

The Synod of Eastern Australia



Minutes

**Of the 170th Annual Meeting
Held at Mt Druitt NSW
2nd May to 4th May 2017**

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

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17.1 OPENING

Within the Mt Druitt Church building of the Hawkesbury Nepean congregation, on Tuesday 2nd May 2017, at 4.30pm, the Synod of Eastern Australia met. The Moderator Rev David Kerridge took the chair, extended a welcome and constituted the meeting leading in prayer. Those gathered joined in praise, singing from Psalm 63:1-8.

17.2 MODERATOR’S SERMON

Mr Kerridge read from Ephesians 4:1-16, 5:1-21 and Revelation 2:1-7 and spoke of the Lord’s letter to the Church at Ephesus under the four heads: the good news, the bad news, the exhortation and the reward. Those gathered led in the singing of Psalm 95:1-7 and the moderator led in prayer. The Clerk thanked Mr Kerridge for his sermon.

17.3 ROLLS OF PRESBYTERIES

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

Northern Presbytery

Brisbane
Hastings
Northern Rivers

Ministers

JD Klazinga †
Vacant
DJ Kerridge

Commissioned Elders

S Carswell
G Hamilton
R Campbell

Central Presbytery

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

DK Muldoon
R Tso
GD Ball
JA McCallum

TM Reeve
AH Steel
DP Smith
DA McIntosh

Synod Appointment: TI Leggott (Seconded to AIM)

Southern Presbytery

Geelong
Knox
All Nations
Narre Warren
Ulverstone

Vacant
AA Miranda
TW Yoa
S Bajema
JA Scheepers (not present)

DPT Manly
J Dekter
RS Ward
T Buck †
ID Hamilton

17.4 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Rev George Ball introduced delegates from other churches: Rev John Forbes, presently visiting Australia and from the Free Church of Scotland, Rev Ian Hall from the Southern Presbyterian Church, Elder Graeme Mitchell from the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia. Rev. Bruce Backensto, delegate from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, with his wife Kim. The moderator welcomed these brethren. It was resolved that these brothers be associated with the court.

17.5 ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

The Clerk presented the Administration Committee’s Report, noting that he failed to report the passing of Rev Edwin Lee in the report. It was resolved that the report be received. There was some modification suggested for the Committee Structure and it was resolved to defer further consideration to a later session.

The Clerk presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved that:

1. That Synod note the passing of Rev Edwin Lee during 2016 and include the following memorial minute, and that a copy be sent to Mt Lee’s daughter Dr Dorothy Lee representing the family.

Rev Edwin Lee, MA, 'Ted' to many Synod members, died in Geelong on 26 October 2016 some two weeks short of his 94th birthday. An Englishman who served in the Royal Navy and later studied at the Free Church of Scotland College, he was invited to Australia and was ordained and inducted to the East St Kilda Congregation on 21 October 1959. He served this congregation until April 1966 but after a ministry in Dundee he returned to Australia and served the Manning River PCEA from late 1970 to early 1990, when he retired. He continued actively assisting and served for periods as an elder in Armidale and in Geelong where he undertook further studies and was awarded in 2010 a PhD on the life and thought of John Buchan a few months after his beloved wife, Barbara, died.

Edwin's main work at Synod level was on Missions but he played an active and positive role in Synod debates and also was Moderator of Synod four times. The last Synod meeting he attended was that in Geelong in 2001. His clear and lively preaching, his active visiting, his keen sense of humour, his gracious companionship, his compassion and understanding, endeared himself to the congregations he served and to the wider church.

2. That the following examiners of records be appointed:

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

3. That in the Congregational Statistics the age bracket currently listed as 19-64 in the "church community by age" column be further divided in future into 19-30, 31-45, 45-64.

17.6 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and the session was closed with Mr McCallum leading in prayer at 5.40pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

DJ Kerridge
Moderator

The session was opened with praise from Psalm 84:1-7 and the Moderator leading in prayer at 7.00pm.

17.7 MINUTES

The minutes of Session 1 were read and confirmed.

17.8 ELECTION OF MODERATOR

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

17.9 MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

The Moderator led the court in prayer. He then read from Genesis 1 and addressed Synod on the subject: The Bible and Science, Conflict and Compromise. The Moderator then led the court in prayer. Mr Reeve addressed the court in expressing thanks to the Moderator for his address.

17.10 PRESBYTERY REPORTS

The report of Northern Presbytery was presented. It was resolved that the report be received. Mr Yoa led the court in Prayer

The report of Central Presbytery was presented. It was resolved that the report be received. It was noted that the Preaching Station of Sydney South had closed toward the end of 2016. Mr Bajema led the court in prayer.

The report of Southern Presbytery was presented. It was resolved that the report be received. Mr Ball led the court in prayer.

17.11 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and read and the session was closed at 8.33pm with the singing of Psalm 148:1-10 and the Moderator closing in prayer.

TI Leggott
Clerk

DK Muldoon
Moderator

The session was opened with prayer and the singing of praise from 104:1-9 at 9.00am. The Moderator read from 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 and shared a meditation from the passage focussing on the subject The Wisdom of the World.

17.12 MINUTES

The minutes of Session 2 were read and confirmed.

17.13 LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

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.

It was agreed to defer consideration of the proposed deliverance relating to Fringe Benefits.

3. 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.
4. 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 approved Australian Deposit Taking Institutions as are deemed expedient without reference to the body corporate.
 - b. The Synod substitute Stewart Andrew Loudon (born 1972) for Ronald Arthur Lawson in the list of trustees in the amendment of the Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act 1918 approved by Synod 2013.
 - c. 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 the amendment (Kerridge, Ward and Loudon) 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.
5. 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.

6. 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'

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

17.14 NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr Reeve presented his motion and it was seconded:

1. That Synod promote a fuller consideration of the proposed new legislation of Safe Church matters (Safe Church Policy, Code of Conduct, Revised Guidelines for Church Workers and Agreements with other denominations), resolve to defer Proposed Deliverance 7 & 8 as printed in the reports, (6&7 above) until 2018, and direct that Presbyteries carefully look at this proposal as well as their own State Government statutes, submitting their recommendations to the Law & Advisory Committee by November 2017.
2. That Synod delegate to the Clerks of Presbyteries the responsibility of organising suitable training for office bearers and church workers in the protection of children and all members and adherents.

On being put to the vote the notice of motion was preferred over the proposed deliverance. It was resolved in favour of the notice of motion as printed above.

The Convener continued with the final proposed deliverance 8 and it was resolved:

8. 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.

17.15 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATE FROM ANOTHER CHURCH

The moderator welcomed Mr Arthur Adams, delegate from the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia, and it was resolved that he be associated with the court.

17.16 TRAINING OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE

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

The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved:

1. 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.
2. 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 "Evaluators" be understood and generally used to refer to all.
3. 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), be recorded in the PCEA Handbook for easy reference.

17.17 CLOSURE OF SESSION

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

TI Leggott
Clerk

DK Muldoon
Moderator

The session was opened at 2.00pm with praise from Psalm 49:1-10 and Mr Campbell leading in prayer.

17.18 MINUTES

The minutes of Session 3 were read and confirmed.

17.19 TRAINING OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE (CONTINUED)

The convener continued with the proposed deliverances and it was resolved:

4. That the Synod authorise the continued development 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.

It was resolved to meet in closed court to meet with student Mr Duncan Hickey. The Convener welcomed Mr Hickey and invited him share about his training experience during the past year. Mr Hickey shared and answered questions about his studies, his placement on the Hunter with preaching and pastoral experience opportunities.

The Convener continued with proposed deliverance 1 as printed in the reports. It was resolved:

5. 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.

Mr Miranda led the court in prayer and commended Mr Hickey to the Lord for his studies and preparation for ministry. Mr Hickey was excused from the meeting.

17.20 NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr Kerridge presented his motion and it was seconded:

That, for the purposes of clarification of existing legislation and to assist prospective students, the paragraph of the Handbook under the heading *Student Training and Allowances*, p32 (2016 edition) now be amended to read:

The Normal Course consist of a 3 year Degree course at a recognised University or like institution and the successful completion of the MDiv. (or equivalent) at Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne, Reformed Theological College, Geelong, or Christ College, Sydney. An equivalent 3 year course of study at Edinburgh Theological Seminary may be undertaken. Other Colleges with a comparable standard may be approved by Synod after consideration of their confessional statements and current Faculty.

The motion was defeated. After some discussion and comment it was resolved to meet in open court.

17.21 CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Muldoon, being Moderator, vacated the chair and Mr Kerridge took the chair. Mr Muldoon presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and after discussion it was resolved that:

1. We thank the Lord that the Federal Marriage Act has not been changed, and continue to pray 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.

The Mr Muldoon returned to the chair.

17.22 MEDIA COMMITTEE

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

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

A time of discussion followed with suggestions and comments particularly regarding the continuance of the production of a hard copy of the magazine.

17.23 WEBSITE

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

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

17.24 ARCHIVIST

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

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

17.25 YOUTH & FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

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

1. Synod recognises the importance of giving special attention to children and youth in the Church and commits to keep praying for the work of Sunday-school teachers, and youth leaders, serving God in our local congregations.
2. Synod thanks Mrs Margaret Kinder and Mrs Irene Steel for their dedication to create new and fun ways for children to learn the truths of the gospel.
3. In addition to the responsibilities of shepherding God's flock, Synod members are also invited to enthusiastically encourage church members to participate in 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 and the 2017 Youth Camp.

Mr Tso led the court in prayer.

17.26 MISSIONS COMMITTEE

The Convener was absent and Mr Muldoon had been asked to present the report. The Moderator invited Mr Kerridge to take the chair so he could present the report. He presented the report and it was resolved that the report be received. It was resolved that:

1. Synod express its ongoing commitment to missions by encouraging the congregations to give generously and continue praying for the mission works we support.
2. 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 2017, with a review of his ministry and support at Synod 2018.
3. 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. 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. Synod adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2017 – 2018 and expresses its general agreement with the estimates for the aforementioned period.

Synod expressed thanks to Mrs Anna Ward for her provision of prayer points and other information regarding CWI for a number of years.

The moderator returned to the chair.

17.27 INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

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

1. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia gives thanks to God for the churches with whom we have formal fraternal relations and for those churches with whom we have contact and resolve to pray for the Lord's blessing upon their work and witness.
2. 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 Rowland Ward as voting delegates to the ICRC meeting in Ontario, Canada, in July 2017.
4. Synod approve payment of a contribution towards travelling expenses (airfare, travel insurance) of the delegates to the ICRC to the amount of \$1,000 each.
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.

17.28 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Mr Ball introduced Rev. Bruce Backensto, delegate from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and the moderator invited him to address Synod. Mr Backensto brought greetings from his church and shared about some of the very positive ministries of the denomination both at home and overseas.

Mr Ball introduced Rev. John Forbes, delegate from the Free Church of Scotland, and the moderator invited him to address Synod. Mr Forbes brought greetings from the Free Church of Scotland noting the long association that the church had had with the PCEA. He shared about some of the latest developments with the Free Church noting that many changes had taken place in recent years.

17.29 CLOSURE OF SESSION

The session was closed with Mr Steel leading in prayer at 6.00pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

DK Muldoon
Moderator

The session was opened with praise singing from Psalm 1 at 7.18pm. The Moderator welcomed visitors to the meeting.

17.30 MINUTES

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

17.31 MISSIONS EVENING

The Moderator introduced sister Vida Jurkovic and she shared about the work of the Lithuanian Christian Literature Fellowship. She spoke about the work of Bible translation and provision of Christian literature for Lithuania for over 24 years. There continued to be a great need for Gospel ministry in that country. The Lord had provided for the development of a local bookshop and publishing company and this had allowed for continuing progress in the provision of translated literature.

Mr Muldoon thanked Mrs Jurkovic and Mr McIntosh led the court in prayer.

The Moderator introduced Mariam Hussain and she shared about the work at the Taleem Centres in Northern India. Mariam shared about the work that her father had started providing education for Muslim children in their village and surrounding area. Mariam had lost both her mother and father whilst still young and that the family lived under persecution and great difficulty. She shared how she felt led of the Lord to continue with what her father started. Mariam shared some photos about the local area, her present work and her family.

Mr Muldoon thanked Mariam and led the court in prayer.

The Moderator invited Becky and Emma Graham to share about their visit to Mukti Mission. Emma and Becky shared a number of slides about the ministries conducted at the centre with the ladies and children. There was a hospital, dental clinic, an aged care unit, a nursing home, care provided for the disabled, and a nursery for the new-born. There was an English Medium School and a Secondary School with grades from 5-10, and a Junior College for grades 11-12. The property was about 200 acres and Mukti is looking to fence the whole property to help with security. They are self-sufficient with water through wells and they provide their own electricity. They produce crops and have their own dairy.

Mr Muldoon thanked Becky and Emma and Mr Ward led the court in prayer.

The Moderator invited Mr Leggott to share about his work with AIM. Trevor gave an update on the recent developments with the finalisation of the class action relating to the Retta Dixon Home and the progress with plans for AIM to join with Pioneers Australia. In this process there appeared to be opportunity to encourage greater participation for the local AIM churches in NSW, Qld and the NT to take up the challenge of being more self-sufficient.

17.32 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and distributed and the session was closed with Mr Glen Hamilton leading in prayer at 9.15pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

DK Muldoon
Moderator

The session was opened with praise singing from Psalm 89:1-8 and the Moderator leading in prayer. The Moderator read from Isaiah 29:11-16 and then shared again from 1 Corinthians 1 18-25 with special reference to the Gentiles. Mr Kerridge led the court in prayer.

17.33 MINUTES

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

17.34 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES (CONTINUED)

Mr Ball introduced Rev Ian Hall delegate from the Southern Presbyterian Church, and the moderator invited him to address Synod. Mr Hall brought the greetings of the church and spoke of the genuine warmth between the two denominations. He commented on a very good church camp with a number of churches being represented. He spoke of the challenge of ministry in a small church and spoke of the great need to reach out to non-Christians, most especially through personal contact. Church members needed to be encouraged and lifted up through good ministry and fellowship.

Mr Ball introduced Elder Graeme Mitchell delegate from the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia, and the moderator invited him to address Synod. Mr Mitchell brought the greetings of the church. (His address is included as an appendix to the minutes)

The Moderator thanked the men for their addresses and Mr Reeve led the court in prayer.

The Moderator invited Rev Tut Yoa to share about the current situation in Southern Sudan. There was such terrible problems with this new country it was tearing it apart. There were 64 tribes but with one tribe, the Dinka tribe, dominating. The economy had collapsed and people are dying from hunger even in the capital. People are fleeing the country in desperation. It is very difficult to help from Australia because there is no effective way of sending support. All Nations is also struggling with grief and also because of the need to try and support people back home.

Mr Leggott led the court in prayer.

17.35 SUPERANNUATION COMMITTEE

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

1. The Superannuation Levy on congregations be reviewed and adjusted on 1st July and 1st January in accordance with the minimum stipend review. The figures to be advised by the Committee in due time.
2. 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.

Mr Carswell led the court in prayer.

17.36 FINANCE COMMITTEE

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

1. We 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.

It was resolved to consider Law and Advisory Committee proposed deliverance 3 together with the Finance Committee Proposed Deliverance 3 as below:

3. The maximum level of Stipend Sacrifice (Non-Cash-Benefits) allowed by Deacons' Courts be 40% of the Synod approved minimum stipend.

Law and Advisory Proposed Deliverance 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.

Synod rule that exempt fringe benefits are not to be paid for fines or penalties; personal super; shares, investments and the like; Centre-link payments and or child support under DHS; tax; cash withdrawals from an exempt fringe benefit account (if they occur they are taxable income) or withdrawal of such benefits from a mortgage which has received them. NB. Items paid as an exempt fringe benefit cannot also be claimed as a tax deduction.

The Moderator ruled the Law and Advisory Committee Proposal out of order.

It was moved and seconded that the Moderator's ruling be overturned. The motion was approved and the Moderator's ruling was overturned.

After consideration it was resolved that the Finance Committee Proposed Deliverance 3 was preferred. It was resolved in favour of the Finance Committee Proposed Deliverance 3:

3. The maximum level of Stipend Sacrifice (Non-Cash-Benefits) allowed by Deacons' Courts be 40% of the Synod approved minimum stipend.

Mr Ward tendered a dissent with the following reasons: The 50% limit is a reasonable one with a number of ministers receiving this level, some of whom were not able to be present at the vote. The effect is to seriously impact the net income of those ministers forthwith when a legal provision of 50% has been employed similar to a number of other conservative churches. I believe that implementation of the 40% non-cash benefit decision should be deferred until Synod 2018.

A number of delegates had left earlier to catch flights home.

The Convener continued with the deliverances. It was further resolved:

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”.

17.37 NOTICE OF MOTION

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

New 3.14a

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

The Deacons' Court is:

- to act with reasonable care and diligence
- to act honestly and fairly in the best interests of the charity and for its charitable purposes
- not to misuse their position or information they gain as a responsible person
- to disclose conflicts of interest
- to ensure that the financial affairs of the charity are managed responsibly, and
- not to allow the charity to operate while it is in solvent. [Presbytery must be promptly advised if there is any risk of this occurring.]

The Deacons' Court is to ensure that:

- a. an ABN is secured for the congregation.
- b. the Congregation is registered with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission [ACNC] as a 'basic religious charity' and submits the Annual Information Statement for each calendar year not later than the prescribed cut-off date (currently 30 June following), as well as promptly advising any changes to persons, contact details or other matters on the ACNC register as they occur.
- c. the Congregation is duly registered with the Australian Taxation Office for GST, FBT Rebate and Income Tax Exemption, and submits a quarterly Business Activity Statement [BAS] in respect of Stipend and PAYG tax deductions and GST.
- d. the minister/s and any employees are issued with a PAYG payment summary immediately following 30th June each year and that the PAYG Payment Summary is sent to the Australian Taxation Office.
- e. financial records are accessible and available for seven years.

Add to 3.15c the words in italics:

The auditor shall be a competent person or persons not being a member of the Deacons' Court *or related to a member of the Deacons' Court*, preferably *independent of the Congregation and having accountancy or book-keeping experience. The Auditors declaration shall be to the following effect unless a review or audit to Australian Accountancy Standards is employed:*

- *I have seen records in the church offering book that match amounts deposited in the bank.*
- *I have seen bank and other documentation that verifies funds at end of year are invested as stated.*
- *I have seen documentation that supports the expenditure shown.*
- *I consider that there are no material misstatements and that the accounts represent a true and fair view of the Congregation's financial position.*

It is not a legal requirement at present (May 2017) for 'basic religious charities' with revenue under \$250,000 to submit financial statements to the ACNC although a review or audit to Australian Accountancy Standards is required above that level. Nevertheless, it is of course permissible and sometimes advisable for the Deacons' Court to arrange for a review or audit by a current member of a relevant professional accounting body even when such is not an ACNC requirement.

The motion was defeated. Mr Ward dissented with the reason that a number of delegates had left the meeting and some may be adversely affected by the decision.

17.38 GENERAL TREASURER'S REPORT

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

17.39 NSW TRUST CORPORATION

The Clerk presented the report on behalf of the Trustees. It was resolved that the report be received. There was an additional report regarding the Glenridding Cemetery. It was resolved that the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia be authorised to negotiate the sale or dispersal of the PCEA portion of the Glenridding Cemetery to the Uniting Church of Australia, with the intent that the whole of the closed cemetery would be placed under the care of the Singleton Council.

17.40 QUEENSLAND TRUST CORPORATION

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

17.41 THE TRUSTEES FOR VICTORIA

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

1. Synod commend to our people giving by bequest to aid the extension of the Gospel in Australia and overseas.
2. Synod note the resignation of Mr Ron Lawson and thank him for his service as a trustee since his appointment in 2013. Synod appoint Mr Stewart Andrew Loudon of 36 Wellington Avenue, Blackburn 3130 [born 1972] a trustee under the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Property Act 1953, his initial term running to 30 June 2022 in terms of Act of Synod 2013.

17.42 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

It was resolved that the Committee Structure be as follows:

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

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

Inter-Church Relations: R Tso (Convener), GD Ball, S Bajema, T Leggott, RS Ward, GD Ball.

Church and Nation, Media: GD Ball, (Convener Church and Nation), DK Muldoon, 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: DK Muldoon (Convener), DP Smith, TI Leggott, JD Klazinga, J Greensill, R Ball.

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

17.43 REPORTS OF EXAMINERS OF RECORDS

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

17.44 MODERATOR-ELECT FOR SYNOD 2018

The Clerk nominated Rev TW Yoa. It was resolved that Mr Yoa be appointed Moderator-elect for Synod 2018.

17.45 TIME AND PLACE OF SYNOD 2018

The Clerk reported that the Manning Congregation had indicated their willingness to host Synod in 2018. It was resolved that Synod 2018 be hosted by the Manning Congregation at Taree from Tuesday 1st May 2018 to Thursday 3rd May 2018.

17.46 TREASURER'S REPORT RE COSTS INCURRED BY SYNOD 2017.

The General Treasurer, Mr AH Steel, gave an indication of costs incurred by Synod 2017 which, due once again to the generous provision of meals by the local congregation, was considerably less than might have been otherwise.

17.47 THANKS

Thanks were expressed for the generous hospitality provided by the local congregation. Mr Ward would express his thanks to the congregation members after the meeting.

The Moderator thanked the Clerk for his work and it was confirmed with acclamation. The Moderator thanked the Treasurer for his work and Synod members for their participation. The Moderator was thanked for his leading of the meetings and for his devotional messages.

17.48 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

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

17.49 CLOSURE OF SYNOD 2017

Synod 2017 was closed with praise singing from Psalm 133 and Mr Carswell closed with prayer at 1.00pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

DK Muldoon
Moderator

ACTS OF SYNOD 2017
Appended by the Direction of Synod (09.50)

Class 1 (Barrier Act Procedure)

No	Act	Reference
	None	

Class 2 (Others)

No	Act	Reference
1	Procedure if lack of Presbytery quorum between Synods	17.13.1
2	Requirements when solemnising a marriage	17.13.2
3	Privacy Act	17.13.3
4	Authority to open bank accounts (NSW Property Act)	17.13.4a
5	Use of property income (NSW Property Act)	17.13.5
6	Changes to Students/Ministers Application Form	17.14.8
7	Amendment of Mutual Eligibility Acts to require completed application form	17.27.5
8	Limit of 40% on Non-cash component of stipend	17.36.3
9		
10		
11		
12		

APPENDIX 1

Address to the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

4th May 2017

Mr Graeme Mitchell B.Sc Forestry (Hons), M. Div.

Moderator of the Presbytery, Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia

I thank Rev. Ball for his kind words of introduction.

I begin my address to the Synod with a brief reflection upon Ps 44:18. The context of this psalm is defeat and dishonour. Yet even in such circumstances, the psalmist testifies 'Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your way ...' That is true I think of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (PRCA). But while we have not departed from an earnest desire to walk in God's way, yet our steps have faltered too often because of blindness and folly. Yet, like the psalmist, we are able to testify: God is ever faithful.

The PRCA does not have a long history like PCEA, for the first congregation at Sutherland NSW will celebrate its 50th anniversary in December 2017. The congregation separated from the Presbyterian Church in NSW, the catalyst being the liberal theology widely promoted by Rev. Lloyd Geering. Although a New Zealander, Professor Geering made frequent visits to Australia and was granted many opportunities to preach and to speak, despite calls from some for him to be denied access to Presbyterian Church pulpits in Australia because of his theological views.

Following the separation of the Sutherland congregation from the Presbyterian Church in NSW in December 1967, the PRCA added other congregations but, at the same time, assumed an isolationist position, declining to fellowship with other faithful Presbyterian and Reformed churches, or indeed any other churches!

Rev. John Forbes, in his address to the Synod yesterday, mentioned changes in his own church in Scotland. The PRCA has been changing also, for the better I hope. As an example, I mention the establishment of an Inter-Church Relations Committee a few years ago, which for us was uncharted waters! Yet, by God's grace, we will enter into our first sister church relationship, with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, later this year.

Many of the items of business before this Synod have been of interest to me, for the PRCA Presbytery wrestled with many of the same issues just last week, e.g. Safe Church Policy, ministerial training and how best to maintain a viable publishing work. My prayer is that God will grant further opportunities for fruitful co-operation and mutual encouragement between our churches in the years ahead.

Lastly, it has been my privilege to represent PRCA here at this Synod as I took office as Moderator of the PRCA Presbytery only last Friday. So, on behalf of the PRCA, I bring warm and cordial greetings in Christ's Name to the commissioners of this Synod and also to the elders and deacons and to the members of each of your congregations. Thank you for the invitation extended to PRCA to be represented at this Synod and for the warm and genuine welcome you have extended to me these past three days and to Rev. Adams yesterday.