that this church will transfer church registers, minute books, correspondence, photographs and other images, and all other records containing personal and sensitive information to the archives of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. The exception to this policy is data collected under Confidential Pastoral Duties above.

6. Complaints procedure, designation of Privacy Officer and contact information

Enquiries concerning this privacy policy, and any complaints concerning failure of the church to comply with this policy, or relevant legislation should be addressed in the first instance to the Church's designated Privacy Officer, who can be contacted as noted on www.pcea.org.au

If any complaint is not readily resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the matter will be referred to the Synod Clerk, who can be contacted as noted on www.pcea.org.au

The complaint resolution process will include but is not limited to:

a) the matter being handled in a proficient and confidential manner at executive level;

and/or

b) referred to the courts of the church under the provisions of the Handbook of Practice and Procedure of the church; and/or

c) independent arbitration initiated depending on the most suitable action necessary in an attempt to best resolve the matter.

APPENDIX 2

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Safe Church Policy

Christians are required by the Lord to think, speak and act in ways that are God-honouring, biblically obedient and motivated by the Christian values of love, mercy and justice. Churches in the past have very commonly thought that Christians would not commit abuse against children or vulnerable adults. Unfortunately, perpetrators often seek out churches because they are welcoming while Christians can also backslide into serious sin. Accordingly the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia applying the principles of God's Word has adopted this Safe Church Policy and the associated Code of Conduct.

- We commit ourselves to respect other people's minds, emotions and bodies. We have established Safe Church - PCEA as the public criteria according to which the community may judge the resolve of the church to address issues of abuse within the church.

- We acknowledge and accept the trust granted to us by those who are taking part in church activities, their families, and the wider community. We therefore commit ourselves to striving to ensure that all our actions are morally upright.

- We acknowledge that, as a church, our responses to victims in the past may have varied greatly. We express regret and sorrow for any hurt that may have been caused whenever the response appeared to be inappropriate or inadequate.

- We are committed to establishing a process that strives for truth and confidentiality. We will ensure as far as possible that a compassionate response is the first priority in all allegations, even at a time when it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate, through offering assistance, protection and care without passing judgment or prejudicing the rights of the alleged offender. We acknowledge that concealing the truth is contrary to the character of God, unjust to victims and a disservice to offenders.

- We understand and value the need for support to all parties involved in an allegation, including the aggrieved person and the alleged offender, and we actively seek to provide this support.

- We acknowledge the personal and public difficulties that a false, misconceived, malicious or vexatious allegation can cause for the person accused. We will take whatever steps are possible to address these difficulties.

- We are willing to know the full extent of the problem of abuse and the causes of such behaviour within the church. We will strive to be aware of our legal responsibilities and obligations in relation to prevention, reporting and processing requirements and seek to meet them at all times.

- We acknowledge that we have had to make changes in the way that we relate to children and young people and others, as a result, some good things have been lost,

however we will bear this loss to ensure as far as possible that the vulnerable are safe.

- We will ensure as far as possible that all people in positions of authority within the church and/or working with children and young people are aware of the appropriate standard of conduct and boundaries. We require those who work on behalf of the church to indicate their agreement with this policy statement and work towards providing an environment that prevents abuse.

- We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for children, young people and others, where they should be and feel safe from any threat when on church property or involved in activities operated by the church, or accessing services provided by the church. We believe that the church should be a place where people can disclose abuse and have it dealt with effectively.

- We will establish a prevention strategy that includes screening, sound recruitment and selection procedures, clear boundaries, risk identification and management, education, support, supervision and training.

- We acknowledge that the age of consent for sexual activity is determined by legislation. However, we are mindful that this must be read in the light of our moral and spiritual responsibility. All people in a position of authority within the church, be it real or perceived, paid or unpaid, have a moral and spiritual responsibility towards those over whom they have authority. In this situation it is never appropriate to take part in sexual activity of any kind, regardless of the person's age. We affirm that sexual behaviour belongs in a marriage relationship only and that in this context it is a good gift of God.

- All allegations will be notified to the appropriate external authorities, including to the Police if of a criminal nature, overseen by the Safe Church Unit (SCU), investigated thoroughly and determined as described in Safe Church - PCEA.

- Irrespective of any other action that may be taken by authorities outside the church, the church reserves the right to exercise its powers according to the PCEA Handbook of Practice and Procedure and Safe Church - PCEA wherever this action is deemed necessary.

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Safe Church PCEA Code of Conduct

The following constitutes the church's Code of Conduct for behaviour for a person in a position of authority within the church:

1. As a person in a position of authority within the church you must always be concerned about the integrity of your position, likely perceptions of the church and the wider community, and the need to acknowledge the real or perceived power given to you as a result of holding this position. You should avoid situations where you are vulnerable to temptation or where your conduct may be construed to be a breach of

this Code of Conduct. You will make yourself familiar with the provisions of Safe Church - PCEA.

2. You must not fail to take action to prevent to the best of your ability and report as required and of the following:

- child abuse,
- a child or young person at risk of significant harm,
- reportable conduct,
- sexual misconduct, and/or
- conduct that breaches the Safe Church - PCEA Code of Conduct.

3. Sexualised behaviour is any behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be of a sexual nature according to the standards of the time by the person to whom it is directed. Sexualised behaviour is only permitted as set out in the Word of God. Except with one's own marriage partner, all sexualised behaviour is forbidden. If you are not married you must abstain from all sexual or sexualised behaviour.

4. You must not engage in or condone any behaviour that could be considered to be:

- child abuse,
- putting a child or young person at risk of significant harm,
- reportable conduct, and/or
- conduct that breaches this Safe Church - PCEA Code of Conduct.

5. You must not engage in or condone any behaviour that could be considered to be sexual misconduct, understanding that sexual misconduct is contact or invitation, via any means, of a sexual nature which is inconsistent with the integrity of a person in a position of authority within the church. Sexual misconduct includes any behaviour that could be reasonably considered to be sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, coercion or grooming of an adult or a child or young person.

6. Sexual exploitation refers to any form of sexualised behaviour with an adult, child or young person, whether or not there is consent and regardless of who initiated the behaviour, where that behaviour is contrary to the Word of God. Therefore, you will not among other things engage in or condone any of the following:

- behaviour or a pattern of behaviour aimed at the involvement of others in sexual acts, including but not limited to coercion or grooming behaviour,
- sexualised behaviour with a person below the age of consent,
- sexualised behaviour with a person with whom there is a supervisory, pastoral care, or counselling relationship,
- the production, distribution, possession of or accessing of pornographic material of any kind,
- taking advantage of the conscious or unconscious use of sexually provocative behaviour that some victims of abuse display,
- engaging the services of a prostitute, or soliciting or providing such services,
- visiting, without legitimate reason, a brothel or any place maintained for the abuse-of-sex industry,
- viewing or reading, in print or otherwise, material of a sexually explicit nature, except for a legitimate purpose,

· participating in sexually explicit conversation via social media, chat rooms, gaming or any other means, and

· asking, without legitimate reason, any questions about the intimate details of a person's sexual life or providing details of your own sexual life.

7. Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexualised behaviour, whether intended or not, in relation to an adult, child or young person where that person reasonably feels in all circumstances offended, belittled or threatened. Such behaviour may consist of a single incident or several incidents over a period of time. Therefore, you will not, among other things engage in or condone:

- implicit or explicit demands or suggestions for sexual activities,
- making any gesture, action or comment of a sexual nature to a person or about a person in their presence,
- making jokes containing sexual references or innuendo using any form of communication,
- exposure to any form of sexually explicit or suggestive material, including but not limited to pornography of any kind,
- physical contact that is inappropriate to the situation or uncomfortable or confusing for the receiver, including kissing, hugging, touching, pinching, patting or aggressive physical conduct,
- touching any sexual part of the body, including the "only kidding" or accidental occasions of sexual touch,
- generating or participating in inappropriate personal correspondence (including electronic communication) in respect of sexual or romantic feelings or in breach of the Code of Conduct,
- inappropriate giving of gifts, including those of a sexual, suggestive or romantic nature that is in breach of the Code of Conduct,
- inappropriate or unnecessary discussion of, or inquiry about, personal matters of a sexual nature,
- inappropriate intrusion of personal space or physical privacy, including being alone in a bedroom or bathroom or allowing inappropriate exposure during activities that require dressing or changing clothes,
- voyeurism, and
- persistent following or stalking.

8. Coercion or grooming behaviour refers to physical or psychological actions intrinsic to initiating or hiding abusive behaviour, which involved the manipulative cultivation of relationships with vulnerable adults, children and/or young people, their carers and others in authority.

- You will not exhibit any behaviour that could be considered to be coercion or grooming behaviour.

9. With regard to children and young people:

- You will not visit a child or young person in their own home unless a parent is present or you visit with another person in a position of authority within the church with parental permission.
- You will not conduct a camp or other activity involving overnight accommodation without

appropriate “camp parents” (ideally a married couple over the age of 25 years, of known maturity and Christian commitment) approved by the supervising body.

- You will not provide any form of accommodation for any reason where there is not strict segregation by sex, with the exception of married couples and families. Supervision of children and/or young people must be provided by a person of the same sex.

- You will ensure that any activity involving children and/or young people is open to observation by parents and other adults with a legitimate interest

10. With regard to adults, children and young people:

- You will not condone or participate in bullying behaviour, where bullying is the repeated seeking out or targeting of an adult, child or young person to cause them distress and humiliation or to exploit them, including exclusion from a peer group, intimidation and extortion.

- You will not participate in or allow nude swimming or other such activities.

- You will not participate in or allow initiations and secret ceremonies.

11. With regard to adults, children and young people, either the Presbytery or Session may make temporary variations in respect to the details of the following. These temporary variations will be formally recorded by the Presbytery or Session and will be made on a restricted basis for individuals in specific circumstances for a specific period of time. Where no temporary variation is formally recorded, the following will apply without change:

- You will take care to ensure an appropriate balance of transparency and confidentiality so that the private concerns of others are not disclosed or revealed improperly. In ordinary circumstances, when you are providing pastoral care to, or working with members of the opposite sex, you will strive to do so in an environment that allows visual surveillance and, where reasonable, have other people within hearing distance.

- You will not allow a child to sleep in close proximity to an adult, other than a parent or guardian, unless there is a significant separation, and privacy of all parties is respected.

- You will not allow an adult to share accommodation with one child or young person only unless they are a parent or guardian of that child or young person.

- You will not drive a child or young person unaccompanied.

Where specified provisions cannot be followed in an emergency, the circumstances of the emergency and the actions taken should be reported to documented and approved by the supervising body. Where the actions taken are not approved they will be considered to be a breach of the PCEA Code of Conduct.

Any breaches of this Code of Conduct for any reason will be reported to the appropriate supervising body as soon as possible, documented and support provided. If a breach appears to involve a criminal offence prompt notice is to be given to the Police.

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH WORKERS, 2017

To be inserted at the front of Session, Deacons' Courts and Presbytery Minute books:

Important preface (Synod 2013)

At least once a year an affirmative answer to the following questions shall be given by all Session and Deacons' Court members and all members of Presbyteries and duly minuted in Session and Presbytery records: *Ministers and elders other officebearers 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 as amended in 2017 and in particular the PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct? 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?* [What follows is Act of Synod 2003, revised 2004 & deemed Class 1 by Synod 2008 as amended 2017.]

General

1. Those activities of the congregation not the prerogative of the minister are under the ultimate supervision of the Session. The Session should know what is happening in the various areas. If necessary, Session will appoint a liaison person to report on a particular activity.

Guarding against Sexual or other Misconduct

1. All ministers, elders and deacons and leaders of Sunday school, youth groups, camps etc. must be ~~Where there is to be contact with minors, those persons appointed by the session should have been approved under local relevant State Government or Federal laws as people suitable to be in such situations—~~ work with children and vulnerable adults, sign their acceptance of the PCEA Safe Church Code of Conduct approved by Synod 2017 and follow the training requirements of the church.

2. The supervision of others should be carried out by appropriately experienced people who are well known to the Congregation, and have been connected with it for at least six months. No person with a previous record of sexual molestation may be involved in a supervisory position, except with the express authorisation of Presbytery. This will be granted only in the most exceptional circumstances under conditions where the risk of reoffending will be completely eliminated. Sexual abuse by known offenders is not covered under the Church's Public Liability insurance.

3. ~~When children are involved out of the sight or hearing of others, at least two adults should supervise.~~

4. ~~Church workers should avoid one to one counselling of the opposite sex, or of any minor. In any counselling, church workers, including ministers, should be ready to seek specialist help where necessary.~~

5. ~~Ministers/elders should exercise great care in visiting women or children unaccompanied. In most circumstances it will be prudent for another person to be present, or available nearby.~~

6. Leaders of church activities must report any suspected physical or sexual abuse to the Session immediately and the Synod's procedures followed. No allegation may be trivialised.

7. In the case of persons from other congregations or denominations applying for membership without a clear disjunction certificate, the Session ~~should~~ must check with the previous church, and would be well advised to do so in any case. Any concern should be documented and advice sought as appropriate.

8. To ensure that there are no outstanding issues or adverse history Sessions should also be careful concerning history of those who apply for membership by confession of faith.

9. A Session shall not issue a Disjunction Certificate if, after careful enquiry, there is any suspicion/allegation of abuse without first investigating the matter. The result of the investigation must be duly minuted, and the Certificate with-held or qualified if necessary.

Those Working on or Using Church Property

1. When work is being done by volunteers on the church premises, a competent person should supervise, particularly when heights, or the use of special tools, are involved. Lighting, paths, steps and handrails, as well as the condition of floorcoverings, electric cords/switches and access to chemicals, need regular attention.

Non-PCEA groups using Church facilities must commit in writing to having proper supervision of their people at all times, as well as meeting other conditions set by the local Deacons' Court or by the Minister, each acting in accordance with Section 3.18 of the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure*. Such conditions ~~might~~ should include no smoking; no raffles or other gambling; appropriate Public Liability Insurance; ~~and~~ responsibility for damage; and provision for termination by either side. Formal leases require Presbytery approval, see 3.19.

Protection of Privacy (see Handbook, Sec XX)

1. Membership lists should only be used outside the Session according to a procedure agreed by Session communicated to all those whose names will be included in such a list.
2. Health information secured for camps or outings is to be used only for the purpose obtained and kept in confidence. Records of such

information should not be kept after their purpose has been fulfilled.

3. It is important also to exercise care in revealing personal information on notice sheets or in church announcements. Before revealing personal information, permission should be obtained from the person concerned.

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GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH WORKERS, 2017

To be inserted at the front of Session, Deacons' Courts and Presbytery Minute books:

Important preface

At least once a year an affirmative answer to the following questions shall be given by all Session and Deacons' Court members and all members of Presbyteries and duly minuted in Session and Presbytery records: **Ministers and other officebearers 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 as amended in 2017 and in particular the PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct? 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?**

[What follows is Act of Synod 2003, revised 2004 & deemed Class 1 by Synod 2008 as amended 2017.]

A. General

1. Those activities of the congregation not the prerogative of the minister are under the ultimate supervision of the Session. The Session should know what is happening in the various areas. If necessary, Session will appoint a liaison person to report on a particular activity.

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1. All ministers, elders and deacons and leaders of Sunday school, youth groups, camps etc. must be approved under relevant State or Federal laws as people suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults, sign their acceptance of the PCEA Safe Church Code of Conduct approved by Synod 2017 and follow the training requirements of the church.

2. The supervision of others should be carried out by appropriately experienced people who are well known to the Congregation, and have been connected with it for at least six months. No person with a previous record of sexual molestation may

be involved in a supervisory position, except with the express authorisation of Presbytery. This will be granted only in the most exceptional circumstances under conditions where the risk of reoffending will be completely eliminated. Sexual abuse by known offenders is not covered under the Church's Public Liability insurance.

3. The church noticeboard in the church foyer and/or church hall shall display a notice stating the PCEA Safe Church Code of Conduct applies to all officebearers and leaders, noting where a copy may be obtained (including any web-address) and to whom any concerns may be directed.

4. Leaders of church activities must report any suspected physical or sexual abuse to the Session immediately and the Synod's procedures followed. No allegation may be trivialised.

5. In the case of persons from other congregations or denominations applying for membership without a clear disjunction certificate, the Session must check with the previous church, and would be well advised to do so in any case. Any concern should be documented and advice sought as appropriate.

6. To ensure that there are no outstanding issues or adverse history Sessions should also be careful concerning history of those who apply for membership by confession of faith.

7. A Session shall not issue a Disjunction Certificate if, after careful enquiry, there is any suspicion/allegation of abuse without first investigating the matter. The result of the investigation must be duly minuted, and the Certificate with-held or qualified if necessary.

C. Those Working or Using Church Property

1. When work is being done by volunteers on the church premises, a competent person should supervise, particularly when heights, or the use of special tools, are involved. Lighting, paths, steps and handrails, as well as the condition of floorcoverings, electric cords/switches and access to chemicals, need regular attention.

2. Non-PCEA groups using Church facilities must commit in writing to having proper supervision of their people at all times, as well as meeting other conditions set by the local Deacons' Court or by the Minister, each acting in accordance with Section 3.18 of the *Handbook of Practice and Procedure*. Such conditions should include no smoking; no raffles or other gambling; appropriate Public Liability Insurance; responsibility for damage; and provision for termination by either side. Formal leases require Presbytery approval, see 3.19.

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1. Membership lists should only be used outside the Session according to a procedure agreed by

Session communicated to all those whose names will be included in such a list.

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3. It is important also to exercise care in revealing personal information on notice sheets or in church announcements. Before revealing personal information, permission should be obtained from the person concerned.

TRAINING OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The Committee kept up communication through the exchange of emails during the year and met once by phone conference. We thank the Lord that He continues to preserve our denomination and look to Him to build us up as we seek to bring glory to His name.

We give thanks to the Lord particularly that Mr Duncan Hickey has now entered his final year of study at Christ College. There are also encouraging signs that others may be coming forward from within the PCEA to consider and be considered for the Ministry of word and sacrament within the denomination.

Mr Duncan Hickey

The Committee continues to be encouraged and delighted with Mr Hickey's results in his academic training. He has achieved outstanding results again in 2016. At the end of 2016, into 2017, Duncan underwent his first placement under the Candidate Placement Scheme established last year.

Candidate Placement Scheme (CPS)

Reports from the designated mentor, Rev. Robin Tso, and Duncan of the first placement from 26/12/2016 to 22/01/2017 have been received by the Assessors. These were considered by the Training of Ministry Committee at a telephone conference on 06/03/2017, and we believe they have been discussed by the St George's Session and Central Presbytery (both co-Assessors). We would expect that they have their own recommendations to make to assist in Duncan's progress. Our Committee appreciated the candour of the Reports and were encouraged by the positive outcome of the 4 weeks that Duncan was able to spend in the Hunter-Barrington charge. We noted with pleasure the "breakthrough" that was achieved, especially in homiletics, but also the experiences of church government and pastoral ministry. As this was the inaugural placement under the newly authorised scheme, we recognise that this could have been a difficult task for both Mentor and student. Thanks need to be expressed to Rev. Tso for his labours in helping the Convener to fine-tune the mechanics of the scheme (content and schedules, baseline questionnaires and feedback forms etc), and Duncan for his grace to be exposed to what is, as yet, an "un-honed" tool."

Some matters regarding the CPS need clarification after last year's report was received:

A. It was agreed on the floor of the Synod, during discussion of the CPS, for the Committee to cover the cost of accommodation for the student (and any accompanying family) for the duration of the placement, so as not to place an unfair burden on Congregations. This clause, however was not minuted and the terms of the CPS were approved as shown below (see Item 2 of last year's Report). The Committee, in discussion with the General Treasurer, agreed that it would be best to make this a standing arrangement. Item 2 would now read as shown in bold text (the previous version strike-through text).

B. There was some confusion over the terms "facilitators" (in the Report) and "Assessors" (in the attached list of conditions) of the scheme. For clarification of terms it is to be understood that ALL of the candidate's Presbytery, Session and the Training of Ministry Committee be designated Facilitators and Assessors together, and to avoid further confusion that the term "Assessors" be used as a catch-all for these groups acting together regarding the CPS.

C. For easy referral and access by any prospective and current student to the terms of the CPS, may we suggest that the conditions 1. to 5. below, with a proposed amendment of accommodation conditions in item 2. (**bold text below**), be added to the Handbook.

1. A nominal 8 week placement with a mentoring Minister in a charge outside the candidate's own congregation in both the penultimate and final year of the candidate's theological study. The location of the placement would be determined by agreement between the Committee, the Presbytery and the candidate's Session (Assessors). Its duration may be varied by consultation with all parties. Notification to the student of the location and duration of the placement to be not less than six months in advance to allow personal arrangements to be made.
2. The cost for the student's placement to be borne by the Training of Ministry Committee, up to the value of 8 weeks stipend at the rate applicable to students' supply (currently 60% of full stipend). Costs for travel and accommodation [**INSERT are to be funded by the Training of Ministry**

Committee] ~~would be borne by the host congregation (they should view the CPS as they would extended supply and budget accordingly).~~ Other incidental costs to be borne by the student themselves. Notwithstanding the allowances provided, financial difficulties (e.g. loss of paid work) in undertaking the placement will be assessed in confidence on a case-by-case basis by the Committee.

3. The student's placement is to be under the mentorship of the host congregation's Minister ("Mentor"). It is expected that the Mentor maintain a strictly confidential relationship with the candidate (especially for the sake of the candidate's prospects) and seek to develop the student's abilities according to both the wisdom and experience of the Mentor and within set criteria to be supplied by the Assessors. The relationship between mentor and student cannot be fully defined as it involves imparting personal approaches as well as fundamental skills. Sermon evaluation (forms provided) will constitute one regular assessment, but the mentor would be expected to evaluate the progress of the student in pastoral ministry while visiting and engaging in other aspects of working the charge. At the close of the placement, the mentor would provide a report to the Assessors advising of areas of excellence and those that need attention. The whole goal of the program is the development and progression of a student, not a merciless critique of all their faults.
4. During the placement it would be good for the student to keep a journal record of their experience. The experience of the student will be determined to a large part by the focus of the mentor's congregation and the work to hand. This may include, but is not limited to, conducting and preaching worship services, visitation, evangelism, and conducting Bible studies and Sunday School classes. The theological development of a student is undertaken by the College he attends. The Spiritual oversight of the student is the work of the Presbytery, this scheme seeks to develop and evaluate the ministerial abilities of the student within the wider context of the denomination. The student should see the CPS as an opportunity to delve into ministry in a place not so familiar to them as their own congregation. At the close of the placement, the student would be expected to provide a report of their experience and self-evaluation, to the Assessors.
5. Upon completion, and the receipt and evaluation of reports by the Assessors, constructive feedback and recommendations are to be provided to the student. Completion of the CPS to the satisfaction of the Assessors would be a normal requisite of their candidature with the PCEA. It is hoped that this course will provide data to assist in an easy transition from candidature to licencing and thence a helpful springboard into pastoral ministry within the PCEA.

Eldership Training Course

The Eldership Course is progressing and has developed more of a presence online. Perusal of some articles of the draft Course by office-bearers has led to 247 downloads of some material (obviously some repeat downloads have taken place). A desire for some form of training and continuing education has been expressed to the Convener by a number of Elders (both Ruling and Teaching) as well as queries as to when the course might be completed so it can be used to effect in congregations. A draft of the main sections of the Course has neared completion at the time of writing this report. Study questions are still to be appended to some, but a working draft should be in the hands of the Synod as a PDF (titled *A Manual for Elders*) and online "blog" in May, God willing. The facility of online research in formulating the course, and the wide availability of online materials on the subject has made it almost imperative that the Course, if approved, be available on the internet linking to useful resources everywhere. PDF's will be available for download and printing for seminars and group study where laptops or computers are unavailable. (For those not using computers at all, printed copies will be available from the Convener).

Parts of the course may need revision and adaption. The presence of the course online will allow for this editorial work to be conducted easily by members of the Committee. Ongoing feedback from participants online and offline will, hopefully, as with the CPS, hone this tool to be more useful in the service of our brothers. It is envisaged that this draft Course, will grow into a useful *Manual for Elders*, which will be a primer and springboard to further study.

Notwithstanding the general usefulness of the course, concerns were raised in the Committee that completion of this Course not become a required criterion in the selection or approval of anyone for the office of Elder, and that the Biblical criteria remain our supreme standard.

Proposed Deliverances

1. That the Synod again commend the excellent progress of Mr Duncan Hickey in his studies, be fervent in prayer for the development of his ministry and expected completion of his formal study at the end of 2017.
2. That the Synod agree that the Accommodation costs of a student (and his family, if required) undertaking the CPS be met by the Training of Ministry Committee.
3. That the Synod note the clarification of terms regarding “Facilitators” and “Assessors” be taken to include the Training of Ministry Committee, the Presbytery and the Session to which the student belongs together, and that the term “Assessors” be understood and generally used to refer to all.
4. That Items 1 to 5 above, agreed to at last year’s Synod as the conditions of the CPS, with the above proposed amendment (deliverance 2, if approved), be recorded in the PCEA Handbook for easy reference.
5. That the Synod authorise the implementation of the Eldership Training Course as an online and paper-based resource (PDF version titled *A Manual for Elders*) for the edification, growth and strengthening of the Eldership within the PCEA, noting the stipulation that it not be a requirement of selection or training for the office of Elder.
6. 5. That, subsequent to the above deliverance, the Synod allow for the ongoing development, supplementation and revision of the Eldership Course by Committee members and those it authorises to do so.

CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

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

This committee communicated by email during the year. We continue to monitor government policy, particularly as it affects the church and morals in society. Attempts to change the Federal Marriage Act to allow homosexual marriage continue to be a matter of prayerful concern. To this end we have prepared some instructive material that may be useful to members of our churches.

It is more than five years since the possibility of the Federal Marriage Act being changed to allow homosexual marriage came to our attention, and became a matter of prayer in our churches. We thank the Lord that several attempts to change the law have been thwarted. In doing so we do not slacken in our prayer, because the forces of evil continue. The push for homosexual or same-sex marriage continues in the press and from various members of parliament. We wrote to the Prime Minister expressing our Biblically-based views on this matter and received a reply from his office. The Government attempted to hold a plebiscite on this matter in February 2017, but the parliament voted against this. We have prepared a case against homosexual marriage to answer those trying to make the issue one of religion. It is not a statement on homosexuality as such, but specifically addresses homosexual marriage. We reaffirm our commitment to marriage as a creation ordinance, designed by God for the lifelong companionship of one man and one woman, and for the raising of children born through the sexual union of this man and woman.

The case against homosexual marriage

The Australian Marriage Act as amended in 2004 states that, 'marriage means the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life'. An additional amendment refuses to recognise as marriage in Australia any same-sex unions solemnised in a foreign country. Homosexual activists are not satisfied with equal rights granted under civil union legislation but want what they call 'marriage equality'. Some political parties have bound members to support homosexual marriage. They assert that the majority of Australians want homosexual marriage and that those who oppose it do so for religious reasons only. The Federal Marriage Act is not a religious document and we strongly oppose any changes to the Act on the following grounds:

1. From the beginning of history, and in every culture around the world, a man and a woman have come together in a life-long union for the purpose of companionship, and the bearing and nurturing of children. This union is called marriage. One reason for this is the biological impossibility of a same-sex couple producing children. To this we would add that this is the design of our Creator: 'in the beginning God made them male and female' (Matthew 19:4).
2. Therefore a homosexual or lesbian couple are dependent upon a third party if they want children. A surrogate mother is open to exploitation, as is a sperm donor. In either case, the child is torn away from one biological parent in a legally sanctioned act, if homosexual marriage is legalised.
3. Every child has a biological mother and father. It is their expectation, and right, to know their mother and father, and be raised by them under normal circumstances. Many children are deprived of a mother and/or father, but the State does not sanction such situations or arrangements for the raising of children as would be done in legalising homosexual marriage. Indeed, the State has said 'Sorry' for such State-sanctioned removal of children from their biological parents in the recent past.
4. Homosexual couples have all the legal rights of heterosexual couples by way of civil unions and *de facto* relationships- apart from that of adopting children in some jurisdictions.
5. The term 'marriage equality' is emotive but misleading. Marriage is not a right for everyone in our society. Our laws do not allow children to marry, do not allow a person to marry a brother or sister (incest), do not allow marriage to more than one man or woman at a time (bigamy and polygamy), and do not allow marriage to animals (bestiality).
6. The desire to legalise homosexual marriage is about 'normalizing' homosexual behaviour. Many homosexual couples are not interested in getting married. In the Netherlands only 20% of homosexual couples are married, compared to 80% for heterosexual couples. In New Zealand only 12% of homosexual couples got married in the two years after legalisation of homosexual marriage.
7. Children growing up in a legally-sanctioned homosexual marriage face confusion and a high risk of emotional instability. They face the inevitable question of why they have 'two daddies' or 'two mummies'.

A little girl should not have to see two men posing as her parents. A teenage boy should not have to ask his dad, 'Where did I come from' and be told, 'Ask your other dad'. Children will have difficulty relating to members of the opposite sex in a whole new way, unrelated to single parenting.

8. Every child has a right to a mother and a father. While adult homosexuals seek their rights under the banner of 'marriage equality', the rights of the child are being denied. Homosexual marriage will legally sanction the denial of the rights of the child.

9. It is our desire that the State assist every child born in Australia to grow up with their birth mother and father, while making provisions for those denied this basic human right. 'Bless the little children!' (Mark 10:16).

Affirmation of Marriage from the Bible

- The PCEA continues to uphold Biblical teaching on marriage as stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 24), that 'Marriage is between one man and one woman...ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate issue'. Marriage is a covenant commitment for life.
- As a creation ordinance it is right that marriage be a legal institution as it is in present/current Federal legislation. The family unit, consisting of a mother and a father, and the progeny of this union called marriage, is ordained by God for the good of adult companionship and the nurture of children in all societies, and for the glory of God.
- In the Bible the marriage relationship is so special that it is compared to the relationship between Christ and church (Ephesians 5:22-33).
- Breaking God's holy law in the matter of marriage, as in any other matter, will result in God's judgment upon individuals and societies- for instance the city of Sodom (Genesis 19) - unless there is repentance.
- We believe all people are made in the image of God, and it is out of love for them, and love for innocent little ones as expressed by Jesus (Mark10:16) that we warn/protest against any re-definition of the institution of marriage as ordained by God, affirmed by Jesus, by the Reformers, and by all faithful churches down through the ages.

We urge ministers and members of our church to continue in urgent prayer over this matter (Luke 18:1-8). Again we say, God is all powerful; "He removes kings and raises up kings" (Daniel 2:21). We pray that there will be wise and God-fearing people whom God can raise up. We pray that God will work in the hearts of those in the parliaments of our land. It is also our duty to communicate with our elected representative; a letter or email to encourage the godly in their views and encourage the ungodly to change their views.

We propose writing to the Prime Minister reminding him of our prayers, and urging him to stand against any move to change the marriage act so as to legalise homosexual marriage.

Proposed deliverances

1. We thank the Lord that the Federal Marriage Act has not been changed, and continue to pray that homosexual marriage will not be legalised.
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.

MEDIA COMMITTEE

Report on 'The Presbyterian Banner': The Lord has been good to us again in the ministry of *The Presbyterian Banner* during this past year of 2016. We have been able to support ourselves through the subscriptions, donations, and volunteer work of God's people.

Disappointingly, the bulk subscriptions from congregations which support the bulk of our finances have taken a bit of a hit. Several congregations reduced their number and together with the number of individual subscriptions declining we find ourselves with a reducing financial base. As you can note from the Financial Statement, at this rate the magazine within two to three years will no longer be viable financially, unless we again raise the subscriptions which in turn will further reduce the subscriber base.

The good news is that more are receiving the magazine by pdf via a Complimentaries emailing list. Anyone wishing to make use of this is encouraged to contact the editor. And further good news is that we do accept donations!

We continue to supply free copies mailed to State and Theological Libraries around the nation and the world at our own expense. The expense for this with the increased cost of postage is an ever increasing percentage of our overall budget.

I express my thanks to the team involved here in *The Presbyterian Banner*, from the contributors to the proof-reader to those involved in printing, packaging and then posting our magazine. There is also our Webmaster who places a pdf copy on the PCEA website every month.

Presently 135 copies per month are now being printed. We had previously printed extra in the hope that any congregation wishing to take up a bulk subscription or add to their subscription would be readily supplied, but as this has not changed over the last several years we have cut back to save costs. We now keep a spare 12 – 15 in case of a mailing mistake.

There are ministers and others regularly contributing articles – I note here again the help of Rowland Ward, Jim Klazinga, George Ball, and Andrew Bajema. The Missions Committee have organised a roster of Missions' news, which is an added plus to the magazine. There are also those who send in the beautiful photos that help make up such attractive covers.

I would use this opportunity again to encourage our other colleagues to contribute at least one item a year. This may be a helpful article or local news. We're sure there are things happening in your churches and would love to know what they are so that we can be encouraged and in prayer for you.

And this is what we need to keep very much in mind – it is our magazine. The more we support it – prayerfully, financially, contributing articles and news – the more this will become so. This is an opportunity to show how serious we are to be united and involved churches in Australia.

And what a helpful thing it is that when we have visitors to our church that we can give them a complimentary copy of *The Presbyterian Banner*? There they can see and read of the heart in our churches – the glorious proclamation of the unchanging and ever-powerful Word of God.

May God continue to bless this vital ministry amongst us, as I count myself blessed to have done this over seven years.

Financial Statement for year ended 31-12-16

RECEIPTS (2016)

Balance 31-12-15	1,550.00
Subscriptions	2,960.00
_____	_____
	\$4,510.01

PAYMENTS

Postage	843.60
Printing	2,452.70
Stationery	44.00
Balance 31-12-16	1,169.71
_____	_____
	\$4,510.01

Please note that of the balance for 31/12/16, \$595 consists of subscriptions for 2017. There was also one payment of \$333.30 for printing and postage which was omitted and has this year (2017) been paid.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE:

1. To warmly encourage our congregations and members to pray for and actively support the ministry of *The Presbyterian Banner*.
2. To have a time of discussion in relation to the future of *The Presbyterian Banner* – thus what place a denominational magazine has amongst us in the face of declining support and if it is deemed to have a future which format(s) would be most suitable.

S. Bajema (Editor)

Report on Website: The PCEA website has morphed and changed in some areas in 2016, in other areas it has stagnated. The front page content has remained pretty static and this will be a matter for review in 2017. Some parts of the site, such as the links page, have languished and need updating. The outdated Congregations menu made in the earlier days of the site, began to just stop working for no apparent reason – leading a number of visitors looking for places of worship in the second half of the year to send feedback, and so a simpler Google maps based single page component was introduced here.

Most of our visitors continue to come from the United States and Australia, with Great Britain and Kenya, being the next most frequent for this year.

	Unique Visitors	Number of Visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
2013	34,332	53,887 (1.56/visitor)	309,416 (5.74 pages/visit)	696,145	13.32 GB (259.14KB/visit)
2014	21,536	43,402 (2.01/visitor)	419,072 (9.65 pages/visit)	791,629	59.19 GB (1,430.08 KB/visit)
2015	14,516	26,239 (1.8/visitor)	600,414 (22.88 pages/visit)	921,609	46.66 GB (1,864.5 KB/visit)
2016	14,921	27,320 (1.83/visitor)	477,158 (17.46 pages/visit)	741,281	28.61 GB (1097.97 KB/visit)

The table above shows trends in visits to the site. These have remained steady in 2016. We are retaining users, but not greatly expanding. The users of the site are also not visiting or utilizing all the site evidenced by the drop in pages visited – most attention is paid to the Congregations, Downloads, and News and Views pages. The Donations and Sponsorships pages have seasonal use when a new batch of donors is introduced or renewals of sponsorships takes place.

Due to the hack that occurred at the end of 2015, which was still being repaired in January/February 2016, a major overhaul and upgrade of all components used on the site was undertaken to avoid any potential places hackers could exploit, as well as a subscription to a regular auditing and scanning service to monitor for future attacks and vulnerabilities. This led to a blow-out in costs as upgrades were purchased. As at the beginning of 2017 the website is hosted on Ventrail (with servers in Sydney) sharing space with Northern Rivers account, thus reducing costs.

A review will be undertaken in 2017 of under-utilized and unused areas of the site, with the possibility of a complete overhaul of the utility and look of the site, even a change of operating system. The Content Management System (a bit like Windows or MacOS for desktops) is currently Joomla which allows for a great range of powerful components (think apps or programs) to work within the site: such as those for the Community area, the Donations and Sponsorships payment system, etc. Joomla using paid components is not as cost effective as, say Wordpress – however Wordpress is much more limited in scope. Any major overhaul would entail a lot of work in redesign and loss of some functionality.

One of the under-utilized areas of the site is the PCEA Community. It is disappointing to see that very few use the arena to share and discuss church matters, fellowship and encourage one another online. The Community pages will remain for the time being and may prove important as a forum for Elders undertaking the Eldership Course. It has the facility of providing a place for members to set up “pages” like Facebook, as a focus for sharing information between different groups within the church. These can be secure, private, invite only – such as the existing India group page (to protect the privacy and security of the Indian church), or more general, one possibility being a Young Adults page to continue discussion and planning between Camps.

The draft Training of Ministry Committee’s Elder’s Course continues from last year to have a “placeholder” presence on the website under the “Elders” Menu at <http://www.pcea.org.au/index.php/elders/course-notes>. (It is editable by members of the Training of Ministry Committee and authorised persons, a facility that will be useful for continued development of the course into future editions). Pending its review under Training of Ministry business, DV, it will then be accessible by those undertaking the Elder’s Course in seminars or privately. The content will also appear as a PDF for download from the site. Links from here will direct participants to other online resources. (The relevant pages should contain most of the draft Eldership Course material for perusal by logged in Office-bearers only, before the sitting of this Synod- there have actually been 247 hits of some material from last year already).

The Missions Donations and Sponsorship scheme (MDSS) has now gone into its second year of operation utilizing the website as a hub for donations. Renewals have been completed on the website for a number of donors, especially those paying instantly via Paypal. Administration of the scheme has, as of the end of 2016, been passed on from the webmaster to Mrs Amelia O’Dell (one of the India Mission Awareness Trip team members at the end of 2016). Amelia has become an enthusiastic promoter of the scheme and is now an integral member of the MDSS sub-Committee. By God’s grace, she has been able to obtain sponsors for the second group of students within a couple of months. As at the writing of this report, there are now sponsors for 42 students and new students have been received for sponsorship and their details will be uploaded prior to Synod. God –willing we may find sponsors for them also before Synod convenes.

Using the same component that powers the Donations and Sponsorship Scheme, in discussion with the Convener of Youth and Fellowship, an online payment system has been established primarily for people wanting to book and pay for Camps. The “Events” menu announces various events and allows people to pay for their bookings using Paypal. Monies are sent automatically to Synod accounts and administration is simplified. As at the writing of this report the system is being trialled for the Youth and Fellowship Youth Camp, scheduled for Easter 2017. Hopefully, this will become the standard method of booking for the Family Camp in 2019.

The Historical Magazine Archive averages about 250 downloads per publication (*The Testimony, 1868* maximum downloads at 531). *The Presbyterian Banner* issues for February and June (Synod Issue) received the most downloads at 381 and 312 respectively.

To maintain the appeal of the site for the general public and for those of the congregations we need content. I again appeal to the delegates to make themselves familiar with the site and in turn make the site known to members of their congregations. Please encourage them to get involved in the PCEA Community as a first step and then get writing, reading, posting, commenting and make the site grow and blossom as a lively witness to our Lord within the denomination.

Proposed Deliverances

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.
2. That, pending approval of the Training of Ministry Committee Elder’s Course by the Synod, it be made publicly available on the website.

D. Kerridge (Webmaster)

ARCHIVIST REPORT

Rev Dr Rowland Ward

Scanning of Magazines 1846-1924

Since last Synod further additions to the digital magazine archive at pcea.org.au have been made including the important magazine *The Presbyterian* (1878-81, 1884-86), edited by Arthur Paul of St Kilda, and the only known copy of *The Australian Witness* (1853-54) edited by Alex Salmon. The Australian Free Presbyterian (1913-24), the first national magazine, is nearly complete. This will mean only *The Standard* (1859-61) [of which a copy is in the State Library of Victoria] and the broadsheet weekly newspaper edited by George Sutherland of St George's, *The Witness and Australian Presbyterian* (1872-74) and its successor *The Witness* (1877-84) remain for the period 1846-1924. We have three recently bound volumes of *The Witness* 1877-78, 1878-89, 1880-81 in the archives, but it will not be practical to scan such large pages.

A complete run of *The Free Churchman* issued by "The Reconstituted Synod" 1883-93 has been assembled, and this can be added to the web site in due course.

Banner Editor's set

A spare bound magazine for 1924-28 along with 16 volumes bound uniformly in light blue covering the period 1928 to 1984 were lodged with Rev S. Bajema on 20 March 2016 as the Editor's reference set. The archive already has a complete run of all magazines during this period. We would like to see reprints of older articles from time to time in *The Presbyterian Banner*.

As indicated last year scanning of the issues of *The Presbyterian Banner* from its beginning in the present format in 1985 up to and including September 2006 is envisaged, as after this date it is already on the website.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. Synod records its appreciation to Mr Robert Hingston, deacon Ulverstone, for his detailed and painstaking work in scanning church magazines.

YOUTH AND FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Members: S. Carswell (Convenor), A. Miranda, G. Hamilton and T. Reeve

This year the Y&F committee has focused on particular ministries that have strengthened cooperative partnership in mission activities overseas and intra-congregational fellowship.

Encouraging Youth to Serve Others

After planning from early 2016 for a Mission Awareness Tour to India the Committee promoted and encouraged participation in this initiative among local congregations. 11 people from the Hastings, Manning, Ulverstone, Newcastle and Geelong congregations participated in the Tour. The Committee offered \$500 per person to assist with costs. The young people gave a short presentation at the 2017 Family Camp in Sydney upon their return and a report was printed in the April 2017 Presbyterian Banner. From all accounts the trip was a great blessing to those that went and we pray that God would continue that blessings in the further work of His church both here and in India.

Family Camp 2017

The venue was at the Elanora –Uniting Venues site in northern suburbs of Sydney from 3 -6 January 2017. The speaker was Graeme Hart from the Reformed Presbyterian Church in McKinnon, Melbourne. The talks focussed around “What does Genesis Teach Us Today?” These have been published in various editions of the 2017 Presbyterian Banner. The camp was very well attended and was a blessing to all those that attended. Graeme was a very engaging speaker and his talks very relevant to today’s church in an ungodly society. We thank God for His blessings upon the talks and those that attended and that the organisation went well. The Y&F committee is convinced that the Family Camp is an important event in the life of the church, which provides fresh opportunities for strengthening our fellowship and deepening our love for God and his Word.

Essays

In 2016 essays prizes were given to 8 children from the Brisbane, Ulverstone and Hastings congregations. The work submitted shows an impressive level of Bible-reading and Bible- understanding, that will definitely produce joy and devotion in the spiritual development of children and young adults in the church.

Prescribed Youth Work 2017

Metrical Psalms	1st Certificate	2nd Certificate
Infants (to 7 yrs)	67	100
Junior (12 yrs and under)	122	29
Senior (17 yrs and under)	42:1-5	116:1-10

Scripture Memory

1st Certificate: Isaiah 53

2nd Certificate: 1 John 1:5 – 2:6

10 Commandments (Exod 20: 1-17)

Psalm Tunes

Junior	Senior
Argyle	Gopsal
Dennis	Hermon
Franconia	Carlisle
St Etheldreda	Mainzer

Catechism:

7 Certificates: 1: 1-10; 2: 11-20; 3: 21-28 4:29-38; 5: 39-62; 6: 63-81; 7: 82-107

Voucher: 1-107 Word Perfect

Books of the Bible Certificate:

Correct repetition of the books of the Bible in order

Essay Questions:

Infants (to 7 yrs)

In Romans 12:1–2, Paul is telling Christian people to do two things. Do you know what those two things are? What happens when we do them?

Junior (12 yrs and younger): Write 100 words or less for each question.

Please read Psalm 51:10–17 and answer these questions:

1. What is David asking God to do for him in verse 10?
2. Why do you think God is the only Person who can do what David is asking in verse 10?
3. In verse 10 David is asking God to give him a clean heart. But to get a clean heart we need to come to God in a special way. What is that special way according to verse 17?
4. What is God going to do for us if we ask him for a clean heart in the way that verse 17 tells us to do it?

Senior (up to 1000 words)

Read Acts 11: 1–18.

As you can see, the first eighteen verses of this chapter are exclusively focused with the repetition of the story of chapter 10. Clearly, the story is very important. Please explain why.

Luke attaches to this incident the amount of space that he has given to it. Make sure you also show the relevance of this text for Christian behaviour.

Youth Camp 2017

After much discussion within the Committee and at the Family Camp it was decided to run a church wide Youth Camp over the Easter long weekend 2017. John and Judy Greensill kindly offered their property which is well equipped with sheds, outside toilets and showers and ample space. This has meant that costs can be kept low. At the time of writing the report there are 18 registered to attend.

Birthday Roll/Search Work

The Y&F Committee is very grateful to both Margaret Kinder (Birthday greetings) and Irene Steel (Search Work) for their ongoing commitment to promote creative ways for our children to grow in the knowledge of Christ.

Proposed Deliverances:

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 future Family Camps and Youth Camps.
4. Members of Synod commit themselves to keep praying for the spiritual development of our children and youth in the church. Synod is conscious of the danger of moving away from the faith, therefore, constant intercession will be made on behalf of our youth, so that they will have the courage to resist secular pressure, find their identity in fellowship with Christ, and participate with glad involvement in their local churches.
5. Synod thanks God for the success and blessings and fellowship of the Mission Awareness Tour to India and the 2017 Family Camp.

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

J. Klazinga (Convener), J. Greensill, D. Muldoon, T. Leggott, D.P. Smith, A Ward.

MISSION FIELD REPORTS

Contents:

1. Australian Indigenous Ministries
2. Mukti Missions
3. Dumisani Theological Institute
4. Taleem (discipleship) Centre
5. Dr Dickson
6. Dr Tigi Verghis
7. Central India
8. Colegio San Andrés
9. Annie Soper School
10. Christian Witness to Israel

1. Australian Indigenous Ministries (reported by Rev. Trevor Leggott)

At the close of 2016 I completed 20 years of service with AIM. In addition to the regular work of directing the general operation of the mission in the past year there has been a twofold major focus for my work with AIM:

1. The Retta Dixon Home, Darwin, and Matters Arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Background: Proceedings began in August 2014 and the Royal Commission sat in Darwin from 22nd September to 2nd October 2014 and a Report from the Commission was released in July 2015. The outcome of that was that AIM offered a public apology for any hurt that had been caused to those whilst they were in Retta Dixon Home. An ex gratia offer of recompense was made through the provision of the proceeds of the sale of the AIM Winnalee property. The sale of the property has proceeded and proceeds are with AIM.

Legal Action: Before disbursement of these funds occurred there was a class action launched by some of those who had been at the Retta Dixon Home against the Commonwealth of Australia and AIM {including personnel Merv Pattemore (superintendent) and Ed Long and Howard Miles (Council members at the time)} for breaches of care for the children at the home.

There were over 70 plaintiffs who resided at the home between 1969 and 1975 who were seeking compensation for loss and damage for being injured through abuse and neglect whilst at the home. Of this number 12 are seeking additional compensation for being assaulted by Mr Donald Henderson whilst he was a house parent at the home. There are an additional three siblings not involved in this class action who are seeking compensation separately.

There have been a number of hearings and AIM has agreed to have our barrister and lawyer act on behalf of Mr Pattemore, Mr Miles and Mr Long as well as AIM. Because all three are in poor health family members were appointed to communicate on their behalf.

Mediation: Toward the end of 2016 the Commonwealth agreed to engage in a mediation process and those acting for AIM recommended that we join in that mediation. The Supreme Court of the Northern Territory set a timetable for mediation for 6th -10th February in Darwin and this process was undertaken.

Legal representatives indicated that they believed AIM would likely win the legal argument if the case continued, however to engage in this process would involve some millions of dollars of expense, and even if the court found in favor of AIM, there would be no way to claim back costs. The mediation process simply concentrated on finding a mutually agreeable financial settlement to the case, given that an extended court case would cost many millions of dollars. At the close of the mediation all parties have agreed to a settlement.

Outcome for AIM: Whilst it is a great relief to know that this matter is resolved, the result has placed a heavy burden on the funds of AIM. There will be a requirement to sell our Humpty Doo property near

Darwin to meet the commitment. In addition AIM has had to meet legal costs of \$97,000 up to the time of writing.

For those genuinely injured and abused whilst at the Retta Dixon Home we must offer heartfelt sorrow and be prepared to do what we are able to help alleviate the hurt and continue to pray for their spiritual well-being. We need to be before the throne of grace seeking the will and blessing of the One who is totally just and righteous, yet full of grace and mercy.

The words of Jesus seem appropriate to our circumstances: In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says: "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well." (Matthew 5:40). In another place, speaking of the cost of discipleship Jesus says: "Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples." (Luke 14:31-33)

AIM can face the future with confidence knowing that this matter is finally put behind us. We are thankful for the prayers of the Lord's people and ask that you continue with us in prayer and support as we look to the Lord for his guidance and direction into the future.

2. AIM and the Future: Discussions with Pioneers of Australia.

I have been concerned that the AIM Council looks carefully at succession planning following my indication that I intend to retire as General Director at the close of 2017. This is coupled with an ongoing need for good administrative processes, building financial support, providing good pastoral care of our workers, and the recruitment of much needed personnel to take up the work.

At the end of 2015 we heard that Pioneers Australia were anticipating commencing work in Arnhem Land through contact with Missionary Aviation Fellowship, taking up work that had been once been with the Uniting Church. It was an interesting new development that a large multinational mission agency planned to commence work in the Northern Territory amongst traditional indigenous communities.

Pioneers International has a membership of 3000 and Pioneers of Australia, in addition to National Team of 35, has 220 long-term members serving in some 40 countries. Pioneers mobilises teams to provide Bible teaching and support ministries to indigenous local churches, working in partnership with local entities. Pioneers has extensive experience in cross-cultural ministry but almost no experience in mission activity among Indigenous Australians. Pioneers established a partnership with Missionary Aviation Fellowship Arnhem Land in January 2014 with a view to collaborating for the sake of unreached Aborigines in the northern part of the NT. It seemed prudent that AIM should pursue contact with this group. After a number of meetings with respective CEOs and Chairs of the two missions it was resolved in May 2016 to explore the process of a merger with Pioneers.

The timing of our discussion seems to be quite providential, both for AIM and for Pioneers. Pioneers can provide the much needed administrative, oversight and recruitment roles, and AIM can bring a wealth of experience of ministry and relationship with Indigenous church groups.

It has been very encouraging to see new missionaries progressing through their orientation processes and prepared for field placement. One of our major needs is to develop a team base ministry for mutual support and effectiveness. Already with Pioneers we are planning a new team to be based at Tennant Creek. As we walk down this road together we pray that the Lord might guide and direct both organisations toward a mutually happy and fruitful outcome.

2. Mukti Mission – India (reported by Rev. Peter Smith)

The highlight this past year was that a Mission Awareness Tour was arranged to visit some of the work, which the PCEA has traditionally supported in India. It was geared for the young in heart to experience mission in a completely different culture. Becky Graham and her 16 year old daughter, Emma, from the Manning congregation spent two weeks in Mukti, joining a visit arranged by Mukti Australia. Nick and Amelia O'Dell (Hunter congregation) also visited Mukti before joining with the group at Chhapara.

For Becky and Emma, Mukti was a life changing experience. Mukti is no longer just a name of a mission in India. Becky and Emma became part of Mukti life, living, breathing, participating and enjoying wholeheartedly being one with the disadvantaged women, the young ladies and babies of Mukti. They returned with so many friends from a country nearly half way around the world from Australia.

Becky and Emma have relived their experience, much to the pleasure of those gathered together at the Manning Ladies Missionary Society's Gift afternoon and also the Friendship group in March. The 'Wingham Chronicle' also ran a full-page article on "Emma & Becky's Mission to India", which really tells their story. I include this below.

"In October 2016, my daughter Emma, and I had the privilege of being able to visit an Indian mission which our church supports. This was made possible by the kind and generous support of the Ladies Missionary Society and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. Emma and I had never dreamed that we would be able to visit, but this trip proved that with God all things are possible. Can you believe that we fund raised \$9,000 in twelve weeks?!

We were part of a team of volunteers from Australia, who went to spend two weeks helping at Mukti Mission in India. It was the most incredible experience of our lives. Mukti is dedicated to helping the disadvantaged women and children of India. They provide shelter, safety, love, education and hope. Mukti takes in and cares for abandoned babies, abused children, elderly ladies, and those with disabilities. Their goal is to provide a "Christ centered home where destitute women and children irrespective of their background are accepted, cared for, transformed, and empowered to be salt and light in the society." Whilst we were there we were given a tour of their facilities which includes several schools, a hospital, nursery for the babies, and houses for the girls and disabled ladies. We also visited the farm – for Mukti grow a lot of their own food – and the dairy. Mukti has 12 milking cows, which provide some of the milk that the children need.

After this we had the amazing opportunity to be able to run a women's conference in which the local village ladies were invited. We had about 150 ladies attend, and what followed was two incredible days of fellowship and laughter as we worshipped together, and in the afternoons ran craft activities. Some of these crafts were as simple as colouring in, but the poverty within India meant that this was something most ladies had not been able to enjoy for several years. We also made two different types of fabric flower brooches, which were a great hit with the locals. They loved having something pretty to pin their saris with.

Emma volunteered at Mukti's hospital and nursing home. "It was touching to see how much these people appreciated the simple things like colouring in, having their nails painted, or the gift of a colourful lap rug. It made me realize how blessed I am to live in Australia!" says Emma. The lap rugs, together with knitted baby goods, socks and other items were all donations from Australians. Thank you Aussies! We also had the opportunity of hearing some of their stories. They just broke your heart. One mother shared how her baby girl became gravely ill and because she didn't have the money to pay the doctor the baby died. The payment was only 20 rupees – about 40c in AUD.

We heard how one baby was brought into Mukti, born so horribly disfigured that her mother would not even look at her. This little girl is now about four years old. She has had several surgeries and is now a bouncing, bright, smiling little button with a future. Some children are so traumatized by their past that they do not speak, but after being lavished with love and care, they are transformed. God is working in Mukti. We were very excited at being able to meet most of the girls and ladies that our church supports. To see their faces light up showed the excitement was mutual. Even though language was at times a challenge, we both feel we have made lasting connections with them. Mukti was a life changing experience for Emma and I. Both of us would like to visit again sometime in the future.

The PCEA due to the lack of mission finances was only able to partly support four young girls from the rising of Synod 2016. In the past, five young girls were fully supported. As we have heard, experiencing Mukti personally makes hearts break! For want of 40 cents, a girl perishes! So, please urge your congregations continually to give to mission funds in abundance, in order to make a huge difference and to bring the good news of Jesus into other people's lives.

Please pray regularly and fervently for Priyanka Shinde, Stuti Katamavare, Maria Bansode and Shital Pandharbale. These are the four young girls the PCEA missions' committee currently supports.

Glenda de Jager and her team in Melbourne must be commended. Their diligence has made the mission in India alive to so many churchgoers here, much to the praise and glory of our marvelous God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

3. Dumisani Theological Institute – South Africa (reported by Rev. Peter Smith)

Ministry in modern South Africa, both in the cities and the rural areas calls for patience, compassion, sensitivity, biblical authenticity and Christian integrity, very often in the face of great human need. Just as Christ ministered to human need in all its aspects, so too at Dumisani they seek to educate and equip the men and women whose work for Christ will, under God's blessing, make a significant difference to the lives of men and women and young people of all backgrounds.

Dumisani offers two main courses: Basic Ministry Studies and a Bachelor of Theology degree. Those who have completed basic studies, but do not qualify for university entrance or wish to do the degree may complete an Advanced Ministry Studies course. DTI also produce basic correspondence courses and other Christian literature in English and Xhosa.

Dr. Jack C. Wytock continues as the Acting Principal. At the time of writing he has been conducting the weekly chapel talks, focusing on Servant Leadership. He plans to develop these talks to offer a variety of day workshops for church groups around the Eastern Cape for leadership training.

There was great rejoicing for a most encouraging Dumisani graduation last March, where 18 students graduated and many of their families and church folk also came to support them. 150 people attended the graduation. Please give thanks to the Lord for such a wonderful occasion.

Term two began at Dumisani on April 18th. Pray for all the students, those continuing their studies and also for the new students joining the college for the first time. As the Free Church in Scotland has reduced funding to their international missions, desiring that they find most support nationally, pray that the Lord will bless DTI financially. Currently, most of the Faculty are only lecturing part time.

4. Taleem (discipleship) Centre – Dehradun, India (reported by Rev Dr Dennis Muldoon)

Mariam continues to manage this ministry to children from the Muslim community in a rural village with the administrative help of ETANI (Evangelical Trust of North India). Mr Mijin has returned to assist in discipleship in the village. Visitors from India and overseas come to see this work and assist Mariam where possible. All funding for this project comes from the PCEA so the 30% cut to funds last year has meant cutting back -meals are only given twice a week- but the work continues. Mariam enjoys going on Sundays to tell Bible stories and teach songs. Mariam was in good spirits when the Muldoon's visited her in December. She is settled in the family home with her two siblings and attending the Good Shepherd fellowship at PTS. Her sister Shekina was working in a call centre but recently left because they demanded she work on Sundays. It is hoped she can attend Synod and share about this work.

5. Dr Dickson – New Delhi, India (reported by Rev Dr Dennis Muldoon)

Dr Dickson, a missionary vet, is based on the outskirts of New Delhi. In December Dennis and Elizabeth Muldoon were able to visit Dickson and his family to encourage them. They were delighted to find them in good health and happily settled in a new flat provided by Mt Carmel School where Griselda teaches. Having returned to good health, Dickson was able to assist EFICOR in conducting three livestock training camps for

farmers. Dickson is also active in the leadership of missions, like Interserve and UESI. The **Animal Wellness Centre** which Dickson started in 2009 at Goyla Dairy, Delhi continues, with him providing animal health care in these urban dairies. The work is expanding into other means of helping these poor families. The women look for work to help their families but are unskilled. Computer classes continue, along with tailoring and knitting classes. Some Korean women came to assist in setting up these classes. A lady from Germany assisted in teaching paper craft. Dickson writes of the sense of satisfaction felt by the women when they make something, especially if the item can be sold. A few women are also taking adult literacy classes so they can help their children with schoolwork and not have to sign documents with a thumb impression. 'There are thousands of children stuck in this community struggling to get a proper education'. Dickson helps the children get to school and provides tuition classes. At Christmas he gathered the children to tell the Good News. Pastor Jaisingh helped with this programme and also with a three day summer (May) Bible camp for some 30 children.

6. Dr Tigi Verghis- Siliguri, India (reported by Rev Dr Dennis Muldoon)

Tigi and his wife Astrid continue mission work in India but with new roles. During school term they are based at Hebron School where Astrid teaches and the three boys attend classes, but they maintain their home at Siliguri. The Muldoon's enjoyed visiting them in Ooty in December- for Elizabeth it was a nostalgic visit also. Tigi has left direct involvement with HIMserve to work as a facilitator with Development Associates International (DAI) teaching Christian leaders in South Asia. He is also on the leadership team of Interserve for North India.

7. Central India (reported by Mr. John Greensill)

The Youth & Fellowship Mission Awareness Trip to India in Dec/Jan as reported in the banner took place since the last synod & group members appreciated a very memorable trip. The group gained first-hand experience into the work of PCEA & Free Church of Scotland in the past, & now presently the Free Church of Central India. We were given much to think about, appreciate & be challenged as we were transported around visiting all aspects of the work in Jabalpur, Lakhnadon from our base in Chhapara. The PFCCI has settled ministers in all 4 congregations along with much outreach work & is a very active denomination, working through many avenues of service. This includes school, medical & church ministry & outreach through church planters & evangelists. The PFCCI is experiencing blessings & challenges as it endeavours to train & equip the saints to serve the Lord.

The sponsorship scheme established after Rev. Samit Mishra and Pradeep Kumars' visit to synod is steadily gaining more sponsors and is a direct way we can support the school and church as it faces the challenge of maintaining facilities, paying staff and providing free education to many children from poor families who cannot afford to pay fees. Sponsorship money is also used to help pay back outstanding wages to teachers and it would be good to see this debt overcome for many reasons. The school requests English teachers to come and assist on a short basis as this would benefit the children and school greatly.

The PFCCI expresses thanks for the ongoing support of the PCEA and looks to the Lord to meet their needs in a challenging and fruitful time.

8. Lakhnadon Christian Hospital (reported by Mr. John Greensill)

The medical work continues in the 33 bed Lakhnadon hospital & would benefit greatly with the addition of another doctor, especially a surgeon. Health awareness programmes, community support & advocacy work continues through LCH & Chhapara.

Doctor Diva Singh wrote recently, thankful for the support given & especially seeking prayer support. She mentioned "This quarter has been very challenging for us so far. One of the main reasons being the scrapping of Five hundred and Thousand rupee notes. The limits for cash withdrawal from ATM & banks also had been reduced for over two months. Because of the demonetization most of the banks & ATMs remained closed for many days due to lack of making available the new currency notes. All this affected our work drastically in the field as many were not getting money from the bank as and when needed. But we thank God that in spite of all this we were able to achieve much because of His grace and support of our staff in the field".

Colegio San Andrés – Peru (reported by Rev Jim Klazinga)

Our contact with the school, Juan José Otero, has recently moved to Scotland in order to pursue a Master's in Theology at ETS in Edinburgh. We haven't heard yet about the appointment of a new contact. The school recently had to shut down for a time due to flooding concerns, but thankfully, classes were scheduled to resume on 27 March.

To access their Wikipedia page, go to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colegio_San_Andrés

To access their webpage (in Spanish), go to: <http://www.sanandres.edu.pe/>

In 2016, the PCEA contributed \$4700AUS for scholarships to help provide some assistance for students and families who might not otherwise be able to attend the school.

9. Annie Soper School – Peru (reported by Rev Jim Klazinga)

Last October the school celebrated 27 years of service in the city of Moyobamba in Northern Peru. From recent translated reviews of the school on their Facebook page:

Annie Soper a good school where I learned a lot not only in knowledge but also grew strong my values.

A center where we have experienced profound experiences that helped us build a better future.

The best... it has everything a student needs for your professional and personal life.

To access their Facebook page, go to: <https://www.facebook.com/colegioanniesoper/>

The following is from a recent letter written by our ASS contact, Pilar Urquieta:

We thank God because:

- we finished the 2016 school year successfully

- there are new children registered for this school year.

- friends of Burlington Presbyterian Church are willing to come again in July.

May He grant us another good year!"

We thank God and ask for His wisdom for the school Director Mrs. Mariquita Chumbe. (a) She must decide about new teachers and new workers. (b) She has being sued by a parent - for something that happened with a teacher, not with her! and it is demanding time and patience . . . (c.) the new curricula (from the Ministry of Education) will be introduced this year in a couple of schools - Annie Soper among them. There are some items that could go/be against our faith and biblical point of view. Wisdom is needed!!! Even though we know it, sometimes we forget that GOD is LORD, that HE is in control of everything . . . and that when things we don't like happen, there is something He is teaching us... so, let's go on...!

Thanks again. Greeting to brothers and sisters in Australia . . . let's live for His glory!

In 2016, the PCEA contributed \$1600AUS for the purpose of helping to fund scholarships for needy students

10. Christian Witness to Israel (reported by Mrs. Anna Ward)

The Presbyterian Banner had an article in the December issue outlining recent changes including a new location for CWI UK headquarters, new mission fields and new missionaries. These are wonderful encouragements, but here in Australia we are not yet seeing great change.

Administration:

CWI Australia Council (Chair Peter Kaldor) is based in Sydney, and there is also a Melbourne committee. The Council for some years has been assessing how to restructure to enable CWI to fulfil its role of reaching Jewish people with the Gospel. This is proving to be challenging and made harder by a lack of administrative staff and a sustainable donor base. The mission-owned house in Bondi is currently being renovated.

Workers: *Kay Chan and Sue Park:* KayChan and Sue served for 8 years in Israel then 10 years with CWI in Sydney but in September 2016 moved to Kyrgyzstan, still doing Jewish mission. They are not working with CWI, but we pray for them as a brother and sister in Christ. They ask for our prayers so they will adapt well to a very different situation. Their departure is a great loss for CWI Australia.

Stephen and Lana Holmes in Melbourne: Stephen and Lana began with CWI in January 2015 and are the sole Australian field workers, ministering to Melbourne's 49,000 Jews and living in the suburb of Ormond. For most of this time Stephen has undertaken part-time supply in a local Anglican church to supplement his income. While necessary, this has limited Stephen and Lana's opportunities to develop their CWI ministry and they would appreciate our prayer for this to be overcome. Stephen has a military background and one of his main ministries has been making contacts among a local Jewish Returned Service Association. Stephen and Lana have three young-adult children and are giving increased care to Lana's mother who has dementia.

We give thanks for the positive changes around the world and long to see this here, so must continue to pray and work. This involves being informed. Keep abreast of needs several ways:

- From CWI's websites: www.cwi.org.uk / www.cwi.org.au
- Magazine: The Herald magazine is available on-line from CWI UK.
- Prayer notes: CWI UK's bi-monthly prayer notes (*Praying Always*) are available on-line on request from CWI UK.
- If you would like Australian prayer points from Knox PCEA bi-monthly meeting please email Anna Ward (annafward46@gmail.com).

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES:

- 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 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 AIM until the end of 2018, with a review of his ministry and support at Synod 2018.
- 3) That Synod acknowledges the heavy burden placed on the financial resources of AIM resulting from the legal actions they've had to deal with, and asks Deacons' Courts and individuals to give consideration to help in this time of financial strain.
- 4) That synod again encourage congregations to provide relevant material on mission work conducted in our local congregations for inclusion in the bi-monthly Prayer Notes.
- 5) That Synod adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2017 – 2018 and expresses its general agreement with the estimates for the aforementioned period.

MISSIONS BUDGET 2017

Missions Budget 2017								
General Funds	Budget 2016		Actual	2016	Budget 2017		Estimate 2018	
Balance 1 Jan 2016		18418		18418		4812		-8208
(Miss Gen, DAA, AIM/Leggott)								
Income: Investments	16000		11228		12000		18000	
Giving Miss General	4000		8236		8000		6000	
Miss Sprt AIM	12000		11005		12000		12000	
Income *1	32000	32000	30469	30469	32000	32000	36000	36000
Expenditure								
CWI	1000		1000		1000		4000	
AIM (TIL Salary) *2	41100		41398		42120		0	
Visiting Miss espenses	500		0		500		1500	
Dumisani	0		1000		700		700	
Admin: Postage, 'ph etc	400		677		700		800	
Rounding	0		0		0		0	
Total Expenditure	43000	43000	44075	44075	45020	45020	7000	7000
Closing Balance		7418		4812		-8208		20792
					deficit			
Notes:								
Account Balances 1 Jan 2017			*1. Income needs to be spread through the year to ensure there are sufficient funds on hand to meet the commitment when due.					
DAA Bequest	0		*2. Budget 2017, For T I Leggott's Stipend is \$54000 split 22% to the Mc Swan MRF (\$11880) and 78% to Missions General/Leggott (\$42120), figures are rounded.					
Missions General	4812		MRF: * 1 The 30% (rounded) foreshadowed in the 2017 estimates have been entered into the Budget for 2017 and a further reduction of the same order is foreshadowed for the 2018 estimates. * 2 No reduction in 2017 allocation for Rev Leggott has been factored into the 2017 budget.					
Missions Support Leggott/AIM	0							
Total	4812							

MRF Working Account	Budget 2016		Actual 2016		Budget 2017*1		Estimate 2018*1	
Balance 1 Jan 2016		1364		1364		1441		4661
Income Investments	16000		9840		10000		14000	
Other (Donation)	0		1000		0		0	
Transfer from Equities Ac	25000		30000		25000		15000	
Income	41000	41000	40840	40840	35000	35000	29000	29000
Expenditure								
Lakhnadon Christian Hospital	7000		7000		5000		3500	
Lakhnadon Mission School	1100		1100		800		600	
Chhapara Christian Health Centre	1800		1800		1300		900	
Chhapara Mission School	1400		1400		1000		700	
San Andres Scholarships	4700		4700		3300		2300	
Annie Soper Scholarships	1600		1600		1200		850	
AIM (TIL Part Salary, SA/LSL levy) *2	11600		11673		11880		0	
Dr Dickson Allahabad	1800		1800		1300		900	
Taleen Centre (Dr Japla Hussein)	5600		8000		5000		3500	
Mukti child sponsorships*3	1300		1300		1000		700	
Fees and Charges	300		390		400		400	
Total Expenditure	37900	37900	40763	40763	31780	31780	13950	13950
Closing Balance		4464		1441		4661		19711
Equities Account	Budget 2016		Actual	2016	Budget 2017		Estimate 2018	
Balance 1 Jan 2016		206173		206173		167911		142911
Income Revaluation of shares & Managed Funds	0		0		0		0	
Income (Retained Investment Income)	0		0		0		0	
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Expenditure								
Transfer to McSwan Working Account	25000		30000		25000		15000	
Revaluation			8262		0		0	
Total	25000	25000	38262	38262	25000	25000	15000	15000
Closing Balance 31 Dec		181173		167911		142911		127911
Total Funds Held McSwan Missions Relief Fund		185637		169352		147572		147622
Net Movement from previous year		-52267		-68552		-21780		50

INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Members: G. D. Ball (Convener 2006), S. Bajema, J. Klazinga, A. Scheepers.

1. CHURCHES WITH WHOM WE HAVE FRATERNAL RELATIONS.

1:1 Free Church of Scotland (FCS). 1954 and 2005.

We expect Rev. John Forbes, minister of Bonar Bridge and Lairg, with his wife Mary and family to be with us at Synod. John has come to supply the Hastings congregation for a few weeks. The Southern Presbytery was able to meet briefly last September in Melbourne with Rev. Dr. John Nicholls, the 2017-17 Moderator. It's been a long time since we have had a delegate visit The Free Church Assembly. We anticipate Rev. Robin Tso becoming a member of this committee. Robin has also expressed a desire to visit Scotland again in the near future and to include a visit to the General Assembly.

1:2 The Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). 2002.

We have received an invitation to attend the RCNZ Synod which plans to meet in the Reformed Church of Palmerston North from Saturday 9th September – Friday 15th September 2017. Our Synod Clerk plans to attend and represent us.

1:3 Reformed Churches (Liberated) of the Netherlands (BBK or GKv). 1999.

We have received an invitation to attend the General Synod which meets in Meppel beginning in March. Visitors from other churches are invited to be present during the first week of April (2-7). One of the major reports to be considered is that of 'Male/Female and Office in the Church'. It's a substantial 70 page report which is weighted in favour of change. We await news of the Synod's decision. If it decides to accept women in the office of elder we will have to reconsider our relationship with BBK.

This and other issues has brought the sister church relationship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the BBK under stress. They no longer accept letters of attestation from local churches or automatically accept ministers from the BBK. The Free Reformed Churches of Australia (FRCA) have suspended relations.

The situation in the BBK appears to be fluid with great diversity among the congregations. The General Secretary stated, 'We are facing a crucial period as reformed churches in the Netherlands and with regard to our relations abroad. Decisions have to be made on several topics in which there is disagreement within our own churches and with a number of our churches abroad . . . we call upon you as churches abroad to unite with us in prayer. Please pray for our churches for peace and harmony based on the unity in our Lord. Pray for the Synod to be convened for wisdom and faithful obedience to the Scriptures when discussing and making decisions' (Rev. Dr. M. H. Oosterhuis in a letter dated 8/12/16).

The Theological University in Kampen is currently exploring the possibility of constituting a Reformed University together with other reformed denominations in the Netherlands.

1:4 The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). 2007.

We have received an invitation to attend the 84th General Assembly of the OPC planned to meet from May 31 – June 6, 2017, at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois. We anticipate meeting with their representatives at the ICRC.

We are pleased to report that the 2016 General Assembly of the OPC determined to enter into full Ecclesiastical Relationship with the PCEA. This happily ends a period of misunderstanding. It was our understanding that we had mutual eligibility since 2007; that however was not the understanding in the OPC. The gap has now been closed. The PCEA and the OPC have had a long association; we both became members of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1949; the PCEA withdrew in 1981 and the OPC in 1988. We are both members of the ICRC. The PCEA was a charter member (1985) and the OPC was admitted in 1993.

1:5 The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia (RPCA). 2004.

It was good to have Rev. Graeme Hart of McKinnon RP church as the speaker at our family Camp in January 2017.

1:6 The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI). 2006.

We anticipate meeting with their representatives at the ICRC.

1:7 The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). 2008.

We look forward to welcoming to Synod Rev. Bruce Backensto with his wife Kim.

1:8 The Presbyterian Free Church of India (PFCI). 2010.

Relationships have been strengthened with the team from PCEA visiting last December and January.

1: 9 The Southern Presbyterian Church of Australia (SPCA). 2014.

1: 10 The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). 2014.

The CRCA will be applying for membership in the ICRC meeting in Canada. Having overcome differences and misunderstandings we are happy to be one of the sponsoring churches.

1: 11 The United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). 2015.

We anticipate meeting with their representatives at the ICRC.

2. CHURCHES WITH WHOM WE HAVE CONTACT.

2: 1 The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (PRCA).

2:2 The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPCA).

3. The International Conference of Reformed Churches.

The General Conference of the ICRC is planned to meet this year (2017) in Jordan, Ontario, Canada, from July 12-19. Check the website for details. Three of our members plan to be present: Sjirk Bajema, Jim Klazinga and Rowland Ward. Dr. Ward is a member of the ICRC Regional Committee and is not seeking any financial assistance with travel.

4. The World Reformed Fellowship (WRF).

The World Reformed Fellowship (WRF) is the result of a marriage in October 2000 between The World Fellowship of Reformed Churches (which was formed in 1994), and The International Reformed Fellowship (also formed in 1994). The mission of the WRF is to promote understanding, cooperation and sharing of resources among the membership of evangelical and reformed Christians in the advancement of the Gospel. The vision of the WRF is; 'that the strengths of some might become the strengths of all in the service of Jesus Christ' (see Eph. 4: 11-13). The purpose of the WRF is to promote Reformed thinking and a Reformed world and life view; to inform and encourage churches and people who embrace the Reformed faith; to provide a network for communication and sharing of ministry resources; to provide a forum for dialogue on current issues; to offer direction to the evangelical Reformed community; to promote evangelization in the Reformed tradition; and to maintain, strengthen, promote and defend the sound doctrines and biblical and theological tenets of the Reformed faith. The doctrinal basis requires every member to affirm at least one of the historic expressions of the Reformed faith.

The WRF makes the distinction of being a fellowship, not a council. Its purpose is not to bring about organizational unity but to provide a forum whereby Reformed leaders from different geographic, cultural

and linguistic backgrounds can become better acquainted with each other, thus developing friendships and relationships leading (hopefully) to closer, mutually beneficial cooperation. The Free Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Westminster Presbyterian Church (Australia) are in membership.

As of February 2017 the WRF is comprised of 80 denominations, 122 congregations, 198 organizations and 828 individuals from 84 countries around the world. The suggested voluntary annual subscription is US\$10 a member, say A\$100 for the PCEA. Members are asked to pray for the work, to contribute blogs of news reports to the WRF website and, as possible, make an annual personal financial contribution of at least US\$20. For more information, including the services and structure of the WRF, and how to become a member visit the website: - wrfnet.org

5 Mutual Eligibility.

The Mutual Eligibility we have with the FCS, RCNZ and the OPC does not actually specify that the usual application form should be completed as part of the process. This needs to be rectified.

Proposed Deliverances.

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. Synod approve membership of The World Reformed Fellowship as a denomination and also encourages PCEA members to become members of WRF.
3. Synod appoint Sjirk Bajema and Jim Klazinga as voting delegates to the ICRC meeting in Ontario, Canada, in July 2017, and Rowland Ward as an Advisor.
4. Synod approve payment of a contribution towards travelling expenses (airfare, travel insurance) of the
5. In respect of the churches with whom we have Mutual Eligibility (FCS, RCNZ and OPC) the following words in the relevant Acts shall be added after "PCEA Presbytery to require" . . "the usual application for admission to be fully and satisfactorily completed and . . ."
6. Synod appoint Rev. Robin Tso as its delegate to the 2018 General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in May 2018 and agrees to pay his economy airfare and travel insurance.
7. Synod appoint our Synod Clerk, Rev. Trevor Leggott, to represent us at the Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) in September 2017 and agrees to pay his travelling expenses and travel insurance.

SUPERANNUATION COMMITTEE

R Tso (Convener 2015), Messrs P. Smith, J Audet, D Ramsay

A: SUPERANNUATION

1. Church Contributions to Superannuation

1.1 Superannuation Levy on congregations

The Superannuation Levy be: From 1/1/16 to 30/6/17

-Self-supporting congregations: 15%

-Aid-receiving congregations: 9%

-Vacant congregations: 3%

The superannuation levy will rise to 16%, for self-supporting congregations, from the 1st of July 2017, whilst others remain unchanged.

1.2 Superannuation Support Fund & Superannuation Levy Account

a. **The Superannuation Support Fund (SSF) Capital Account** balance as at 31/12/16 was \$212,347. This was decrease of \$2,762 (0.13% on the 2016 balance). The fund arises from specific legacies and forfeited benefits under earlier no longer existing provisions. The intention of the fund is to support the levy account from time to time.

The SSF Working Account balance as at 31/12/16 was \$7,710 after providing \$9,018 for Rev TI Leggott's superannuation contributions.

b. **The Superannuation Levy Account** balance as at 31/12/16 was \$10,299 after paying contributions totalling \$91,526 to ministers' nominated superannuation funds.

2. Contributions to ministers' accounts

Inducted ministers (up to 70 years of age):16%

Inducted ministers (between 70 and 75 years of age):9.5%

3. Superannuation overview

3.1 Default Fund

All but two of our members have chosen HESTA, our default fund, for their contributions. The default for HESTA is their Core Fund.

3.2 Performance

The net return on HESTA Core Fund for twelve months ending 30/6/16 was 3.03% Historical performance as at 30/6/16 for the past 5 years was 8.35%.

B. LONG SERVICE LEAVE/ANNUAL LEAVE

We remind Synod members of the provision by Synod 2003 of an extra week of annual leave (5 weeks in all), which must be taken, or the provision of LSL at a week a year at the local level up to age 70. It is increasingly normal in the general community not to allow annual leave to accumulate beyond two years. We commend this as very appropriate.

Proposed deliverances:

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. 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.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

(Incorporating General Treasurer's Report)

Committee members: AH Steel (Convener), J Audet, T Buck, DE Kerr, DJ Ramsay

Business attended to by the committee included:

1. Ministers' Minimum Stipend

Level and Basis of Review of Minimum Stipend –

After taking into account rates paid by other Presbyterian churches in NSW and Victoria, the *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia (Full-time adult ordinary time earnings)* as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the *Consumer Price Index (CPI)* the committee recommends the current level (\$1,032 per week) and basis of review of the minimum stipend be continued.

2. Fringe Benefits

The Committee received a letter from the Hawkesbury-Nepean Deacons' Court addressed to *the Synod Finance Committee* and the *Synod Law and Advisory Committee* requesting guidelines be provided for Deacons' Courts in determining the level of Non-Cash Benefits component of their ministers' stipends. Their request was that this Committee "and/or" the *Synod Law and Advisory Committee* provide such. This Committee therefore puts forward a proposed deliverance to Synod for consideration which addresses the question asked and is not a full set of guidelines covering the provision of Exempt Fringe Benefits, as follows:

a. Australian Taxation Office (ATO) Legislation

- Section 57 of the Fringe Benefits Taxation Assessment Act (FBTAA) No.39.1986 sets out to which employers of Religious Institutions (Churches) can provide exempt fringe benefits.
- Section 136(1) of the FBTAA defines who is a religious practitioner (Minister of religion)
- Taxation Ruling 92/17 (10/12/92) establishes tests to determine if a person is a religious practitioner.

b. Taxation Treatment of Religious Practitioners

Legislation dealing with the taxation treatment of stipends and allowances paid to a Religious Practitioner (Ministers) was introduced in August 2001. The amendments ensure that Religious Practitioners who are not employees at common law are treated in the same way as employees for income tax purposes. Remuneration received by a Religious Practitioner from a Religious Institution is to be treated as follows:

- Payments to a Religious Practitioner for activities carried out in the pursuit of a vocation as a Religious Practitioner and as a member of a Religious Institution are subject to PAYG withholding tax.
- A Religious Institution making a payment to a religious Practitioner for the performance of such activities is required to make PAYG Withholding deductions and required to issue a PAYG Payment Summary to the Religious Practitioner at the end of each tax year.
- Under the ABN and GST law all activities performed by a Religious Practitioner as a member of a Religious Institution will be taken to be the activities of the Religious Institution. As a result, the Religious Practitioner will not be eligible to register for GST or for an ABN for these activities. Religious Practitioner may be entitled to an ABN for other activities if they satisfy the criteria for recognition as an enterprise.
- Fringe Benefits provided by the relevant Religious Institution to its ministers or employees in roles that meet the ATO criteria of a Religious Practitioner predominantly in respect of pastoral or related duties are exempt from Fringe Benefit Tax.

c. Stipend Sacrifice

Exempt Fringe Benefits are made available via stipend sacrifice where PAYG tax is withheld on that portion of the stipend paid after deducting Exempt Fringe Benefits (Non-Cash Benefits) as agreed upon by the Deacons' Court. The amount is not included in the minister's PAYG Payment Summary.

d. Type of Exempt Fringe Benefits Allowable

The tax legislation does not specify the type of benefits, which may be provided to ministers. However, it is important that Deacons' Courts observe reasonable limits on the provision of such benefits. The type of expenses which may be paid to ministers include (but are not limited to) –

- Expenses in relation to the purchase, financing and operating costs of a motor vehicle (including a bicycle) used for ministry purposes: expenses for local, domestic or international travel related to the pursuit of the minister's pastoral duties and professional development; expenses of the minister's spouse and/or children in directly accompanying the minister or his spouse on ministry related matters; and expenses of the minister's spouse in representing the minister on ministry related matters.
- Costs associated with the provision and upkeep of the residence in which the minister lives; eg. rent, loan repayments, electricity, water, gas, council rates, insurances, security monitoring and building maintenance. Where a loan has a redraw facility any amount redrawn should not exceed the amounts previously repaid from sources other than the Exempt Fringe Benefits.
- Education, professional development, supervision, mentoring and professional debriefing costs for the minister, including but not limited to books, DVD's etc, conference fees.
- Ministry related expenses including but not limited to telephone, mobile, fax, internet connection, subscriptions, periodicals, newspapers, computer software and hardware, provision of home office furniture, equipment and supplies, clerical clothing, hospitality and cleaning costs, gifts made in relation to ministry (eg. free will offering) and other expenses incurred in respect of the minister's duties.
- Education expenses of the minister's dependent children
- Private health insurance premiums for the minister and his family
- Personal contributions to superannuation.
- Other expenses of the ministry that have been approved by Synod.

e. Type of Exempt Fringe Benefits Not Allowable

Expenses not allowable as Exempt Fringe Benefits include:

- Fines or penalties imposed by Federal, State or Local Government such as traffic infringement notices;
- Taxation levies, (including payment for the preparation of annual; returns);
- Child support or other CentreLink payments;
- Offerings and donations to Deductible Gift Recipients;
- Tax deductible costs (ie. payment from these amounts cannot be used as tax deductions); and
- Cash withdrawals;

f. Limits on Stipend Sacrifice (Exempt Fringe benefits)

Currently the tax legislation does not limit the amount of the stipend, which can be sacrificed under stipend sacrifice arrangements. However, it is reiterated that Deacons' Courts observe reason limits on the use of those arrangements. A failure to observe reasonable limits may lead the government to limit the relevant tax exemption, which currently applies to those arrangements.

The Committee therefore considered limits placed by six other churches on the amount of Exempt Fringe Benefits provided to ministers. These ranged from 30% to 50% of their minimum stipend paid.

Remembering then that the benefits provided under this exemption are "fringe benefits" (something regarded as peripheral, marginal, secondary etc.), and the need for the church to observe reasonable limits on the use of them, the Committee recommends that the maximum level of Stipend Sacrifice allowed by Deacons' Courts be 40% of the Synod approved minimum stipend.

Deacons' Courts and ministers should keep in mind that while in theory 100% of stipend could be provided in the fringe benefits, the stipulation provided by the Taxation Office is that the benefits are fringe benefits under the Act and do not retain the nature of income.

However, it should be noted that where the Commissioner believes that a “scheme” has been entered into for the specific purpose of avoiding a taxation liability then he could invoke anti-avoidance provisions of the Fringe Benefits Tax Assessment and/or the Income Assessment Act.

3. Stipend Relief

On 6th March 2017 a request from Brisbane Deacons’ Court via petition to Northern Presbyter was received for Stipend Relief of up to \$20,000. Subsequently Northern Presbytery advised they applied resolution of Synod 2016 (16.54) viz.

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)

As a result \$5,000 was contributed to the *Synod Stipend Relief Fund* by a congregation within its bounds to help provide for the request from Brisbane Deacons’ Court.

As at 31st December 2016 the balance of *Synod Stipend Relief Fund* was \$12,771. It is therefore recommended that all applications made for stipend relief be:

- Strictly on a quarterly needs basis.
- 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.
- Subject to the availability of funds.

4. The Capital Assistance Fund

As at 31/12/16 assets totalled \$814,034 which was an increase of \$21,789 (2.8%) on 2015. The increase resulted from interest received, share dividends and revaluations, the annual \$50 rent from St Georges Deacons’ Court.

Loans –

As at 31st December 2016 no loans were outstanding. The outstanding balance of \$12,900 on a loan of \$15,000 granted to the Hunter-Barrington Deacons’ Court by Synod 2015 was fully repaid on 20th October 2016.

5. Congregational Financial Management

Synod 2016 resolved (Minutes 16.49.5) “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.

The Committee recommends current legislation *Congregational Financial Records & Auditing* (Handbook 3.15) be updated as detailed in Appendix “B”.

6. Estimates (Major Working Funds Receipts/Payments)

Estimates have been made for the major working funds to 31/12/17 – See Appendix “A”

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. We are again thankful to God for the sufficiency of temporal blessing during 2016 and pray for wisdom in the administration of such in 2017.

2. Adjustment of the Minimum Stipend, Cash and Non-cash components (Excluding Manse, Car and Telephone) for 2017/2018 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. The maximum level of Stipend Sacrifice (Non-Cash-Benefits) allowed by Deacons' Courts be 40% of the Synod approved minimum stipend.

4. Stipend Assistance of up to \$20,000 for 2016/2017 be granted to Brisbane Deacons' Court as follows:

- 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.
- Subject to the availability of funds.

5. Current legislation *Congregational Financial Records & Auditing* (Handbook 3.15) be replaced with *Congregational Financial Management* as detailed in Appendix "B"

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GENERAL TREASURER

1. Financial Needs

All financial needs of the Synod were adequately provided for during 2016 with total funds decreasing by \$20,270 (1%) to \$1,950,918 after allowing for \$259,222 held on behalf of others (Mission Fields, GST, Congregation Bequests etc.)

Net changes occurred in:

Capital Funds	\$ (2,349)
Working Funds	\$ (17,921)

Net Decrease in Funds	\$ (20,270)
	=====

The decrease in Capital Funds resulted from the revaluation of investments held in equities (Shares in individual companies and Managed Funds) as at 31/12/16.

The decrease in Working Funds was mainly in the Missions accounts (General) and (Missions Relief Fund) where income from givings and investments were insufficient to cover expenditure.

2. Contributions to Synod Funds and Other Missions etc. by Congregations

Contributions of \$23,059 by congregations to Synod Funds during 2016 decreased by \$2,288 (12%). Givings of \$24,411 to other Specified Missions increased by \$2,525 (12%). Refer to the Congregational Contributions Summary at back of the Financial Statements and Note 5 on page 5 for further detail.

3. Synod General Working Funds

Synod General Working Funds held as at 31/12/16 were \$58,042. This was an increase of \$1,176 on 2015.

4. Books of Account Audit

An unqualified audit report of the books of account has been obtained from Mr Richard W Partlett A.C.A., GPA Accountants and is included in the published Financial Statements.

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FINANCE COMMITTEE - APPENDIX "A"

**BUDGET - SYNOD MAJOR WORKING FUNDS
for twelve months ending 31/12/17**

Fund	Balance as at 30/12/2012	Estimated Income Int/Divnds to 12/17	Estimated Givings & Other	Estimated Expenditure to 12/17	Estimated Surplus (Deficit)	Estimated Balance 31/12/17	Estimated Deficit Balances 31/12/17
Capital Assistance Fund	814,034	20,000	0		20,000	834,034	
Church Extension	1,414	35	100	1,391	-1,256	158	
Stipend Relief	12,771	2,300	7,400	20,000	-10,300	2,471	
Missions - General	4,812	?	?	Not available 20th March 2017			
Missions - (Legg/AIM)	0	?	?	Not available 20th March 2017			
Miss Relief (Equities)	167,911	?	?	Not available 20th March 2017			
Miss Rel (Working Fnd)	1,441	?	?	Not available 20th March 2017			
Training of Ministry	179,873	8,000	1,400	20,000	-10,600	169,273	
Youth & Fellowship	8,371	?	?	Not available 20th March 2017			
General Funds	58,042	4,000	1,500	0	5,500	63,542	

Notes:

1. The Missions Committee and Youth & Fellowship Committee had not supplied budgets by 20th March (due date for submission of reports)

CONGREGATIONAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Deacons' Court is to see that mandatory Government Legislation is complied with including:

- . Australian Business Register
- . Australian Taxation Office
- . Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

Australian Business Register (ABR)

The Deacons' Court is to apply for an Australian Business Number (ABN) through the ABR.

Australian Taxation Office (ATO)

The Deacons' Court is to register for Goods and Service Tax (GST) through the ABR. Charity Tax Concessions are to be applied for including GST Concession, FBT Rebate and Income Tax Exemption.

Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) is the independent national regulator of charities.

The Deacons' Court is to register with the ACNC as a "basic religious charity" but is not required to meet set governance standards set by them as other charities are. However, the Deacons' Court is to comply with regulations set by Synod to ensure the court is run in an accountable and responsible manner.

It is to submit an *Annual Information Statement* as at 31st December, to the ACNC and advise of any changes to the detail recorded on their register when it occurs.

Function of Deacons' Court

The Deacons' Court gathers the monetary contributions of the congregation, takes charge of them and any moneys received by or for the congregation and disburses them for the purpose for which they were contributed.

Treasurer

Each Deacons' Court appoints one or more treasurers, not necessarily member(s) of the Deacons' Court. He receives, disburses and accounts for all moneys under the care of the Deacons' Court as it directs and produces for inspection when required all books of account together with relevant vouchers. He promptly deposits all moneys received in an Australian Deposit-Taking Institution (banks, building societies and credit unions – corporations authorised by the Government under the *Banking Act 1959* to take deposits from customers) account in the name of " Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia - <Name> Congregation". At least two persons as appointed by the Deacons' Court are required to authorise disbursement of funds except in circumstances specifically agreed to by the Court.

Church offerings are to be counted by two persons designated by the Deacons' Court while in each other's presence and details recorded and initialed by both persons.

Financial Accounting

The Deacons' Court is to keep proper and adequate books of account and other financial records as appropriate. As at 31st December each year it is to produce a financial report for the preceding twelve months including a Balance Sheet (Assets/Liabilities/Equity), Statement of Income and Expenditure and explanatory notes as required.

Annual Financial Report - Review or Audit

The ACNC classifies charities into:

Small Charities Annual revenue less than \$250,000

Medium Charities	Annual revenue \$250,000 to less than \$1m
Large Charities	Annual revenue \$1m or over

They require a Review or Audit of the congregation's Annual Financial Report as follows:

Small Charities	None required
Medium Charities	Review or Audit
Large Charities	Audit

While the ACNC does not require Small Charities to submit a Review or Audit report with their *Annual Information Statement*, SYNOD requires either a Review or Audit report to form part of the congregation's Annual Financial Report when presenting it to the Presbytery of the bounds for attestation (see 2.33). Congregations classified as Medium Charities must submit either a Review or Audit Report to the ACNC with their *Annual Information Statement*.

Persons qualified to conduct a:

Review

- a registered company auditor
- an audit firm
- an authorised audit company
- a current member of a relevant professional body, CPA Australia – CPAA (CPA or FCPA designation), Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand – CAANZ (CA or FCA designation) or Institute of Public Accountants – IPA (FIPA or MIPA designation).

Audit

- a registered company auditor
- an audit firm
- an authorised audit company.

A *Review* involves a lower level of examination/assurance of the financial report and attracts a lower fee by the reviewer for the service provided.

Attestation of Financial Report

After the accounts have been duly prepared and the Financial Report reviewed or audited it is submitted to the Presbytery of the Bounds for attestation if the Presbytery finds it in order. Once attested the Financial Report is ready to be presented at the annual meeting of the Deacons' Court with the congregation (see 2.33)

NSW TRUST CORPORATION
‘THE TRUSTEES OF THE SYNOD OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA’

Members: Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer

Bequests

No new bequests were received by Synod during 2016.

Deed Box

The Locked Deed Box of the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia is lodged with the National Australia Bank Ltd, 163 Rowe Street, Eastwood NSW.

Deeds lodged during 2016:

- 22/04/16 – Certificates of Title Id 14/1197867, Id 16/1197876, Id 17/1197876 Tinonee
- 09/08/16 - Qualified Certificate of Title Ref 1/1192270 Glenridding Cemetery
- 09/08/16 - Certificate of Title Ref 83/1106476 Gulmarrad Manse

Deeds uplifted during 2016:

- 28/09/16 – Qualified Certs of Title Ref 101/1122138 & 102/1122138 Barrington Church
- 05/10/16 – Old System documents Barrington Church:
 - Conveyance Regd No 841 Book 620
 - Mortgage to Bank of Australasia Regd No. 69 Book 638
 - Conveyance Regd No.153 Book 873
 - Conveyance Regd No.129 Book 867
 - Conveyance Regd No.711 Book 1482

An audit of the contents of the Deed Box was conducted by the Moderator and Treasurer on 14/3/17 and found to be in order.

Common Seal Applications

Applications during 2016 were:

<u>No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Document Executed</u>
239	25/03/16	Contract – Purchase 36 Bruce Drive, Gulmarrad
240	05/08/16	Letter of Consent/Appointment of Agent – St Georges steeple restoration
241	18/08/16	Contract – Sale Barrington church
242	18/08/16	Transfer – Sale Barrington church

Investments: Specified Capital Funds (Bequests) -

Review of Results as at 31/12/16

DIVERSIFICATION

<i>Actual as at 31/12/16</i>		<i>Asset Class</i>	<i>Investment Strategy</i>	
<i>Amount</i>	<i>Percentage</i>		<i>Benchmark</i>	<i>Range</i>
148,484	45%	Cash (Banks) 1 st Regd	5%	5% - 10%
0	0%	Mtges	30%	20% - 40%
0	0%	Debentures	15%	10% - 25%
181,307	55%	Shares/Units	50%	40% - 60%
336,491	100%		100%	

No change in the spread of investments was made during 2016.

Return:

Growth –

Total Trust Funds (Specified Capital Funds) decreased by \$6,701 (2%) during 2016 against a Target of 1.5% (CPI). “Real value” (keeping up with inflation) was not therefore achieved. When CPI is taken into account since 1998 total Capital Funds lag behind by \$120,119 (26%) as at 31/12/16 (24% 2015).

Income – income of \$12,827 represented a return of 3.81% against a target of 2.59% (2016 average official cash interest rate of 1.59% plus 1.00%).

Summary –

Diversification – To minimise risk and achieve a reasonable return in a climate of low inflation and low interest rates, investments are only held in Banks and Equities (mostly in the financial sector).

Investment Strategy Objectives – not achieved in *Growth*, at only minus 2% but exceeded in *Income* by achieving a 4% return.

Proposed Deliverances: Nil.

QUEENSLAND TRUST CORPORATION
'PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA'
Members: Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer

Deed Box and Common Seal: The title deeds of the Church Property at Kalinga are held in the Locked Deed Box of the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia with the National Australia Bank Ltd, 163 Rowe Street Eastwood NSW. The Common Seal is held by the Clerk of Synod. There were no applications of the Common Seal in 2016.

Proposed Deliverances: Nil.

THE TRUSTEES FOR VICTORIA OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA [TVIC]

Incorporated by the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Property Act, Victoria 1953.

Trustees: R. S. Ward (Secretary 2013), Clerk (T .I. Leggott), Treasurer (A. H. Steel), D. J. Kerridge, R. A. Lawson

1. Property Holdings

No changes since the full listing in 2015.

2. Bequests

None reported

3. Contents of Custody Packet at NAB Eastwood

The last three-yearly Report (as required by Synod 2008) was delayed but duly occurred on 14 March 2017 with all titles in the box plus the Student Bond for Duncan Hickey. The next inspection should therefore be made in 2020 prior to Synod of that year.

4. Common Seal Applications during 2016

None

5. Investments

Current returns from fixed deposits are around 2.3 – 2.5%, not even covering typical *real* inflation. The only option in many cases is equity investment in shares of some of our well-established companies where returns of 8% including tax credits are readily obtainable, but at the risk of short-term fluctuation in value up or down. This is not a major issue where holdings are long-term. Also if holdings are realized at a loss down the track one has to take account of the higher income they have generated while held (in 2016, 6.5% including tax credits on value at beginning of year; much higher based on original cost). While capital growth has exceeded 33% since 1998 it has still fallen short of matching inflation over much of that period (about 56%). The last time we matched accumulated inflation since 1998 was in 2010.

During the year we sold for \$1,611 the 347 free shares in Clydesdale Bank we received as part of the demerger from NAB and took up the offer of a further \$15,000 Argo shares.

TVIC's Investment Strategy's Objectives as approved by Synod are:

- **CAPITAL:** To grow Bequest Funds by the rate of inflation. Inflation was 1.5% for year ended 31/12/16. The result in 2016 was plus **0.25%**.
- **INCOME:** To achieve income from Bequest Funds of 1.00%pa above the Official Cash Rate set by the Reserve Bank of Australia. - Cash Rate 31/12/16 was 1.5% (2.0% at the beginning of the year). The result was **5.2%** if \$5,006 of tax credits had been received in 2016 (if fact they were late coming in February 2017 due to an error at the ATO.)

The allocation according to the investment strategy approved by Synod 2014 was:

<i>Asset Class</i>	<i>Benchmark</i>	<i>Range permitted</i>	<i>Allocation 31/12/2016</i>
Cash/mortgages/debentures	30	25-35	31
Shares/units	70	65-75	69

6. Succession planning

Pursuant to Act of Synod 2013, the initial 5 year period for Messrs Ward, Kerridge and Lawson set by Synod 2013 will cease at midnight on 30 June 2018. Mr Leggott and Mr Steel are trustees by virtue of their offices as Synod Clerk and Treasurer respectively. Mr Stewart Loudon, BBus, LLB (2014) who was admitted to practice as a solicitor in 2016 and has an earlier banking and finance background. An elder in Narre Warren, we recommend he be associated with meetings of the trustees but for convenience the proposal has been brought up in the Law and Advisory Report.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

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