

# **The Synod of Eastern Australia**



**Set to meet at the  
Knox Church Melbourne  
Church 358 Mountain Hwy Wantirna  
Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia  
From 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020  
But postponed because of the  
COVID-19 Coronavirus**

## **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 2020**  
**{ TC "TIMETABLE" }**

Time	Dates to be advised	Time			
	<b>Synod to Commence with Session 1 at 4.30pm</b>	9.00am	<b>SESSION 3</b> Devotions and Prayer	<b>SESSION 6</b> Devotions and Prayer	<b>SESSION 9</b> Devotions and Prayer
		M/Tea 10.30am	Presbytery Reports	Youth and Fellowship	Superannuation Finance Trust Corporations Committee Structure Reports of Examiners of Records. Appointment of Moderator-elect Time and Place of Next Synod Closure of Synod
		12.30pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
4.30pm	<b>SESSION 1</b> Constitution of Synod Retiring Moderator's Sermon. Thanks to Retiring Moderator  Presbytery Rolls. Welcomes to new members, guests, associations etc.	2.00pm	<b>SESSION 4</b>  Training of Ministry  Inter-Church Relations	<b>SESSION 7</b>  Missions Speakers	<b>Synod Closes at the end of Session 9 at 12.30pm</b>  <b>Lunch to follow before delegates depart</b>
6.00pm	Dinner	6.00pm	Dinner	Dinner	
7.00pm	<b>SESSION 2</b>  Election of Moderator for 2019/2020 Moderator's address. Thanks to Moderator.  Administration	7.00pm	<b>SESSION 5</b>  Delegates from Other Churches	<b>SESSION 8</b>  Church and Nation Media (Banner & Website) Archivist	
7.30pm					
8.30pm	Close	8.30pm	Close	Close	

## ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE{ TC "ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE" }

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

**Timetable:** Synod has been postponed because of the COVID19 virus. The expectation is that the daily timetable will remain the same when we can set the dates.

**Congregational Statistics:** See the table appended to this report.

**Ministerial Movements:** There were no ministerial movements during 2019.

**Expression of Sympathy:** Two men who were ministers of the Free Church of Scotland and had been members of this Synod died in 2019. Memorial minutes are appended with a fuller record of each man in The Presbyterian Banner, March 2020.

The Rev. **John Pateman** was born in England in 1930 and, after service in the Merchant Navy and with the Fisherman's Mission, trained in Edinburgh and was ordained and inducted to East Kilbride Free Church in 1973. He was called and inducted to Hamilton PCEA on 25 April 1986 and retired in 1992 to Geelong, but returned to Hamilton in 1994 and supplied the congregation there faithfully until July 2001. There were no children of his marriage to Winnie who died in 2010. A Christian gentleman he died quietly and peacefully on 3 August 2019. A service in the Lutheran Eventide Home Chapel on 8 August was led by the Rev. David Schulz of Hamilton PCV who had provided pastoral care since our work was wound up in 2007.

The Rev. **John Stewart Graham** was born on Lewis, Scotland in 1939 and worked as a motor mechanic. He offered for the ministry and studied in Aberdeen (MA) and Edinburgh and was ordained on 17 October 1978 for work with CWI in Sydney. He had a seat on Central Presbytery from 1981 to 1994 and was Interim-Moderator of the new work at Sydney South from November 1988 seeing considerable encouragement. While he changed his position on the law of God as set out in the Westminster Confession and in due time lost ministerial standing with the Free Church of Scotland, he served with the PCA at Bondi from 1997 until 30 June 2019. A missionary at heart he worked hard when others would have given up. He died on 31 October 2019 from cancer which he had suffered from for some years.

**Synod Treasurer:** Mr John Audet, a member of Narre Warren congregation, has agreed to take have his name put forward to be appointed as Synod Treasurer from the rising of Synod. Mr Audet is currently not an office bearer, although he has been a deacon in the past. An amendment to the Handbook of Practice and Procedure is proposed to include: The treasurer is to be an office-bearer of the church, **(minister, elder or deacon) or a person who has subscribed the Vows and Formula as if an office-bearer.**

**Correspondence:** 1) Overture from Northern Presbytery concerning All Nations Congregation.

### **Proposed Deliverances:**

1. That the 5.6 of the Handbook of Practice and Procedure be modified to read: The Synod appoints a **treasurer** to gather, take charge of, disburse and account for all the funds held by the Synod as it may direct. The treasurer is to be an office-bearer of the church, (minister, elder or deacon) or a person who has subscribed the Vows and Formula as if an office-bearer, and if not a member of Synod is automatically associated so as to be able to speak on all matters relating to finance and by virtue of his office is a member of the New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland trust corporations.
2. Synod appoint Mr John Audet as Synod Treasurer from the rising of Synod 2020, and that such appointment would be dependent on Mr Audet subscribing to the Vows and Formula.
3. That Correspondence 1 be taken with the Presbytery Reports.
4. That the following examiners of records be appointed:

Northern Presbytery	Rev D Muldoon and All Nations elder.
Central Presbytery	Rev AA Miranda and Hastings elder.



**CONGREGATIONAL STATISTICS AS AT 31.12.19**

	Elders / Deacons	Communicants				Typical Attendance of different persons each Lord's Day		Church Community By Age Total attendance if ever you present who worships at least once a month plus the household but not including visitors passing through								Baptisms	Sunday- School classes/ pupils	Youth mid week participants	
		2018	+	2019	Deaths	2018	2019	<4	4-11	12-18	19-30	31-45	45-64	65+	Total				
Bisbane (2018)	2/1	33	2	2	33	0	47	48	3	5	9	0	27	0	10	54	3	316	12
Nhu Rivers	4/4	39	2	5	36	1	34	30	1	4	0	0	2	4	35	46	1	0	0
Hastings	4/1	30	0	2	28	2	44	51	3	7	7	3	6	5	30	61	0	249	0
Northern Pres	10/6	102	4	7	95	3	125	129	7	35	16	3	35	9	75	161	4	925	12
Manning	5/3	48	0	1	47	0	48	48	2	0	4	3	3	15	33	60	0	1/2	0
Hunter	2/2	47	1	1	47	1	70	65	4	6	6	8	7	14	20	65	0	223	0
St George	3/3	35	1	2	34	2	65	70	1	4	2	2	18	16	13	56	0	1/2	0
Mt Druitt	2/1	40	0	4	36	0	50	45	4	11	7	8	6	8	13	56	0	416	15
Central Pres	12/9	170	2	8	164	3	233	228	11	21	19	21	34	53	79	237	0	843	13
Knox	3/0	23	0	1	24	0	40	43	0	4	9	4	6	13	11	47	0	210	13
Nare Warren	3/0	34	0	10	24	0	46	45	1	3	5	3	8	14	11	45	0	0	0
All Nations	2/0	63	17	12	68	0	115	105	8	18	26	25	19	20	9	123	0	228	8
Camun Down in	1/0	11	0	2	9	0	19	16	0	0	0	3	2	4	9	18	0	0	0
Geelong	2/0	12	0	0	12	0	10	11	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	11	0	0	0
Ulverstone	1/3	22	3	2	23	0	30	35	3	1	3	11	2	7	8	35	2	2/3	15
Southern Pres	12/3	165	20	26	160	0	266	255	12	26	43	44	37	59	58	257	2	641	34
TOTAL	34/18	437	26	41	419	6	624	612	30	63	78	68	106	121	212	655	6	19109	89

## NORTHERN PRESBYTERY REPORT

**Brisbane:** "Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them. Full of splendour and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever." (Psalm 111:1-3). 2019 was an eventful year in the life of our congregation.

**Services:** Services were normally held every Lord's Day at our Emma Street building at 10 am and 5 pm. We continue to accommodate a number of our senior members needing to join in worship via their phones, including three people living in the Rockhampton area, and two from the Redcliffe section of Brisbane. 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. The congregation has been blessed by the consistent presence of visitors at our worship services, some of whom have been attending regularly.

**Membership:** On 6 January, session met with Lauren Klazinga and officially welcomed her as a member of the church. On 10 March, session met with and received the profession of faith of five young people: Chris Buckingham, Ian Buckingham, Aimee Carswell, Jessie Carswell, and Isaac Klazinga. Aimee, Jessie and Isaac were welcomed as communicant members immediately, with brothers Chris and Ian being welcomed as such upon their baptism, which took place on 31 March. Also in March, Jill Abbott and Beth Anderson were welcomed as members. In May, session met with and received the profession of faith of Haino Yu. He was baptised and welcomed as a communicant member on 9 June. The Richards family was blessed in August with the birth of their sixth child and fifth daughter, Liberty. In October, they moved to a small town some distance away, where Taylor found a teaching job. Their membership continues to be held by our congregation.

No members of the congregation died during 2019, although Wendy Germanos' husband Nick died in October. A number of members have had to deal with significant medical issues. No disjunction certificates were requested during 2019.

**Session:** The congregation has two elders and the pastor serving in session. Elder Wes Hanna serves in the role of Clerk of Session, while Elder Stewart Carswell serves as the representative elder at Presbytery and synod. Mr. John Greensill of the Northern Rivers congregation stands ready to serve as an assessor elder, but we did not need to call on him in 2019. Much of session's attention was focused on the need for more office-bearers. It was hoped to have names presented for election by the end of the year, but this was delayed. At the time this report was written, session was very close to being able to present the names of a number of men to serve in the office of Deacon.

**Deacons' Court:** The Deacons' Court consists of the two elders, the pastor, and one deacon, Mr. Keith Schmidt, who serves as clerk. Much of our focus this year centred on finding and purchasing a manse, a goal that has been worked toward for a number of years. We give thanks that this could bear fruit with the acquisition of a property at 3 Padua Place in Boondall. We are thankful for the support of synod, which approved and provided the bulk of the necessary funds. After a lengthy and sometimes difficult process, possession took place in early 2020, with the Klazingas moving in shortly thereafter. Giving continued to increase at a faster rate than our expenses, so that we did not need to access as much stipend assistance as had been set aside for us. With rent payments to the old manse having ceased, we are hopeful that we will no longer need to operate on a deficit. We continued to collect a bi-monthly offering for the Deaconate Fund. This fund is set apart to provide assistance in cases of special financial need in the congregation.

**Education and Fellowship:** A number of members, led by Miss Julie Schmidt, gather together for a few minutes before the morning worship services during the school year, to learn psalm 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. Fellowship lunches continued to be held at the church most Sundays. The young adult group met regularly for study and fellowship, led by Julie Schmidt and Matthew Schmidt. A younger youth group also regularly met, led mainly by Lawrence and Mary Buckingham. The minister taught the occasional Pastor's Class during the Sunday-School time, two fortnightly mid-week Bible Studies meeting on alternate weeks, and a men's Spiritual Growth Discussion Group, held occasionally following the Sunday evening worship service. Women met in a separate group, convened by Mrs. Julie Klazinga. The pastor continued his practice of sending text messages up to six days a week to members via their mobile phones, informing the congregation of matters for prayer, focusing mainly on the members and activities of the congregation. He also continued to send texts focused on denominational prayer matters to leaders and members throughout the PCEA.

**Camp Drewe:** The Annual Family Camp was held at Lennox Head in December. We were blessed by the ministry of Rev. John Forbes, who led a series of talks focused on worship.

**Northern Rivers:** We give thanks to the Lord that His Kingdom endures and grows in the world. The now-annual PCEA Youth Camp was held at John and Judy Greensill's property on Palmer's Channel over the Easter long weekend. A good number braved some unseasonal rain and enjoyed talks from Rev. John Forbes on Creation. It was a great blessing to the congregation to join with the Campers on the Lord's Day to worship together. We pray that this event might continue and that there would be an increase in young people attending, especially from Sydney and Melbourne. At the time of writing this report, Northern Rivers is scheduled to host the 2020 Camp over the Easter long weekend. The speaker is to be Pastor Tim Attwood of Maclean Evangelical Church.

The congregation meets each Lord's Day in Grafton at 9 am, and Maclean at 11am and 4pm, with a combined attendance of approximately 30 for the two morning services (approximately 8-10 in the afternoon). Mid-week Bible Studies are held, 10am Wednesday in Maclean. The Live Telephone Service is used by members in Ballina and Evans Head who are unable to attend, as well as occasional listeners from further afield. The Minister holds a monthly service in Whiddon nursing home. The Minister conducted the funeral of a long-standing member of the congregation, Mrs Eleanor Hope Lin McSwan, in April of the year. Mrs McSwan had recently celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. She had been a teacher in the district, teaching even our august local Elders in their youth. Mrs McSwan had received the OAM for her work in local history, being an avid member of the Historical Society. We give thanks to the Lord for His marvelous preservation of Mr Ken Weeks (father of Dr Noel Weeks), a member of the Grafton congregation, who celebrated his 106<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 2019.

We praise the Lord that the Maclean Manse is used as an Op-Shop and raises substantial funds to support the work of the Lower Clarence Christian Education Association (LCCEA). In turn the LCCEA makes a donation to Northern Rivers Congregation. We again remind PCEA congregations that part of this money (approx. \$5,000) is available for assistance to other congregations or worthy causes by agreement with our Deacons' Court. The Church Hall at Maclean continues to serve groups in the community as well as the needs of the congregation. The prospective sale of the Church and Hall in Lismore to our current lessee (Care-Ring) fell through last year. This was due to Lismore City Council rulings requiring a Development Application for the lessee to continue to use the property for day care after their prospective purchase. This would have entailed a prohibitive cost to Care-Ring. We continue to value them as good tenants. Sadly, we have been unable to assist Brisbane financially.

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.

The Minister continues as a Board Member of the local Pacific Valley Christian School and has very positive relationships with students and staff.

We give thanks for two new members in 2019: one joining us by profession of faith, another by disjunction from Sydney West. It was wonderful to witness also an infant baptism in the congregation: that of Ethan Hamish Kerridge, the service conducted by Rev. Jim Klazinga. As the majority of the congregation moves into a higher age demographic, we look to the Lord of the harvest to give growth in grace and in numbers. We pray for the Lord's blessing in 2020.

**Hastings:** Wauchope Services and activities: The congregation continued to meet for public worship in Wauchope each Lord's Day at 10am and 4pm. Sermon series in the past year have been mainly in Matthew's gospel in the mornings, with studies in Genesis, Daniel and 1 Samuel in the afternoons. The morning service is followed by refreshments and then a doctrinal study/discussion. This was introduced to provide opportunity for more specific study but also as a forum for questions and discussion about the sermons and other matters of interest. The main area of study in 2019 was the Westminster Directory for Worship. With new children in the congregation it was possible to resume Sunday-School classes in 2019. These classes take place at the same time as the adults' doctrinal study. A number of the young people were awarded certificates for recitation of catechisms, scripture and psalms. Once a month the afternoon service is followed by a psalmody practice ably led by Sonja Hamilton. A weekly prayer meeting is held on Wednesday mornings.

Kindee: A Sabbath worship service continues to be held monthly in Kindee, a rural community approximately 40km west of Wauchope. Services are attended by 8 locals with the addition of some others from Wauchope. A thanksgiving service marking the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Kindee church building was held on

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2019 with approximately 70 people in attendance. This included many who had been brought up in that church or attended the Sunday-School there. An abundant spread of food was enjoyed afterwards in the open air.

**People:** The congregation mourned the deaths of two of our longest standing members in 2019. Norma Hoy died in January and Nina Lindsay in December. Both had been members for many decades. We also bade farewell to members Chris and Jess Hamilton who moved to Rockhampton, but rejoiced with them on news of the safe arrival of their first child, Reuben. We were delighted to welcome Chris and Joanne Freebairn who arrived from Canada with their two children and have transferred their membership from the URCNA. We rejoiced with them at the birth of their third child, Hadassah, and at her baptism in the congregation in January 2020.

**Buildings:** Welcome improvements took place at the Wauchope premises during the year with upgrading of the electrical wiring being carried out by elder Glen Hamilton. The subsequent laying of a new carpet in the main church building and installation of air-conditioning units have made it much more comfortable year round. The church hall at 8 Table Street, Port Macquarie, continues to be used through the week by a school group. The local Gideons hold a weekly prayer meeting there on Saturdays. Consideration is given from time to time as to how this building could be effectively used for the work of the gospel in the Port Macquarie area, the 9<sup>th</sup> most populace place in New South Wales. We look to the Lord to open a door there for effective ministry.

## **CENTRAL PRESBYTERY REPORT**

Central Presbytery met on five occasions during the year. At our meeting on 2 July 2019 Mr. Duncan Hickey was granted a licence to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Sydney West:** We give thanks to the Lord for supplying our needs and maintaining faithful gospel preaching in the western area of Sydney. A Bible Class and three Sabbath School classes are held at 10:10 am, with a Tongan language fellowship meeting at the same time. Divine Worship services are continued at 11:00am and at 6:00 pm (5 pm in winter). Our minister has been preaching recently from 1 John and the Minor Prophets. He also instructs the children in the Shorter Catechism at most morning services. We regularly have visitors attending our services, mainly from the kingdom of Tonga; sometimes from New Zealand and elsewhere.

During 2019 the Bible study and prayer meeting continued at Friday lunchtimes, followed by the Lighthouse Club and Youth group after school. The congregation suffered a loss in 2019 when our elder Sekona and his family resigned to assist the work of Rev. Dr Siotame Havea, superintendent of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga in Sydney. We are praying that God would raise up new office-bearers to strengthen the work in our corner of the vineyard.

Members of our congregation regularly visit several Nursing Homes and assist in conducting services at two places (Chester Hill and Kurrajong). A major renovation of the adjacent Church manse (built in 1986) occupied many hours of voluntary labour from February to April. This included much needed storm water works. It is currently leased to Bethel Christian School as a residence for one of their chaplains. Although our work seems small and fragile at times, we look to our Heavenly Father to sustain and guide us, as we seek to build up the congregation and to be a witness in our area. May His Name be glorified!

**Manning:** The Manning congregation is in good spirits. The minister is preaching through prayers of the Bible and the prophecy of Isaiah. There are three fellowship meetings during the week. Worship services are at 10am and 4pm each Lord's day with a fellowship lunch after the service once a month. Pastoral issues include ministering to older folk, a separated couple, and new arrivals.

We are thankful for sufficient funds to conduct the ministry. Upkeep of property is an ongoing issue. Garage sales are held regularly and the money raised is sent to missions.

**Hunter:** Lord's Day Worship Services were conducted weekly at Raymond Terrace (am) and Cardiff (am & pm). Rev Tso continued preaching through the Gospel of Matthew in the mornings and 2 Kings in the evenings. A related five-part sermon series was preached prior to the election of Deacons. Weekly live telephone & internet streaming of Worship services to our sick, aged and other interested persons continued. A combined count of audio & video listeners/viewers was slightly over 1500 in 2019.

Prayer Meetings/Bible studies were held regularly in both centres. Rev Tso continued with a detailed study of the book of Exodus. Prayer for spiritual maturity, local and wider mission and our sister PCEA congregations have been priorities. 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. Psalm tunes, the Shorter Catechism and the Scriptures have been taught faithfully to the participants. Young people and adult participants completed a helpful study of Romans 1-5. An infants group was conducted in the afternoons prior to worship. Young people/young adults fellowship was conducted by the minister and his wife. Some youth were regularly involved in the All Age Sunday School study of Romans 1-5 conducted by Mr Miller. We are encouraged that some of our youth are seeking the Lord. Communicant membership remained static at 47 (2018 and 2019). Typical Lord's day attendance declined slightly: 70 (2018) to 65 (2019). Long standing and faithful communicant member, Mrs Alleen Dyball passed to glory.

Local mission activities included the distribution of thousands of invitation tracts in the Cardiff area, a Church BBQ and the Samaritan's Purse Operation. Some 120 boxes of donated gifts were collected at Raymond Terrace which operated as an area collection centre. Mission presentations including the Creation Ministries International and India Reformed Fellowship Australia provided insight into the challenges and blessings. The preaching of visitors Rev Ball, Rev Don Burgess and two delegates to Synod 2019, Rev Graeme Hart (McKinnon Reformed Presbyterian Church), and Rev John Macleod (Free Church of Scotland Continuing) was appreciated.

We thank the Lord for our Minister's faithful and relevant exposition of the Scriptures, his helpful pastoral care and contribution to the maintenance of peaceful, Christian relationships. Session enjoyed harmony in faithfully and actively serving as Christ's under shepherds. The valuable contribution of Mr Alex Steel (Assessor Elder) to the work of Session and Deacons' Court is gratefully acknowledged. We gratefully acknowledge our Almighty, Sovereign God who has graciously blessed and kept us throughout the vicissitudes of 2019. We continue to pray, *'Show us Your mercy, LORD, and grant us Your salvation'* (Psalm 85:7).

**St Georges:** We thankfully acknowledge that our Gracious Heavenly Father has enabled us to continue to represent His cause in the CB District of Sydney. In 2019 St George's congregation worshipped at the church three times a week. The exception is the addition of Thursday and Saturday evenings Preparatory services, and Monday Thanksgiving services for our two communion seasons. On Lord's Day meetings\_[with the exception of school holidays and communion seasons]:

At 9.30am we start with a psalm & a prayer followed by separate Bible Class & Sabbath School sessions.

10.30am Morning Worship service

5.15 pm Our Psalmody Class practices

6.00 pm 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 travelled long distances.

St Georges also welcomed 22 groups of international visitors from UK- Cardiff, France, Chile, Northern Ireland, Holland, USA, Korea, Brazil and Vanuatu to worship with us, as well as from interstate & intrastate churches. There was a good cross section of old and young including young families in our midst.

Our Website has still 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 George's 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 & 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 2019.

Communicant members for the year ending 31st December 2019 were 34. Attendances at worship services were between 40 to 48 at the Lord's Day morning services with 25 to 32 at the evening services, & 18 to 25 at the midweek services. Some aged & infirmed cannot attend because of their physical state. There are 6 children attending with their parents.

Repairs and restoration work preparations for the steeple have been progressing slowly. 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

**Geelong:** Session Clerk reports - God has graciously sustained us throughout the year; generously providing for our needs, graciously accepting our worship, and giving us encouraging fellowship each Lord's Day. Although being vacant since July 2013, the congregation has been blessed with sound preaching from local men as well as students from the Reformed Theological College. Our numbers are small but we remain a faithful group of members and adherents, caring for each other both physically and spiritually. Visitors are frequent and provide an opportunity for fellowship with and witness to all who attend. With the appointment of Rev. Andres Miranda as interim moderator in March, we have celebrated the Lord's Supper quarterly, and have benefitted from his leadership and support through times of blessings and trials. The suspension of an elder in October has been particularly difficult but this reminds us that God desires holiness from all, and that church leaders should be beyond reproach. We are conscious that it is God who sustains us for His glory alone.

Sunday morning worship has remained the focus for our congregation. While we look to the Lord for the provision of a full-time minister, we recognise that there are blessings to be gained from perseverance and faithfulness in times of testing. It is with sadness that we report the passing of Mrs Gwen Mackenzie in February 2020, who had been a faithful member in Geelong since 1970, and at St Georges, Sydney, before that. The congregation continues to be faithful in their financial support of the church and its various mission works, both locally and abroad. Despite our small numbers, we have decided to continue to support the work of Compassion Australia in Uganda by sponsoring 5 year old Vicky Abio. The manse has received considerable necessary repair and maintenance work to its exterior during a period of vacancy but has been again leased to a young theology student and his wife since November. The rental income, security, ministry, fellowship, and preaching this provides is a great blessing.

**Knox:** Session reports - We had the privilege of serving our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the local congregation of his church in Knox for another year in 2019. We thank our Lord for the continued freedom and opportunity to do so and pray that this may continue in 2020. We thank God for enabling us to maintain our faithfulness to him but also for giving us to more opportunities to help others grow in the Lord. The Rev. Andres Miranda, who had been ministering at Knox since 29 January 2011 and as sole minister since Dr Ward's retirement on 30 June 2012, was called to the Narre Warren congregation and inducted on 1 June. Mr and Mrs Miranda were farewelled with a special morning tea on the 26<sup>th</sup> May. Mr Miranda's ministry had been appreciated and so we were sad to see them leave, but the Narre Warren congregation had been without a pastor for some time. Our prayerful desire for the Lord's blessing went with them, and we made a substantial gift to Narre Warren to enable repairs to the exterior of their building. Rev Dr Rowland Ward was appointed as interim moderator and elder emeritus John Loudon was appointed to be an assessor elder. By the grace of God, our pulpit has been well-supplied since then with visiting preachers, mitigating some of our loss in having no full-time pastor. We are thankful to our Father's week-by-week provision in this and the men who have supplied. We intended to begin the process to call the Rev. Lourens Nel from the CRCA to be our minister but he ultimately accepted a call with another congregation in his own denomination as we had no ability to call him until Synod. We have continued to support the ministry at Carrum Downs and supported commencing the process to install the Rev. Ian Hall as minister there from the SPC in Launceston. We also rearranged our investments so as to purchase a house suitable as a manse near the Carrum Downs church. Offerings at Knox rose 10.7% compared to the previous year.

Missionary support was again given to Synod. We continued our sponsorship of girls through Mukti. On 17 September Dr Jack and Mrs Nancy Whytock spoke at our missions meeting of the work of Dumisani Theological Institute in South Africa. For Samaritans Purse, 41 boxes were packed and forwarded for distribution to underprivileged children located overseas. We also contributed 4 boxes of non-perishable food to the local Knox Community Christmas support program.

Sunday School and Youth Group functioned during the year and we were blessed that most youth group activities throughout the year had combined attendance from Knox and All Nations. Our regular mid-week general and ladies Bible studies continued during the year. The knitting group also continued between April and October and continues to be an outreach to the local community. We thank the volunteers who made these

groups possible. We organised a picnic in May to which we invited the other PCEA congregations in Melbourne although there was minimal response to this as also to the missions meeting already mentioned which was disappointing. In August, we started a Young Men's fellowship for older teenagers through to early 40s to minister to and encourage that group. In time it may be possible to start a similar group for young women as well. On this front we held a Ladies afternoon tea on 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

The communion roll stands at 28. While we had the Mirandas leaving for Narre Warren, we welcomed a new family into membership as well as the communicant membership of one of our covenant children, and a transfer of membership from Narre Warren. The typical attendance of different persons each Lord's Day has grown slightly to about 43 across the morning and evening services. Elders' visits have been carried out during the year. Congregational luncheons continued every two months. The weekly publication of the Knox News sets out our regular activities but also is used to inform members of the challenges we face in this day and age. We also had the pleasure, in partnership with the Narre Warren congregation, of hosting the ministry student, Mr Duncan Hickey, for a placement from 1 Jan to 3 Feb 2019 to advance his preaching and pastoral skills under the supervision of Interim-moderator and elders of Knox and Narre Warren congregations.

**Narre Warren:** Minister reports - The church-community in Narre Warren continues to be encouraged by God in a number of ways. People feel part of a Christian environment that promotes sincere love, spiritual growth and enthusiasm for Christian service. In fact, I (minister) have been amazed with the extraordinary levels of service in the church. The leadership also seeks to strengthen the church with its diverse gifts and pastoral ways of relating to the flock that we supervise week after week with the help of the Spirit. The congregation maintains a steady and cheerful commitment to support ministry work, welcomes with open arms visitors and newcomers, and is consistently focused on pleasing the Lord in everything. In matters of church policy, the congregation has been informed of Synod's decision regarding child safety practices and copies of approved Safe Church Policy & Code of Conduct were distributed for general information. On Friday, February 14, a lunch was organised at the pastor's house for the ladies of the Church. The event helped to deepen fellowship and solidarity in relationships. The same is planned for the men in the church. This year we also have had the joy of welcoming some visitors who have been attending worship regularly. As leaders in the church, we thank God for helping us maintain our faithfulness to him but also for giving us to more opportunities to help others grow in the Lord.

**Carrum Downs:** Session reports - The 10.30am service had been maintained throughout the year with the Interim Moderator taking 31 of the services and the balance by other ministers and elders whose assistance was much appreciated particularly when Dr Ward was overseas and missed 5 Lord's Days. Attendance had declined a little during the year with number typically 12 or 15 but ranging from under 10 to the low 20s. Mr Kumnick's health has been such that he has been able to attend most services during the year. The infant work undoubtedly required a active man on the ground to attend to pastoral needs and develop the work.

The application of the Rev. Ian Hall and his desire to work in the Carrum Downs area was a real encouragement as was the Knox Congregation's willingness to provide financial support and a rent-free manse convenient to the church at 22 Frost Street. While we are disappointed that Mr Hall could not be called and inducted in the usual way until after his formal reception by Synod, we are delighted that he was able to officially commence on 16 February 2020. The cause is already showing increase in numbers and givings. Financially, the congregation has managed to end the year with accumulated funds a little over \$30,000 at year end. The building has proved very suitable.

**All Nations:** The year 2019 saw a reduction in offerings related to loss of employment, the civil war in South Sudan necessitating diversion of support to relatives, and a lack of prioritising the Lord's work. This has been addressed and so far in 2020 givings have recovered. All liabilities to date have been met. The Presbytery's action in declining the application of a Sudanese minister late in 2018 was quite correct but did lead some to leave, while guarding the people from unbiblical practice among the young has also been necessary. Jonah Gatluak Kot was ordained and inducted as an elder on 1 September 2019. The roll shows 11 removals but 19 additions. On the Lord's Day there are two main services: English at 11am and Nuer at 2.30pm. The numbers vary up and down but typically 110-115. A transitional national government was formed in February 2020 and it is hoped a more peaceful way ahead will result in line with the motto, Justice, Liberty and Prosperity. We received some funds from the Government Community Harmony programme and conducted a number of activities including Suicide Prevention and Family Violence.

A Planning permit for the extension of the hall and the provision of offices upstairs was granted in June. The Building permit for the extensions at All Nations had been granted 18 December 2019 and it had been hoped to

begin construction at the beginning of April. However, on 28 February 2020 the department of Premier and Cabinet indicated that there would be a delay of about 6 weeks due to their cash-flow issues and the need to wait for the State budget on 5 May, but they were confident the work would proceed.

**Ulverstone:** The Ulverstone Congregation gives thanks for and continues to receive the Lord's weekly and daily blessings in its various ministries. Despite nearly three years of vacancy we continue to be well supplied by a number of local and visiting preachers. A number of our own ministers, including Interim Moderator Rev Andres Miranda visited and supplied services over 2019, together with student Duncan Hickey last June. It was a special blessing to witness the EPC and SPC reconciliation last March and this was followed by an interchurch Psalmody day at Ross on the 15<sup>th</sup> June. The convener of the PCEA Psalmody Committee, Rev Jim Klazinga, together with his wife Julie were able to travel from Brisbane and be present for this.

We received three new members over the last year and witnessed two infant baptisms. The overall average attendance on the Lord's Day service has risen slightly to 35. There has also been the new attendance of adherents both locally and from interstate. One lady has a new and developing hunger for the knowledge of Christ and this has been very apparent at the services and midweek meetings. In addition to the Lord's Day service there are a number of other regular meetings and ministries – adult study, Sunday school, ladies craft, WMU, men's prayer breakfast and monthly fellowship. The start of 2019 has seen two special fellowship events – a quiz night in February and overnight camp at Lake Barrington in March. In September last year contact commenced with a student minister from the RPCNA, Mr Zach Dotson, who has expressed interest in ministering with the PCEA and this congregation. He and his wife Wilma and son Archie are visiting between the 4-23<sup>rd</sup> March. At the time of this report his visit has been very well received and we prayerfully look to the Lord's will in this new chapter.

The missions interest of the congregation continues in a number of areas. Shaun Hamilton visited Vanuatu in October for volunteer Build Aid work. Sponsorships continue for students of Chhapara Christian School in India, and also for children in Compassion and other organisations. The ladies are active in supporting various causes, in particular Kids International Ministries in the Philippines at this time. We continue to have good fellowship with a number of churches in the state and look forward to this continuing. From the practical perspective we have been encouraged with two new Deacons, these being Luke Keast and Cameron Hamilton, who were ordained in August. We have also been blessed with higher givings and this indicates positively for future viability.

## LAW & ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr Rowland Ward (Convener 2007), Tom Reeve, Stewart Loudon, Trevor Leggott, David Kerridge, John Forbes

*Note:* John Forbes has noted that some words in Synod Standing Orders are missing from recent issues of the Handbook. This will be fixed in the next print.

### 1. Obligations under Australia Law 3.14a

In view of ATO's new procedures delete the words in 3.14a B.e being Act of Synod 2018:

3.14e 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.

And replace with:

3.14e The requirements of the Australian Taxation office are followed in regard to reporting taxable stipend payments.

### 2. Entry and exit from Committees Handbook 5.19 (3)

Synod 2019 went well beyond its stated time despite allowing an extra day with the consequence that many members had to leave and could not participate in the last session which covered several issues including Committee structure. Section 3 in the legislation passed (the courtesy section) appears to require some minor rewording to avoid the requirement that people agree to have their names removed or alternatively must agree in advance for their names to be added. Also what is 'an established reason' is indefinite.

### 3. Composition of Administration Committee

One of the roles of the Administration Committee is to be a bills and overtures committee to see all papers for Synod are in order. In practice the exercise of this power has fallen largely into disuse as we have not had much material of recent years requiring such attention until last year. However, in 2019 there was material that was needed such attention. In addition, the Synod has always had the Convener of Law & Advisory as a member for the very reason that some expertise is required in this matter and presumably the person appointed as some expertise. While for a period the Clerk of Synod also convened Law and Advisory this placed too much on the Clerk given two heads with expertise is better than one. The action in 2018 which replaced the L & A Convener with the Treasurer arose in a context of hostility to an action of the Convener in pointing out a decision that changed the obligations of a Class 1 Act was invalid because it was not passed down under the Barrier Act and was barely debated. It leaves the situation where the Clerk is the only constant member with expertise and two members (Moderator and Moderator-elect) constantly change. This is highly unsatisfactory. The Law & Advisory Convener, whoever he is, should be a member of the Administration Committee and another member of that Committee in another Presbytery as well. This can be considered when Committees are appointed.

### 4. Clarification of Class 1 and Class 2 legislation, Handbook 5.37

A clarification was proposed last year by the addition of the underlined words in 5.37 but the action in regard to it does not appear in the Synod minutes.

Class 2 legislation is all other legislation and usually arises from an overture or committee report suggesting legislation entirely or substantially related to the Synod itself, such as the regulation of the business of Synod and its committees, and decisions in local matters or those of an exhortatory or advisory character. In these matters the Synod comes to its own mind without use of Barrier Act procedure, although it may refer proposed Class 2 legislation to presbyteries if it wishes (but consent is not required for enactment to take place). Class 2 legislation has binding force but if a Class 2 enactment should have been Class 1 it has no binding force in respect of the Class 1 elements within it.

The point simply is this: Suppose Synod passes Class 2 legislation in which (a) it urges greater attention to psalmody but also declares (b) that only the Psalter produced in Melbourne in 1991 be used in congregations henceforth. Point a is legitimate and binding, but point b is not binding because it requires Barrier Act (ie. Class 1) procedure.

## **5. Recording of Decisions 5.42**

Add the words underlined:

Acts of Synod are titled, listed and numbered by the Synod Clerk so as to facilitate citation. All Class 1 legislation and also Class 2 legislation of on-going significance in the regulation of business in church courts or the business of Committees, and they are is incorporated by the Administration Committee into a the regularly up-dated Handbook/Decision Book, classified according to subject/committee. Copies of the Decision Book are posted on the PCEA website and made available at a suitable charge to members and other interested persons.

## **6. NSW Church Property Act (Minute 2019:69)**

The unanimous decision to approve the amendment of the 1918 Act after some vigorous debate over many years was made in 2013 and approach made on several occasions to the NSW authorities. At last we received a response in April 2019 which outlined several options but raised serious issues as the NSW now has guidelines for approving Property Acts for religious bodies which preclude us given our small size. The remit to consider the response was continued by Synod and the correspondence circulated. The only practical options would be (1) to transfer property to the Victorian Act and cancel the NSW Act (which has the emotional disadvantage of the name but is legally neat giving a modern trust for all but Queensland). OR create a private trust in the terms of the Act we can't get, transfer NSW Property to it and cancel the NSW Act which will not give us a uniform trust arrangement but could remove the disabilities we have at the moment eg: no power to run a common fund, limited powers, no trust protection for our Presbyterian government etc.

For any option the NSW Department of Justice would need to obtain Ministerial approval, Cabinet approval, drafting services of the Parliamentary Counsel's Office and time on parliament legislative agenda. Victoria Government was very helpful in the update we secured there in 2012 and treated our Act as a Public one and so there was no cost. No guarantee in NSW but likely on the options mentioned, and I imagine we could get relief from transfer and stamp duty. It is not ideal to leave this as is. The impact for the future is to be considered so the remit needs to be continued.

## **7. Redress Scheme**

The National Redress Scheme was established in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, to support those who experienced child sexual abuse through an institution. Joining the Redress Scheme enables churches, institutions and schools to provide support for survivors of child sexual abuse committed prior to 1 July 2018 where they may previously not have had the financial resources to do so on their own. Avoiding a Court process at common law, compensation to victims of child sexual abuse can be made of up to \$150,000 plus \$5,000 for counselling. Amounts awarded are repayable by the institution from the assets of the congregation involved plus, if required, any general funds held by the relevant trust body. An appropriate apology must be made to the victim. ACS Mutual have developed a unique insurance cover for its hundreds of member churches specifically for Redress claims and it will cover awards made. The cost in our case for claims occurring for 5 years is \$312.50 plus GST for each of the twelve sanctioned charges (ie \$3,750 plus GST). There will be an excess of \$5,000 on each and every claim that arises.

Although we have had a Church-wide Public Liability Scheme since 2/7/1985, incidents prior to that are not covered while many victims are put off by the adversarial nature and cost of Court proceedings at Common Law where, of course, verdicts can be much higher. There was considerable debate in Committee. While we thought the risk was low the primary consideration must be facilitating compensation and an apology for any victim/s that may exist.

Entry to the Redress scheme expires on 1 July 2020. There is a fair amount of work to do, particular by the Redress authority, and ACS advise that if a decision is delayed to Synod it is doubtful if the deadline can be met. If we joined well before Synod to ensure registration could occur in time, ACS offered to refund the premium if Synod decided not to join. This seemed a generous arrangement. The result was a majority of members approved. In these circumstances it was thought Synod would approve and accordingly the Administration Committee was approached and arrangement made to advance the funds. If Synod approves sanctioned charges will be levied \$312.50 net; if Synod disapproves the premium will be refunded.

## **8. Remit re use of membership application form, admission and disjoining procedure &c (Synod Minute 19:24.6) re items 2.12, 13, 14, 15,18 on pages 16 & 17 of Synod Reports 2019.**

The following are the returns to the remit.

**Central Presbytery 20/9/2019:** Resolved 'that the details requested on the proposed membership form are not necessary; the current guidelines are adequate. Personal contact, communication and conversation are more beneficial'.

**Northern Presbytery 7/3/2020:** 'After a detailed discussion, it was moved seconded and carried that Northern Presbytery does not believe that the use of a membership application form is necessary or appropriate.'

**Southern Presbytery 14/3/2020:** 'The points referred to were read from Synod Reports and there was no objection raised to them, it being noted (a) that the 'strongly recommended' form to collect basic data in 2.12 was simply that and not a requirement and (b) that the reversal of onus of proof now general meant evidence of reasonable care was necessary and such an application assists in that.'

**Onus of proof:** It should be noted that the onus of proof in child sexual abuse cases has now been reversed with effective dates as follows (but is not retrospective): Victoria 1/7/2017; NSW 26/10/2018; Qld 30/10/2019; Tas (in process). The importance of written evidence if allegations arise years later is obvious. Therefore use of a membership application form is really essential.

### **9. Reportable Conduct Scheme**

The Victorian Scheme applies to religious bodies from 1/1/2019 and the NSW one from 1/3/2020 and are somewhat similar. Queensland and Tasmania have the subject under consideration. For the purpose of these schemes the 'Head of the Entity/Organisation' should be taken as the Clerk of the relevant Presbytery.

### **10. Safe Church**

The Synod has recognised the necessity of an adequate Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct but has found difficulty in reaching a good consensus because of the nature of the subject, differences over the use of the materials produced by others, and personalities. The Policy and Code of Conduct adopted by Synod 2019 by no means had unanimous support and a dissent was lodged against it by the Convener. The Committee was charged by Synod 2019 with responsibility of bringing "minor additions or amendments" to Synod 2020. The Convener suggested on 5 June 2019 that there be a sub-committee led by Tom Reeve to draw up proposed changes and John Forbes volunteered to assist him. With this arrangement the Committee concurred. However, dealing with this subject has a significant learning curve as new reports are issued and new laws made. The difficulties in working through the subject actually help to refine the best way forward. However, the Committee is evenly divided with Messrs Reeve, Forbes and Kerridge supporting the sub-committee proposal and Messrs. Ward, Leggott and Loudon supporting a fuller reconsideration in line with the responsibility of the Committee to the Synod. Consequently there are two reports and proposals each supported by three members of the six man Committee.

The sub-committee also proposed a new chapter incorporating matters related to sexual abuse. Given that the Session has the care of all in the congregation, and the occasions of abuse are likely to be rare, we think it is needless overkill to create a new chapter in the Handbook. It seems quite sufficient to distribute the needed amendments across existing chapters. Keeping to matters essential this involves an addition of about 1,250 words rather than the 3,000 in the sub-committee proposal (excluding the 7,000 words in the introduction and other sections in that proposal). Further, the publicly available document does not need to include detail of our internal procedures which in any case will be difficult for the average person to follow. Finally, examples of the kind of forms needed to meet legal requirements are provided in our Report which can be included as an Appendix in the Handbook.

The aim of all our efforts should be to provide a coherent and succinct Safe Church Protocol that that does not require constant amendment and is adequate not just to safeguard against child abuse but sets out the pattern for the behaviour required of Scripture of all our leaders. The Safe Church Protocol but meets all legal requirements and if accepted can bring the era of exhaustive work on this subject to a close so that church courts can focus their energies more directly on church revitalisation and outreach.

Synod will need to address the issues and make a decision. The three members offering what that call an Alternative Report wish their Report and Recommendations to be taken separately. It is not clear how that can be done but at any rate both proposals will need to be considered.

## PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. In view of ATO's new procedures delete the words in 3.14a [B.e] being Act of Synod 2018:

3.14e 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.

And replace with:

3.14e The requirements of the Australian Taxation office are followed in regard to reporting taxable stipend payments.

2. Handbook 5. 19 (3.) Delete this section and renumber subsequent section accordingly: ~~It is appropriate that It is courtesy that parties being proposed for new membership of committees be informed of and agree in advance of their appointment (to be referred to as 'entry courtesy'). It is also courtesy that parties who are currently members of committees be informed of and agree in advance to their names.~~

3. The underlined words be added to Handbook 5.37

Class 2 legislation is all other legislation and usually arises from an overture or committee report suggesting legislation entirely or substantially related to the Synod itself, such as the regulation of the business of Synod and its committees, and decisions in local matters or those of an exhortatory or advisory character. In these matters the Synod comes to its own mind without use of Barrier Act procedure, although it may refer proposed Class 2 legislation to presbyteries if it wishes (but consent is not required for enactment to take place). Class 2 legislation has binding force but if a Class 2 enactment should have been Class 1 it has no binding force in respect of the Class 1 elements within it.

4. Make the changes to Handbook 5.42:

Acts of Synod are titled, listed and numbered by the Synod Clerk so as to facilitate citation. All Class 1 legislation and also Class 2 legislation of on-going significance in the regulation of business in church courts or the business of Committees, and they are is incorporated by the Administration Committee into a the regularly up-dated Handbook/Decision Book, classified according to subject/committee. Copies of the Decision Book are posted on the PCEA website and made available at a suitable charge to members and other interested persons.

### 5. NSW Property Act

Synod resolve that the Committee's remit be continued with a view to exploring ways in which the unanimous desire of Synod 2013 can be fulfilled albeit using a different mechanism if the preferred one is not obtainable.

### 6. Redress Scheme

The Synod (a) endorse the action of the Law and Advisory Committee in taking steps to join the Redress Scheme on a provisional basis before the Synod meeting; (b) now formally approve the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia joining the Scheme; ,and (3) accordingly levy each of the 12 sanctioned charges \$312.50 net of GST to refund the funds advanced by Synod.

### 7. PCEA Safe Church Protocol

Synod transmit the following overture to Presbyteries in terms of the Barrier Act and meantime pass the same as an Interim Act in force until next Synod, returns to be in the hands of the Synod Clerk by 30 November 2020 with voting recorded and liberty to make comments or suggestions:

- a. Whereas our aim as a Church should be to have a Safe Church Protocol for public display that that does not require constant amendment and is adequate to safeguard against child abuse and to set out the pattern for the behaviour required of Scripture of all our leaders.
- b. And whereas it is vital that our public document be clear and easy to understand for those not versed in the details of Presbyterian government and procedure or even of the Christian faith;
- c. And whereas by a careful review of the material discussed in past years and more recently it is possible to produce a coherent and document for public display that meets the aim in point 1, is commended by outside experts, meets our obligations to our Insurers and, while being regularly reviewed, is not liable to constant amendment:

NOW THEREFORE

1. Synod enact the appended PCEA SAFE CHURCH PROTOCOL to replace Act 1 Class 1, Synod 2019 (Safe Church Policy & Code of Conduct) and Act 1 Class 1 (Synod 2014 (Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct)
  2. Resolve that amendments to the Handbook following the PCEA Safe Church Protocol, be adopted.
  3. Repeal Act 1 Class 2 but deemed Class 1 of Synod 2013 (Guidelines for Church Workers) but incorporate the Section headed 'Protection of those working on Church Property in Handbook 3:18 with the addition of 'agreement with the PCEA Safe Church Protocol' after 'Insurance;,'.
8. Synod strongly commend the use of the Forms A, B, and C attached to the Report or their substantial equivalent.
9. Synod thank all those involved in considered proposals over the past years and especially all the members of the Law and Advisory Committee.

# LAW & ADVISORY COMMITTEE: SAFE CHURCH PACKAGE

Report and Proposal supported by Messrs Leggott, Louden and Ward

## Introduction

For substance the following argument in almost identical form was placed before the Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> March most having been indicated in outline weeks before without acceptance by the other half of the Committee. It was regarded by them as contrary to the remit of Synod 2019, but it was sufficiently studied by the other half of the Committee for some material in an altered form to be taken from the proposed Handbook changes and the rest of those changes discarded with the result submitted to the whole Committee as a *fait accompli* late on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March and sent on by its authors to the Synod Clerk on the following day. [A few issues, of which the whole Committee had knowledge, raised in Knox Session by elder Chris White were also taken into account in the changes to the 2019 Code of Conduct.]

### *Some arguments for this Protocol.*

- a. A Policy and Code of Conduct can be relatively brief or quite extensive. As we are a small denomination with no paid administrators and limited number of officebearers, particularly those experienced in professional and business matters, we want a document that can stand alone as covering what we require of all according to the Scriptures and at the same time covering what the law of the land requires in regard only to abuse of children and the vulnerable. The 2019/2020 material is not sufficiently clear on this scope. The Protocol is.
- b. The authority for our position needs to be clear and certainly have some gospel context. The 2019/20 version indicates the authority of the Scriptures, and discusses various passages at some length, but of course Scripture is variously understood even in the evangelical Christian community today, and the 750 words provided the heart of the Gospel is not included. This the Protocol does in a succinct way.
- c. We need a document for public display that is understandable by people who may have limited Christian understanding or no understanding at all. That means it needs definitions of Session, Presbytery and Synod and the definitions of 'children' and 'vulnerable' and 'abuse' need to be very clear and correct. This the proposed protocol does. The existing Policy/Code of Conduct does not.
- d. The other members of the Committee envisaged a separate Handbook Chapter 8 embracing over 6,000 words in addition to the 2019 Policy/Code of Conduct amended as they propose. It included details of internal procedures not necessary to include in a public document but it excluded material from the public Policy/Code of Conduct that should be in it. This betrays confusion - unless the sub-committee felt constrained by the "minor amendments" limitation to not associate these sections with the Policy/Code of Conduct. As a consequence, important items such as 'Making a Complaint', 'Our Response to a Complaint' and 'Investigating a Complaint' are in the Handbook, more or less duplicating much of what is in the existing Policy but, while some of the material in 'Investigating a Complaint' and in 'Review of Procedures' is unnecessarily detailed, there is much that should be in the publicly available document. Therefore, recognising the worth in the sub-committee's report of much of this it was incorporated in the Protocol but still managed to be a document that runs to under 4,300 words compared to around 3,800 in the Policy/Code of Conduct proposed by the Sub-committee. The additional sub-committee proposal of over 1,800 words is not part of the Policy/Code of Conduct, and was not reviewed by the whole Committee being advised only on 14 March.
- e. There are significant drafting problems in the 2019-20 proposal apart from the duplication introduced as noted in (d). As no comments were offered on the content of the Proposal, on 10 March the following were noted and those marked \* were modified by the other half of the Committee on 14 March.
  - (i) **Outline of Principles & Practices** *Advocating* Biblical principles will not *result* in a safe environment. Principles have to be implemented and the result should be a limiting of risk of abuse. 'Delivering (reporting) to civil authorities' is awkward phrasing. \*
  - (ii) **Protection Officer.** In Presbyterian polity the elders are responsible for the pastoral care of all in the congregation and this cannot be delegated beyond the Session.
  - (iii) **Confidential (keep 50 years), non-confidential (keep 25 years) records.** It is not necessary to make this distinction in normal situations. In any case, the so-called non-confidential records must be kept at least 50 years given that they are an essential part of proving we have taken reasonable care. Remember, there is now a reverse onus of proof in child abuse cases (in NSW from 1/3/2020). If you have no records how to prove you took reasonable care?

(iv) Our insurers require immediate advice of any potential child sexual abuse and will provide guidance. The Protocol covers these angles.

(v) **12. False allegations.** Much of middle section better omitted; freedom from prosecution for good faith reports should be noted and preferred procedure in reports.

(vi) **13 Managing known offenders.** Needs to be more specific

(vii) in **Code of Conduct:** 3b. too broad; 3k. probably too specific; 3m. what is a 'minor' protocol ;4\*. 'sexualised behaviour' too broad (needs definition; eg. excludes a leader with a potential marriage partner holding hands).

f. That the Handbook changes (or do not need to go under the Barrier Act is arguable. In so far as they are prescriptive binding the whole church they must do so given that their form is not altogether the same as elsewhere and in part amend existing Class 1 legislation..

g. The Convener discussed Safe Church issues with key people in the PCA in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne to understand current attitudes and practices. He emailed Fiona Bligh, the Co-ordinator in the PCV of the Safechurch unit on 16 Jan (12.45pm) for an independent opinion as she has very extensive experience not only in drafting material but in handling complaints and dealing with abusers:

Further to our conversation yesterday I attach my draft. I slightly rearranged the PCV doc (hopefully more logical).

Any comments would be much appreciated.

On 11 Feb 2020 Fiona replied (9.29am):

Firstly, I am sorry it has taken me so long to respond to your email. A number of urgent unexpected matters arose since we spoke - hence the delay in my reply. As I say - I do apologise.

I have read through the document and I have no suggestions for improvements as I find it reads easy, is comprehensive and logical in its order and the clarity of meaning is clear. Essentially, I believe this is an excellent document and I believe the Synod would be wise and indeed, blessed, to adopt it for use in the PCEA.

Thank you for sharing it with me - I found it helpful for my work as well,

At 10.40am the same day I responded:

Thank you for your very kind comments. I made a few changes underlined in the attached after having a chat with our insurers and also thinking about pictures of children on social media.

On 12 Feb at 17.04pm Fiona responded:

Those changes look wise and fill out the detail which is always helpful. I wasn't sure to what level detail you were wanting to go to (as in, is it primarily a high level document?) and I can see from what you have added that it makes sense to have both the high level and the detail in the same document.

Over here we use the manual for that reason and the information about photographing children etc is covered via our online and electronic communication guidelines and our privacy protocols.

Here are some links if you are interested: [links omitted]

Again, the changes you have made are excellent and I believe your denomination will be well served by this material,

h. The Convener submitted a draft Protocol and the 2020 version to our Insurers on 16 January (the same day I wrote to Fiona Bligh):

Further to our conversation I attach two documents:

One I have drafted, much in the Code of Conduct section drawn from the major Presbyterian bodies.

The other is the current proposal of a minority of the Church Law & Advisory Committee I convene. It means well but in my judgment is not customer friendly, lacks precision in definition and detail, is not well drafted, includes material that is really internal procedure but does not include material on making and responding to a complaint which should be in a public document.

Anyway, any comment you care to make as to adequacy of both for Insurance purposes would be welcome. Feel free to annotate if you wish to do so.

The response (21 Jan, 10.01am) on the draft Protocol was:

Thank you for your email and providing copies of the proposed and existing Safe Church documents.

The policy written by you appears to capture all aspects of our requirements for a compliant Child Protection Policy.

We would like to clarify the requirement of 2 references for all new employees or volunteers working with children. This doesn't need to be written references from external sources. It could be a person

within the church community or a discussion with a previous organisation where this person has previously worked or volunteered. This policy should also clearly state that if a person is found guilty of having committed an offence of sexual abuse that they are automatically terminated from working or volunteering for your organisation.

I'm not sure if we have already provided you with a link to an organisation with a Child Protection Policy template. You will find this here: <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/childsafetytoolkit> If there is anything else we can assist with please don't hesitate to contact us.

Very obviously they didn't want to buy into church business, but I responded 21 Jan 10.09am

Appreciate this Louise. You have not commented on the existing one. What were your thoughts on that? Enjoy the Conference.

The response on 2020 version on 21 Jan 2020 10.16am was:

"I concur with your comments that it doesn't seem to be user friendly to all members of a church community. We, as the Public Liability Protection provider, require a document more along the lines of the template link I provided in my previous email."

On 24 Jan 10.21am I wrote our Insurers:

Glad the Conference went well.

The Moores document dates from 2018 and perhaps is a wee bit dated but is very helpful. I had seen it before.

I've polished the Draft I sent you and enclose it with the chief changes (apart from the addition of an Introduction) underlined. Removal of those guilty of child sexual abuse was noted in D 3 but I've in addition added explicit words at the end of the document as you suggested. I've taken on board a couple of points re notifying our insurers mentioned in conversation this morning with either you or Barb.

I'd be glad if you would confirm you're OK with the wording.

On 24 Jan 16.26pm they replied:

Thank you for forwarding the revised draft for our perusal. I confirm it all appears to comply with our requirements. Have a lovely weekend.

#### SUMMARY:

We believe the above sufficiently shows 2019/20 is not adequate; our insurer's are not great fans and objectively speaking it has deficiencies and hardly meets the government directions for clarity in this area.

*The existing procedure has most of the needed material but it is wordy, not well arranged, and lacks precision. It needs better definition at various points. It includes some material unnecessarily. In general it is framed from the insider's point of view not the ordinary attender's point of view. It virtually commits us to constant tinkering. Certainly, the Handbook will need to be brought into line at a following Synod in the Alternative proposal is adopted.*

*Importantly it does not distinguish properly between what is appropriate for a publicly displayed document and what is more our internal procedure. Thus with some modest revision the sections on Making a Complaint and responding to a Complaint prepared by the sub-committee should be in the public policy enabling as much as practical a stand alone document so earnestly argued for at previous Synods.*

*Considering the size of the church and the likely relative infrequency of allegations of or actual cases of child abuse, the other half of the Committee plans to give too much space by creating new chapter 8 (deferred on the ground the vote was evenly divided but then so was the Protocol). Abuse material has always been part of the concern of Sessions and with minimal change should be included in its ordinary chapter.*

*More concise and careful drafting can pick up the problems and provide a concise Protocol and a modest adjustment to the Handbook virtually cuts the length by 40%.*

*We have been anxious to draw from the sub-committee's work where possible and have done so to quite an extent in the key section which is 44% of the Protocol. Wisdom is usually found according to the principle iron sharpens iron. We therefore commend the Safe Protocol package.*

## PCEA SAFE CHURCH PROTOCOL

### INTRODUCTION

Christians are required by the Lord of the Church to think, speak and act in ways that are God-honouring, biblically obedient and motivated by love for Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us so that we might, through a Spirit-wrought trust in him, be redeemed from the penalty and power of sin and live a life of gratitude and love for God. True faith works through love, even though we are not free from sin in this life. This policy is a public document highlighting our resolve to respect the dignity of all people and to maintain a safe church for all attending our ministries as we seek to help them to become and to mature as disciples of Jesus Christ.

### A. DEFINITIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROTOCOL:

1. Whenever we refer to a **child** or **children**, we mean persons **under the age of 18**.
2. Whenever we speak about **vulnerable people** we mean persons with a cognitive impairment including an intellectual disability, a developmental disorder (including an autistic spectrum disorder), a neurological disorder, dementia, a severe mental illness, or a brain injury. We also mean a person who through life circumstances such as a significant grief or loss requires increased support in daily life. We also mean people experiencing family or domestic violence.
3. By **abuse** we mean all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to a child's or vulnerable person's or other person's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.
4. **Session** is the name of the body of elders in a local congregation, chaired by the minister (or interim-moderator), responsible for the care of the congregation and its activities. **Presbytery** is the name of the regional body embracing the ministers and an elder from each congregation in its region and has an administrative and supervisory role over the congregations within its region and the discipline of ministers. **Synod** is the national body, composed of the members of the several presbyteries, which usually meets annually and regularly reviews the Safe Church Protocol and its operation.

### B. SCOPE:

1. This Safe Church Protocol, applies to all congregations and activities of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and in particular applies to all office-bearers (including ministers, elders and deacons) and Church workers, whether paid or voluntary, and others providing or leading Church programmes. Outside groups making use of our Church facilities are to maintain a Policy and Code of Conduct substantially the same as Sections C and F of this Protocol as should other Christian organisations to whose activities our people are invited.
2. This Protocol covers abusive conduct governed by federal and/or state laws and also other conduct that these laws do not necessarily proscribe or regulate but which is contrary to the biblical standards maintained by this Church. Sexual abuse and much other abuse requires mandatory reporting to the appropriate Police or government agencies according to applicable state or federal laws. All allegations or suspicions of abuse also require report to the relevant Church body.

### C. SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Those serving in leadership and working directly with children or vulnerable persons accept a position of trust which places on them a commitment to carry out their role in accord with the teaching and values of the Church. In ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people, we will –

1. **communicate our commitment** to the safety of children, vulnerable people and others by maintaining this PCEA Safe Church Protocol and any update on the PCEA website <[www.pcea.org.au](http://www.pcea.org.au)> and requiring each congregation to include a link to it that can be easily found on the congregation's website;
2. **carefully recruit, train and supervise** our ministers, other office-bearers and church workers, including ensuring they all have a current Working with Children Check, comply with federal and/or state legislation relating to the protection of children and vulnerable persons, and understand and maintain a high standard of conduct according to the Church's understanding of the teaching of Scripture as illustrated in the Larger Catechism 122-148 and applied in the Code of Conduct below.

3. ensure that all - children, vulnerable people, ministers, Church workers, volunteers and parishioners – receive **support and respect** in a safe and nurturing environment,
4. **respond promptly** and in a trauma-informed manner to each concern raised about the behaviour of its office-bearers and Church workers,
5. within the context of the ministries and activities of the Church, **provide supervision** and pastoral accountability of any person connected with the congregation who is known to have abused a child or another vulnerable person or who poses a reasonably-known risk to children so that he or she is not alone with such persons or permitted to supervise them or to participate in any activity or groups directed mainly toward children or to engage with children by electronic, digital or social media; but the Church always reserves the right (a) to require a signed behavioural agreement as a condition of continued attendance in specific aspects of Church life, and (b) to exclude such a person from Church activities altogether. The name of known offenders will be promptly advised to our Insurers who will provide guidance. *See further PCEA Safe Church Protocol E4 below.*
6. ensure that Presbyteries give particular attention in their **review of records** that Sessions have not less than once in every twelve months reviewed the operation of this Safe Church Protocol and minuted the result, that all records required by the Church and/or state and/or federal legislation are properly kept; the result of the Presbytery review is to be minuted and Presbyteries are also to maintain a list of all persons within the presbytery bounds with Working with Children Checks and any persons coming under C5 above; and Synod examination of records is to have regard to this.

## **D. MAKING A COMPLAINT**

### **1. Who should tell?**

If you are a child or vulnerable person who has been abused then it is important that you tell someone about it. Although mandatory reporting requirements vary somewhat between states, anyone else who suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or vulnerable person is at risk of being abused and/or neglected, should report it to the reporting authority in their state who can advise on procedure. Serious concerns should be reported by telephone not on-line or via email. Serious concerns include when you suspect a child or vulnerable person is in imminent or immediate danger of serious harm, serious injury or chronic neglect. Child sexual abuse is always serious.

**2. Who should you speak to?** You have the right to go directly to the reporting authority in your state or you can speak directly to the minister or one of the elders, or you can speak to any leader of a Church activity such as a Sunday school teacher or youth leader. All our leaders have been trained to listen to your complaint, to take it seriously, and to report it to the Session or Presbytery as the case may be, and advise you about the reporting authority if it is a matter that must be reported according to state or federal legislation.

**3. What if the abuser is one of the Church leaders?** As a Church we seek to be very careful about who we appoint to leadership positions but it is a sad reality that sometimes even a person who was trusted to be a suitable leader may use that position of trust wrongly to abuse others. This is unacceptable and it is important that it is reported to another leader in the Church, or directly to the reporting authority in your state. No person convicted of child sexual abuse or guilty of other serious abuse can remain in church leadership or have any supervision of children and vulnerable people. *See also Protocol C5 above and E6 below.*

**4. What if the abuse happened somewhere else?** Even if the abuse happened somewhere else, such as at school, or at a friend's house, you can still speak to the leaders at your Church about this. They will listen to you and seek to help you.

### **5. What if the victim is now an adult?**

Incidents of abuse perpetrated by a Church office-bearer or leader should be reported even if it happened a long time ago. It may not be easy for a victim to speak about the abuse they experienced but the Session (or Presbytery) will seek to ensure that help and support are provided to the victim without entering into the details if it is a criminal matter as it is vital that allegations of this kind are investigated by the Police first. If the adult who claims to have been a victim of child abuse does not want to press charges or be involved in a criminal complaint, the matter is to be reported to Police without disclosing the complainant's name. If the Police advise they will not proceed with the matter the Church will follow the procedure in E3.

## **E. THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO A COMPLAINT**

**1. We will treat all disclosures seriously** - Our Church is committed to processes that strive for truth and confidentiality and will treat all allegations seriously and act upon them. A child may disclose, deliberately or inadvertently, that he/she is a victim of abuse. Alternatively, there may be reasonable grounds - such as through words spoken, professional observation or signs of abuse - to suspect that a child has been or is being abused. 'Reasonable grounds' is more than mere rumour or speculation and is not the same as proof, but this does not remove responsibility from a person to act if there are reasonable grounds.

**2. We will be compassionate** - We will ensure as far as possible that a compassionate response is a priority in all reported allegations especially at the time when details are sketchy and it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate. At these times, when emotions may run high, leaders are not to pass judgment but to offer care and support to the aggrieved person(s) and, if practicable, to the alleged offender but without entering into the matter, other than to record what happened, when and where it happened, details of persons present or any witnesses, using the complainant's own words as far as possible to avoid jumping to conclusions.

**3. We will report abuse or suspected abuse to the relevant Church body and the proper civil or criminal authorities** - If the matter is one that must be reported to the Police, the alleged perpetrator will be advised he/she is stood down because the Police are investigating a prejudicial allegation. Our Insurers are to be advised and will provide guidance as to the steps to take. A suitable person is appointed to be the liaison person with the police and/or relevant government agency and also to report to the presbytery. Confidentiality is particularly important at this stage to preserve the integrity of the investigation. If the Police advise that the matter will not proceed, the Session or Presbytery, as the case may be, will continue action to determine the plausibility of the allegation, always in accordance with procedural fairness and the Church's rules for interviewing children and vulnerable adults. The Clerk of Presbytery is the normal person with responsibility as 'Head of Entity/Organisation' under Reportable Conduct Schemes.

**4. We will take immediate steps to minimise the risk of further harm** – As soon as the Session (or Presbytery) becomes aware of a complaint of abuse the person against whom an allegation is made is stood down as described in point E3 above. A risk assessment is immediately carried out to identify risks of harm that may exist and steps are taken to ensure that those risks are minimised in order to protect the safety of children and the vulnerable.

**5. We will not let fear of being wrong prevent us from reporting abuse** - Accusations of abuse raised due to ignorance, unwarranted suspicion or malice may prove to be false. Reputations can be irrevocably tarnished by a false accusation and may constitute criminal behaviour as well as behaviour censurable by the Word of God and therefore by the Church. However, the fear of being wrong in reporting situations where it is believed in good faith that abuse has occurred is not sufficient ground for not reporting the concerns and those so reporting are protected in law from criminal, civil or administrative penalty.

**6. Persons of Concern** – The Church will exercise due care in admitting persons into membership. If the Church becomes aware that any person attending its services or activities is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse, or has been convicted of an offence related to child abuse, or has been denied a positive Working with Children Check (or equivalent) or had it withdrawn, suspended, barred or revoked, or who poses a reasonably-known risk to children, the Session or Presbytery (as the case may be) will take appropriate steps to manage that risk as in Protocol C5. Any person found guilty of the criminal offence of sexual abuse will be automatically terminated from volunteering or working with children, and if an office-bearer will be removed from office.

**7. We will keep careful and confidential records** – All office-bearers and leaders will be interviewed and answer screening questions relating to past behaviour via completion of a form signed and witnessed; along with any referee's reports at least two verbal reference checks will be made and the applicant will sign their agreement with this Safe Church Protocol. No office-bearer or leader will be permitted to resign without ensuring there are no allegations of child abuse or other behaviour contrary to this Protocol affecting them and minuting accordingly. We will keep for not less than 50 years records of all complaints and our action taken. Sensitive electronic records will be password protected where appropriate and stored off-line. These records will be kept by the Session clerk, or another elder as appointed from time to time by Session, and controlled under the privacy legislation of the Church with certified copies lodged with the Presbytery. Suitable details of abuse allegations will be made available to the Church's insurers. In fulfilling our duty of care the Session and/or

Presbytery will provide suitable details to the congregation directly concerned and to the wider church and other denominations where appropriate.

## **F. SAFE CHURCH CODE OF CONDUCT**

*The following constitutes the Code of Conduct for a person in a position of authority within the Church, which expression includes ministers, elders, deacons, Sunday-school or youth leaders and all persons, including those giving pulpit supply, supervising or working with children or vulnerable adults. A copy of this entire Safe Church Protocol document of which this Code of Conduct is a part is to be read, signed and dated by all in a position of authority and the fact minuted by the Session or Presbytery as the case may be.*

1. *Introduction:* 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 the PCEA Safe Church Protocol and regularly refresh your knowledge of it.
2. *Permitted sexual behaviour:* Sexual behaviour is only permitted as set out in the Word of God as held by the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia. As marriage in Scripture is between two persons of the opposite sex, physical intimacy, among other things, is confined to this relationship; if you are unmarried any relationship with a potential marriage partner will honour Scripture requirements of respect, purity and integrity and so it will be fully and freely consensual, and you will abstain from physical intimacy.
3. *Use of media, photography &c.* All email, mobile phone and electronic media use with children and vulnerable persons will be primarily about information sharing. Photographs or videos of children or vulnerable persons will not be posted on social media or the church website unless the consent of those pictured is given or, in the case of children or young people, the consent of the adults responsible for them.
4. You must not fail to take action to prevent to the best of your ability and report as required any of the following:
  - a) abuse of a child or children or vulnerable person/s,
  - b) a child or vulnerable person at risk of significant harm,
  - c) reportable conduct under state and/or federal law,
  - d) sexual misconduct, and/or
  - e) conduct that breaches this Safe Church Code of Conduct,and you may not engage in or condone any behaviour that could be considered of this description.
5. *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 any person.
6. *Sexual exploitation* refers to any form of sexualised behaviour with any person, whether or not there is consent and regardless of who initiated the behaviour, where that behaviour is contrary to the Word of God. You will not among other things engage in or condone any of the following:
  - a) behaviour or a pattern of behaviour aimed at the involvement of others in sexual acts, including but not limited to coercion or grooming behaviour,
  - b) sexualised behaviour with a person below the legal age of consent,
  - c) the production, distribution, possession of or accessing of pornographic material of any kind,
  - d) taking advantage of the conscious or unconscious use of sexually provocative behaviour that some victims of abuse display,
  - e) engaging the services of a prostitute, or soliciting or providing such services,
  - f) visiting, without legitimate reason, a brothel or any place maintained for the abuse-of-sex industry,
  - g) viewing or reading, in print or otherwise, material of a sexually explicit nature, except for a legitimate purpose,
  - h) participating in sexually explicit conversation via social media, chat rooms, gaming or any other means, and
  - i) 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 any person where that person reasonably feels in all the 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:
- a) implicit or explicit demands or suggestions for sexual activities,
  - b) making any gesture, action or comment of a sexual nature to a person or about a person in their presence,
  - c) making jokes containing sexual references or innuendo using any form of communication,
  - d) exposure to any form of sexually explicit or suggestive material, including but not limited to pornography of any kind,
  - e) 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,
  - f) touching any sexual part of the body, including the “only kidding” or accidental occasions of sexual touch,
  - g) 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,
  - h) inappropriate giving of gifts, including those of a sexual, suggestive or romantic nature that is in breach of the Code of Conduct,
  - i) inappropriate or unnecessary discussion of, or inquiry about, personal matters of a sexual nature,
  - j) 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,
  - k) voyeurism, and
  - l) persistent following or stalking.
8. *Coercion or grooming* behaviour refers to physical or psychological actions intrinsic to initiating or hiding abusive behaviour, which involve the manipulative cultivation of relationships with children and /or vulnerable people, their carers and others in authority.
- a) You will not exhibit any behaviour that could be considered to be coercion or grooming behaviour.
  - b) 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 another person present or within hearing distance.
9. *Bullying, domestic violence:*
- a) You will not condone or participate in bullying behaviour, where bullying is the repeated seeking out or targeting of a person to cause them distress and humiliation or to exploit them, including exclusion from a peer group, intimidation and extortion.
  - b) You will not condone or participate in domestic or family violence, which involves violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour carried out by a partner, carer or family member to control, dominate or instil fear. This includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial or other types of abuse.
10. *Some further rules for activities involving children or vulnerable people:*
- a) You will ensure that any activity is open to observation by parents and other adults with a legitimate interest. It is the norm that there be at least two leaders, or a leader and another adult, at any activity and in any smaller group formed from the activity, unless in sight or hearing of the other group/s.\* It is preferable that there are male and female leaders for mixed groups, with male leaders for boys’ groups and female leaders for girls’ groups.
  - b) 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.\*
  - c) You will not drive a child unaccompanied unless you are a parent or guardian of that child or two or more persons are being driven to be dropped off at the one address.\* You will exercise Christian prudence and common sense in driving a vulnerable person unaccompanied.
  - d) You will not visit a child in their own home unless a parent or guardian is present or you visit with another person in a position of authority within the Church with parental permission. You will exercise Christian prudence in visiting vulnerable persons in their own home.
  - e) You will not use or permit the use of illicit drugs or permit the use of alcohol at an activity for children. Only where authorised by Session for particular functions (eg. wedding reception) are alcoholic beverages allowed at any activity of the Church.

- f) 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.
  - g) 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 vulnerable people must be provided by a person of the same sex.
  - h) You will not allow an adult to share accommodation or sleep in close proximity with one child or vulnerable person, unless he or she is a parent or guardian of that child or vulnerable person or there is significant separation, and the privacy of all parties is respected.\*
  - i) You will not participate in or allow nude swimming or other such activities
  - j) You will not participate in or allow initiations and secret ceremonies.
11. *Temporary Variations on items marked \**: Temporary variations on 10 (a) (b) (c) and (h) on a restricted basis for individuals in specific circumstances for a specific period of time can be made but must be formally recorded by the Session or Presbytery as the case may be. Where no temporary variation is formally recorded, the rules stated will apply.
  12. *Emergency situations*: Where specified provisions cannot be followed in an emergency, the circumstances of the emergency and the actions taken are to be reported to and approved and minuted by the supervising body, usually the Session of the congregation concerned. Where the actions taken are not approved they will be considered to be a breach of the Code of Conduct.
  13. *Breaches of this Code of Conduct*: Breaches whether in emergency or otherwise may be inadvertent and/or non-criminal or in the circumstances able to be condoned or passed from with guidance in correct procedure given or further training or working with another or more experienced person provided. Criminal or other serious breaches require immediate suspension or removal from ministry with children or, potentially, other or all ministries of the Church. Any person convicted of the criminal act of sexual abuse will be automatically terminated from volunteering or working with children, and if an office-bearer will be removed from office.
  14. Any perceived breach must be recognised, reported to the appropriate supervising body (usually the Session) as soon as possible, and recorded in the minutes together with the remedy adopted (note the provisions of this Protocol E3, E6 for known offenders). The established disciplinary procedures of the Church as set out in its Handbook apply. The supervising body will immediately report the matter to the Presbytery and relevant Synod Committee as the case may be.

# HANDBOOK AMENDMENTS

Approx. 1,228 words

## Chapter 2 SESSION

Renumber 2.9 to 2.9a and add new section 2.9b,c,d,e,f & g as follows:

**2.9b Office-bearers and other applicants for working with children:** All applicants for working with children or young people, including applicants for office as elder or deacon, creche assistants and youth workers, must

i) be a regular worshipper in the congregation for at least twelve months, unless transferred from another PCEA congregation with a clear letter of transfer or from a denomination with whom we have fraternal relations, in which case a lesser period may be approved if an explicit letter of good standing from the previous church is provided. A form along the lines of Form A (see Appendix) is to be completed and referees verbally checked using a form along the lines of the specimen Form C (see Appendix).

ii) have a working with children clearance and meet other legal requirements, including reference checks. If written these must be supplemented by verbal checking (Form C).

iii) commit in writing to the Role and to the PCEA Safe Church Protocol by signing a form along the lines of the specimen Form B (see Appendix) to be lodged with the Session;

iv) be approved by the Session by a **written minute which certifies the above requirements have been met;**

v) participate regularly in public worship;

vi) undertake **initial and follow-up training** in safe church matters as prescribed by Presbytery or Synod at no less a frequency than prescribed in State and/or Federal legislation;

vii) have the regular oversight of the Session (or Presbytery as the case may be).

**2.9c Known Offenders:** No person with a known history of sexual molestation or the like offending may be employed in a supervisory role or be alone with children. [In any case our Church insurance does not cover abuse by known offenders.] Presbytery advice must be sought and see also the requirements of *Safe Church Protocol C5*.

**2.9d Report to Presbytery:** Any case of actual or alleged child or vulnerable person abuse must be reported immediately to Presbytery (Handbook 7.26) for the security of other congregations and for any necessary assistance.

**2.9e Resignation from position of authority:** Should an office-bearer or other person working with children resign his or her post or leave the congregation the Session must certify **in the Session minutes** that, after careful enquiry, they are satisfied that there are no rumours or allegations that suggest failure to observe the PCEA Safe Church Protocol. If Session is not satisfied, appropriate steps must be taken and minuted and no clear disjunction certificate issued.

**2.9f Registers to be kept:** A register of all office-bearers and persons working with children shall be kept with relevant dates, including details of current Working with Children checks, and training and a copy lodged with the Presbytery at least once of year. (see 2.30). A register of children attending at meetings of Sunday school (especially in the creche), youth groups, camps etc. should be kept, and placed in the Session archives.

**2.9g Notice about PCEA Safe Church Protocol:** The Protocol will be available on the PCEA website and each congregation website is to have an easily located link to it. A simple notice indicating this should be visible on the church property. **Non-PCEA** groups using Church facilities must be provided a copy of the Protocol as an illustration of what is required of those using our facilities and commit to it or similar requirements and provide evidence of insurance covering abuse of children or vulnerable persons if such are involved.

**Add to 2.12:** To ensure that there are no outstanding issues or adverse history the Session must be careful concerning the background history of those who apply for membership. Checking with the previous church is normal practice. Pastoral care and home visitation are also important in this respect. A simple form to collect basic background data is strongly recommended and should be kept securely in the Session records. An explicit minute covering the foregoing in regard to each person admitted to membership is certainly essential as an exercise of the reasonable care required by State and/or Federal legislation.

**Add to 2.18:** A Session shall not issue a Disjunction Certificate if there is any suspicion/allegation of sexual or domestic abuse without first investigating the matter. The result of the investigation must be duly **minuted**, and the Certificate with-held or qualified if necessary.

**Renumber 2.28 to 2.28a**

**Add 2.28b** Not less than **annually** the Session must minute to the following effect: *‘Each member of Session certifies that he is aware of the current PCEA Safe Church Protocol, faithfully keeps it, and is also aware of the legal requirements under State and Church law to report suspected or actual cases of child or vulnerable person abuse or pornography. Each member also certifies that he is not aware, after suitable enquiry (including of deacons and other persons in positions of authority), of any rumour or allegation in breach of the policy and code of conduct except.....’* [here state the exception and the action to be taken].

**Add 2.28c.** Session minutes and records are **confidential** within the courts of the church. It is not normally necessary to keep a record apart from the normal minutes for discipline cases, but Sessions may find it appropriate (particularly in drawn out cases), but in any case of actual or alleged child or vulnerable person abuse, certified copies of the material in the case are lodged with the Presbytery Clerk as insurance against the originals, which must be retained for **at least 50 years**, being mislaid. See further **Safe Church Protocol E6**.

**Add to 2.30** A **register of Adherents** (2.19) should also be kept. Admission and removal dates from the rolls should be carefully noted. An **attendance register** is also good practice for pastoral care

**CHAPTER 4: PRESBYTERY**

**Renumber 4.33 to 4.33a**

**Add 4.33b** The Presbytery, as having responsibility for the oversight of congregations within the bounds, must include **Safe Church issues** on the agenda, maintain a list of the names, card numbers and expiry date of all persons requiring Working with Children Checks, ensure the PCEA Safe Church Protocol is faithfully observed, that Safe Church training is provided as specified from time to time by Synod and/or State and/or Federal legislation, and that any **pulpit supply persons** approved by Presbytery also comply with the Safe Church Protocol. The Clerk of Presbytery is ordinarily the ‘Head of Entity/Organisation’ for Reportable Conduct schemes under State law. The Presbytery takes such steps as it considers appropriate to ensure the preservation of Session records that are relevant to any child or vulnerable person abuse case that might arise in the future, usually by certified copies being lodged with the Presbytery. **See also Safe Church Protocol C6 and E6.**

**CHAPTER 5: SYNOD**

**Reword 5.32** to read: Persons are appointed to examine the **records of presbyteries**, and these examiners report their findings to a later sitting. They are to make sure that the ~~questions prescribed by Synod 2013 re child abuse &c have been satisfactorily answered and minuted.~~ business conducted was in accordance with the laws of the church and in particular that the requirements of the Synod in regard to the **PCEA Safe Church Protocol** are being carefully observed. It is the responsibility of Synod to put in place policies and procedures which apply throughout the PCEA, that take into account relevant state/federal legislation and the examples of best practice from other similar organisations, and Synod is advised in this by its Law and Advisory Committee.



**Questionnaire:** *To ensure compliance with Child Safe Standards and insurance requirements.*

A. Have you ever been convicted of child abuse or neglect? \_\_\_\_\_

B. Have any allegations or complaints involving misconduct with children ever been made against you? \_\_\_\_\_

C. Is there anything in your past that would call into question your suitability to be trusted with the care of children under 18 years? Or of vulnerable persons? \_\_\_\_\_

If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the above questions, please provide details below: *(If insufficient space, please attach separate page)*

D. If you have any previous experience and/or qualifications in working with children, please list below:

E. What is your reason or motivation for becoming engaged in Children's Ministry in the Church?

F. What behaviors do you believe are required for people working with children in the Church? [Read the PCEA Safe Church Protocol]

**Name of Previous Church (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Referees:**  
*(Not related to you or the other referee) PLEASE NOTE: Your nominated referees must be people who have known you for a significant amount of time (years rather than months) and who are **not** relatives.*

**Contact details of Referees:**

**Name of 1<sup>st</sup> Referee:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ or email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of 2<sup>nd</sup> Referee:** \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ or email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Declaration:**

I declare that I have read and understood the questions in this application form. I have answered the questions truthfully and completely to the best of my knowledge. Should it be found that any answer that I have given in this application is untrue, I understand that this may be grounds for my application and/or my approval to work with children under the age of 18 years in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia to cease and/or to be withdrawn.

I agree that the Church may contact the referees provided by me to establish my suitability to work with children under the age of 18 years in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Office use:** *Interviewer* \_\_\_\_\_ *Action by Session: See minutes* / /

## **Form B: ROLE DESCRIPTION – CHILDREN’S MINISTRY**

**To be completed by all those working with children under 18 years** (e.g. Playgroups, Crèche, Sunday School, Kids Clubs, Youth, Holiday Clubs, Camps etc) and also by ministers, elders and deacons.

**Aim:** As a Children’s Ministry Team Member, you aim to:

- Share the gospel within the local church and community
- Serve God in all you do in the ministry team
- Encourage and support members of the ministry team
- Teach the Bible faithfully and truthfully as maintained by the PCEA
- Model the Christian life to the those you minister to
- Encourage and pray for team members
- Be involved in the planning and implementing of the ministry programme.

### **Additional Specific Responsibilities:**

In addition to the Responsibilities listed on *Page 1*, you may have further specific responsibilities in respect to one or more of your roles and if so, these are listed below: (*Ministry leader to complete*):

•
•
•
•

### **General Information:**

- It is important that all activities of the children’s ministries are open to appropriate, authorised observation by the Minister and the Session. Parents are always welcome to stay with their children in ministry time should this be necessary.
- If you are training up younger leaders, it is important to pastorally care for them. When delegating tasks to them, it is important to work alongside with them in the organising and implementing of the specific tasks.
- If providing food as part of the ministry activities you must ascertain whether any participants are allergic/ sensitive to any specific foods. If necessary, separate options may need to be provided for these individuals.
- Having a first aid kit for the ministry team is essential. You need to ensure that you know where it is located in an emergency.
- Do not allow yourself to be in any area alone with a child under 18. Always have another team member, leader or the parent with you.
- If a child has questions for you during the ministry events, ask another team member to remain in the room while you talk to them.
- If a child is distressed and needs to be consoled, it is best practice with older children and teens particularly that a person of the same gender does the consoling. Ensure that another team member is either with you or nearby (within sight) at all times, and use your discretion when speaking and comforting the child. With very young children they will often gravitate towards a “mum”-like person, or indeed there may only be women involved in the children’s ministry. Obviously in this situation the advice concerning being of the same gender as the child does not apply here.
- ***Read the PCEA Safe Church Protocol***

### **Declaration:**

I have read and agree to abide by this Role Description and the PCEA Safe Church Protocol:

\_\_\_\_\_ **Print name**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Signature**      \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ **Date**

Action by Session: See minutes / /

**Form C: CONFIDENTIAL RECORD OF REFERENCE CHECKS**

Church / Organisation name: \_\_\_\_\_

*This form is to be completed, whenever a **new** person applies to work with children under 18 in any capacity in the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia – including voluntary roles and to be kept securely by the Session.*

Name of applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

**TWO REFEREES REQUIRED: (Not related to the applicant or other referee)**

*Note: Written references must always be checked by contacting the referee.*

Name of 1<sup>st</sup> Referee: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date contacted: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ WWCC &c. Ref: (attach) \_\_\_\_\_ exp: \_\_\_\_\_

Contacted by (Circle one): Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Personal Conversation; Written/Email \_\_\_\_\_

Conversation summary of the referee’s remarks concerning the applicant’s fitness and suitability for working with children under 18 (continue over page if necessary):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of 2<sup>nd</sup> Referee: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date contacted: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ WWCC &c. Ref: (attach) \_\_\_\_\_

Contacted by (Circle one): Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Personal Conversation; Written/Email \_\_\_\_\_

Conversation summary of the referee’s remarks concerning the applicant’s fitness and suitability for working with children under 18 (continue over page if necessary):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person conducting reference checks:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print name and position

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Action by Session: See minutes / /

# **LAW & ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

## **Alternative Report - Safe Church Matters**

Tom Reeve, John Forbes, David Kerridge

### **1. Amendments to Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct (See Appendices 1 & 2)**

Some minor amendments were suggested by the Northern Presbytery and it was unanimously agreed by the 2019 Synod that the following remit be given to the Law and Advisory committee:

*Synod DIRECT that the minor amendments to the PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct which are proposed by Northern Presbytery (as set out in their remit in Correspondence Item 1), as well as any other minor additions or amendments, be brought for consideration at the next meeting of Synod, with advice from the Law & Advisory Committee. (Synod minutes 19.24.2)*

In seeking to fulfil this remit the committee has carefully reviewed existing legislation in all the relevant Australian states, reviewed the report and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and appraised itself of the specific requirements of the Church's insurer, in order to ensure that PCEA Safe Church standards are fully compliant with all of these. Appropriate minor amendments were proposed and approved by the majority of the committee. These are set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the alternative L&A report and submitted to Synod for approval.

An alternative "Safe Church package" was submitted to the L&A committee by its convenor on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020, just two weeks before the deadline for submission of committee reports. This has received the support of two members whilst the remaining three have dissented from the proposal as it is contrary to the committee's remit.

The following observations are also relevant:

1. No significant problems have been identified with the existing Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct by any member of the committee.
2. The existing Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct have now been in use by all congregations of the PCEA for two years, having been passed as an interim-act by Synod in 2018 and ratified in 2019. To introduce a completely new Policy and Code at this stage is unwarranted and will create unnecessary confusion.

### **2. Handbook Changes**

The committee also had a remit from Synod to prepare material for inclusion into the Handbook. Significant work was carried out in furtherance of this remit and it was proposed that the Handbook have a new chapter dedicated to Safe Church matters. This had the positive support of a majority of the committee until 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 when the convenor proposed an alternative Safe Church package, at which time two members of committee supported the new proposals. In view of this late development it has not been possible to bring forward Handbook amendments that are agreeable to a majority of the committee.

### **3. Complaints Handling Procedures (See Appendix 3)**

The Royal Commission's report recommends that institutions should have a clear, accessible and child-focused complaint handling procedure that sets out how institutions should respond to complaints of child sexual abuse. Its Standard 6 recommends that: "*The institution has a child-focussed complaint handling system that is understood by children, staff, volunteers and families.*"

They recommend that the complaint handling policy and procedure should cover:

1. Making a complaint
2. Responding to a complaint
3. Investigating a complaint
4. Providing support and assistance
5. Achieving systemic improvements following a complaint.

It is apparent that the current procedures contained in Act 1, Class 1, 2014 do not meet the new standards and should now be repealed and replaced. New Complaints Handling Procedures are set out in Appendix 3. They were initially developed for inclusion in the new Handbook chapter but are now submitted to Synod to be adopted as a separate Act. It is not necessary that these Complaints Handling Procedures be passed as a Class 1 Act since the key constitutional requirements of confidentiality, reporting to civil authorities, and disciplinary

outcomes are already contained in the PCEA Safe Church Policy.

## **PROPOSED DELIVERANCES**

### **1. Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct**

Synod transmit the following overture to Presbyteries under the terms of the Barrier Act and meantime pass the same as an interim act in force until next Synod. Returns are to be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by 30 November 2020:

WHEREAS Synod is committed to the careful development and refining of its Safe Church standards,  
AND WHEREAS minor amendments to the 2019 Safe Church Policy and Code were suggested by the Northern Presbytery, and further amendments and additions have been advised by the Law & Advisory committee following its review of state legislation, insurance requirements, and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse,  
NOW THEREFORE Synod, with the consent of presbyteries, enact and ordain, for the PCEA Australia-wide the amendments to the existing Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct (Act 1, Class 1, 2019) as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the Law and Advisory Alternative Report 2020.

### **2. Complaints Handling Procedures**

Synod adopt the Complaints Handling Procedures contained in Appendix 3 of the alternative Law and Advisory Report 2020, as a child focussed and accessible standard to be used throughout the PCEA.

### **3. Repeal of Act 1, Class 1, 2014**

Synod transmit the following overture to Presbyteries under the terms of the Barrier Act. Returns are to be in the hands of the Clerk of Synod by 30 November 2020:

WHEREAS the Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct contained in Act 1, Class 1, 2014 are not considered to be suitably accessible to children, families and volunteers,  
AND WHEREAS all the key constitutional aspects of complaints handling, including requirements for confidentiality, reporting to civil authorities, and disciplinary outcomes are already contained in the PCEA Safe Church Policy,  
AND WHEREAS the 2020 Synod has adopted new Complaints Handling Procedures which are more child-focussed and accessible,  
NOW THEREFORE Synod repeal Act 1, Class 1, 2014 (Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct).

**APPENDIX 1  
AMENDMENTS TO SAFE CHURCH POLICY**

**Remit to L&A committee per Synod minutes 19.24.2**

*Synod DIRECT that the minor amendments to the PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct which are proposed by Northern Presbytery (as set out in their remit in Correspondence Item 1), as well as any other minor additions or amendments, be brought for consideration at the next meeting of Synod, with advice from the Law & Advisory Committee.*

**All additions with underline – additions All deletions with strikethrough – ~~deletions~~**

**Overview of proposed amendments:**

**1, 2, 3, 4 and 6** - Minor wording changes proposed by Northern Presbytery

**3** - Simplify some wording; Ensure implementation of the policy is kept under review, and policy wording updated when required

**4.5** - Delete unnecessary sentences

**8** - Clarify that it is only confidential records which may not be stored electronically – here and 8.2

**8.1** - Statutory requirement for attendance records to be retained for a minimum of 25 yrs

**8.2** - Add protocol for disclosure of relevant confidential information to insurers

**9** - Specify two referees' reports; Slight modification to membership rule to allow more flexibility

**10** - Change to new Complaints Handling Procedures; Add explicit statements about managing risk and removal from office

**11** - Minor wording adjustments; Clarify contact with offender prohibited “to discuss the case”

**13** - New protocol for management of known offenders who attend church meetings

**15** - Clarify and refine training obligations

**SAFE CHURCH POLICY**

**1. Introduction**

Christians are required by the Lord of the Church to think, speak and act in ways that are God-honouring, biblically obedient and motivated by the Christian values of love, mercy and justice. Unfortunately, perpetrators of crimes often seek out churches because they are welcoming, while Christians can also backslide into serious sin. Accordingly, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, in applying the principles of God’s Word, has adopted this fuller Safe Church Policy and the associated Code of Conduct for Church Workers.

This policy is a public document highlighting our resolve to maintain a safe church for all who attend our ministries. It is a privilege to serve Christ in working with all those who entrust themselves to our care, particularly children, young people, and the vulnerable as we help them to become and to mature as disciples of Jesus Christ.

However with this privilege comes responsibility. We have a high calling to protect the vulnerable among us, especially the young, and it comes from the Lord Jesus Himself. “*Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say unto you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter in.*” *And He blessed them.*’ Mark 10: 14-16. Just as those first century children felt safe and secure with Jesus, so all children should feel safe and secure in our care. Their parents should also feel confident in leaving their children with us, knowing that we shall protect them from harm, whilst sharing the love of Christ in word and deed.

Parents have the primary responsibility to teach and to protect their children and they need to be assured that church leaders will similarly teach good things and protect their children. Church leaders undertake their task with responsibility towards parents and towards God. This policy seeks to fulfil the expectations of parents as well as society in these matters. These are set down in state laws but biblical standards are even higher, particularly when it comes to the care of children (including the unborn), the disabled and the elderly.

**2. A Biblical Perspective**

Firstly, we recognise that sin not only affects our relationship to God but also our relationships with one another. The Bible identifies ~~defines and deals with the problem~~ of sin as the root cause of the abuse and miseries we see in society. The institutional church is not free from such abuse as it is comprised of sinful people at varying levels of Christian commitment as well as the unregenerate. But the church should be conforming to God’s standards.

In His teaching summarising the Ten Commandments, Jesus said, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (Luke 10:27). Jesus pronounced severe punishment upon anyone bringing offence or harm to ‘one of these little ones’ (Luke 17:2). The church therefore should always be ready to help the poor, the young and the vulnerable and to defend them from harm and exploitation. This teaching underlies our Safe Church practices.

In the law given through Moses there were many regulations designed to provide for, and to protect, ‘the stranger, the fatherless and the widow’ (Deuteronomy 14:29, 24:17-22, 26:12-13, 27:19, Psalm 82:3-4, Isaiah 1:17, Jeremiah 7:5-7, 22:3, Zechariah 7:9,10). This law reflected the heart of God himself, and Jesus reflected the same heart of love. He was moved with compassion for the widow of Nain (Luke 7:13), and for little children (Matthew 19:14). James writes, ‘Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.’(James 1:27).

Biblical standards include those of justice as well as mercy. These standards make provision for false allegations of abuse, either mistaken or deliberate, which may arise in the Church. This is also a serious offence (Deuteronomy 19:16-21) as persons falsely accused in public can suffer loss of reputation and health. Therefore, when an accusation is made it is important that we, as a church, judge with righteous judgment (Proverbs 17:15). ‘The house of God, which is the church of the living God, (is) the pillar and ground of truth’ (1Timothy 3:15).

The Bible requires us (as per the principle in Deuteronomy 22:8) to do our best to foresee possible sources of danger and put in place reasonable safeguards. We also recognise the need in doing this to strike a sensible balance between taking precautions on the one hand and, on the other, not being unreasonably oppressive when it comes to guarding against possible scenarios.

### **3. Outline of Principles and Practices by the PCEA and its Congregations**

As a national organisation, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia is committed to safe ministry by the following principles and practices:

- advocating Biblical ~~ministry principles~~ principles which ~~values~~ value children, young people and the vulnerable. We believe this will result in a safe, friendly and nurturing environment
- complying with Government requirements concerning all vulnerable people
- carefully appointing and monitoring leaders who oversee church ministries
- appointing a ‘Protection Officer’ in each congregation to promote safe church matters and to keep records
- providing initial and regular follow-up training on safe church matters
- ~~-delivering (reporting) reporting~~ reporting to the civil authorities any whose conduct infringe criminal codes
- disciplining (by documented procedures) and counselling any who exploit children, young people, the vulnerable or those who make false accusations
- ~~-regularly reviewing the implementation and effectiveness of this policy and updating as required this policy on a regular basis (This responsibility will continue under the oversight of the Synod Law & Advisory Committee.)~~

### **4. Some Definitions**

**4.1 Child:** A person under the age of 16 years (some laws, under 18 years of age)

**4.2 Young Person:** A person from 16 to 18 years of age

**4.2 Vulnerable Person:** A child or someone who by reason of mental incapacity or other disability, age or illnesses may be unable to take care of or protect themselves against harm or exploitation by another person

### **4.3 Abuse categories:**

**(Serious) physical abuse** occurs when a child or vulnerable person is severely and/or persistently hurt or injured. It can occur in the context of domestic violence. This constitutes a reportable offence.

**Sexual abuse** occurs when a child or vulnerable person is exposed or subjected to sexual behaviours or threat to commit such behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate. This constitutes a reportable offence.

It usually occurs when a person uses their power and authority to take advantage of another's trust to involve them in sexual activity. Sexual abuse does not necessarily involve physical contact. It includes any act which erodes the sexual boundary between two persons. It may appear to be consensual, but the validity of consent is negated by the power differential.

**Emotional (psychological) abuse** occurs when a child or vulnerable person is repeatedly treated in ways that damage their ability to feel, express their feelings and develop self-esteem. This does not automatically constitute a reportable offence.

**Neglect** is a legally defined term and occurs when a child or vulnerable person is deprived of the basic physical and emotional necessities of life (such as freedom of movement, food, medical care, clothing, housing, education). This may constitute a criminal act and hence may be a reportable offence.

**4.4 WWCC:** A Working With Children Check is carried out by State Governments, using a national database, to provide a clearance to work with children based on police records. ~~For voluntary workers such clearances are valid for five years and a number is issued. Two forms of identification will be required and an on line application process is used now.~~

## **5. Positions for Ministry**

These include the minister and any other paid employees, elders, deacons, carers (including the crèche), Sunday School teachers and helpers, Kid's Club leaders and helpers, Youth Group leaders and helpers and Scripture Teachers (SRE). Most of these positions are voluntary.

## **6. Code of Conduct for Church Workers 2018**

This is an associated document to be followed by all leaders and office-bearers. This Code may be updated from time to time by the Synod. ~~through its Law & Advisory Committee.~~

## **7. Protection Officer**

The session of each congregation will appoint a suitable Protection Officer (or Officers) who will be responsible for the following:

- promoting to the congregation the details and importance of the Safe Church Policy including the Code of Conduct
- being readily available to answer queries and to provide information to the congregation and others (e.g. parents) when required
- keeping the non-confidential records such as the WWCC documentation and training records for each leader (and other records as outlined below)
- checking on the training of all leaders and liaising with the clerk of presbytery concerning training courses
- providing a report to the clerk of session annually, or as required

## **8. Record-Keeping**

Within each congregation there will be two sets of Records kept in books or folders ~~(and not to be stored electronically).~~

**8.1 Non-Confidential records** showing the list of approved workers, dates of appointment to positions, Working With Children Check approval numbers and dates and training programmes attended; also to be recorded here are the training course programmes delivered to the congregation with name of the providers, objectives, content, dates of delivery and attendees. Registers are also to be kept showing attendance records of all those participating in youth activities, and these are to be retained for at least 25 years. These records are kept by the congregational Protection Officer.

**8.2 Confidential records (as a Record Apart)** kept by the session clerk and controlled under the privacy legislation of the Church. These records are to contain the details of any alleged abuse and the steps taken to process the alleged abuse with the resolution of the process and any conditions placed on the parties involved with all relevant supporting documents (or attested copies) to be attached. Copies are to be kept with the session records for 50 years and then archived at the direction of Synod. A duplicate certified copy of the above records should be lodged with the presbytery clerk. Presbytery clerks and session clerks are authorised to release relevant confidential information for insurance purposes upon receipt of a written request from the person or committee that organises the Church's insurance renewal. Confidential records are not to be stored or communicated electronically.

## **9. Selection Process for Church Workers**

This is a critical aspect in preventing harm and requires care and patience, with prayer. The most important thing is to appoint godly leaders who are well known members of the congregation. When Paul chose Timothy

to be his assistant ministry worker he obtained the opinions of the local church members at Lystra/Iconium (Acts 16:2). We also should be encouraging those who have the gifts for service and leadership.

For those who will be working with children and young people, the following protocols apply:

- applicants must be members of the congregation who have been regular attenders for at least one year (less time approved only if they are well attested from another congregation of the PCEA with at least two referees' reports)
- applicants for leadership positions must be approved by the local session
- before they commence working as a leader they must have a WWCC clearance
- they must undertake initial and follow-up training as prescribed by presbytery
- they must continue regularly at the public worship in the congregation
- they must have ongoing supervision and mentoring by an elder

## **10. Procedures for Dealing with Alleged Abuse**

(Please refer to the PCEA Handbook of Practice and Procedure: 7.51 PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT. Act Class 1 of Synod 2014)

Our Church is committed to processes that strive for truth and confidentiality and will treat all allegations seriously and act upon them. Information about how to make a complaint can be found in our COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURES (reference when known) which also sets out how the Church will respond and investigate the complaint.

A child may disclose, deliberately or inadvertently, that he/she is a victim of abuse. Alternatively there may be reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been or is being abused. 'Reasonable grounds' is a subjective concept, but this does not remove responsibility from a person to act.

We are to ensure as far as possible that a compassionate response is a priority in all reported allegations especially at the time when details are sketchy and it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate. At these times, when emotions may run high, leaders are not to pass judgment but to offer care and support to the aggrieved person(s) and, if practicable, to the alleged offender. Pastoral care at all stages is very important (see further under Item 11).

Leaders and any others in the congregation who hear such disclosures or have reasonable grounds for concern may go directly to the Police and/or report the matter to the Minister/Interim Moderator or an elder. From that time the session will appoint a suitable elder who will be the only one to have carriage of the matter for reportable conduct and will become the liaison person with the Police and/or relevant Government agency. This procedure shall also apply if a child discloses that the abuse has occurred somewhere else other than the church.

When session becomes aware of a complaint of abuse it must immediately assess the risks of harm that exist and take steps to ensure that those risks are minimised in order to protect the safety of children and vulnerable.

At this stage, allegations of child sexual abuse when the alleged victim is still under 18 years of age must not be further investigated by the Church, and neither should the child/young person or the accused be questioned by the Church. When the matter involves criminal behaviour, this must be investigated first by the police.

There will be no disclosure to any interested parties connected with allegedly abused child to avoid contamination of evidence and prejudice of investigations. Although the church minister (or interim moderator) and session are to be advised, at this stage it will not become a matter for session to act upon nor of presbytery involvement (unless a minister of the Church is the accused).

Any church leader or worker who is accused will be stood down by the session from his/her position until the investigations are concluded. Irrespective of any other action taken by bodies outside the Church, the PCEA church discipline procedures, if necessary, will apply according to the Handbook of Practice and Procedure following the conclusion of Police investigations and the outcome of any Court or other legal proceedings.

Following investigation by the Church, any leader found guilty of sexual abuse will be immediately removed from office and from all other positions or roles they may hold within the Church.

### **11. Pastoral Care for Children & Young People who are Alleged Victims of Abuse**

Appropriate sensitive pastoral care will be extended to any child, young person or vulnerable person who has made a disclosure of abuse, by the following protocols:

- not pushing the child or young person to disclose details of the alleged assault
- not attempting to investigate the allegation
- assuring the child person that they are understood; that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- not making contact with the alleged offender to discuss the case
- maintaining confidentiality by speaking only to those parties recommended by the police (or delegates), even though this may cause emotional tension

### **12. False Allegations**

Accusations of abuse raised due to ignorance, by unwarranted suspicion or malice may prove to be false. Reputations can be irrevocably tarnished by a false accusation which is clearly forbidden under the ninth commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour." Exodus 20:16.

False accusations may themselves constitute criminal behaviour and as such, redress may be contemplated by the aggrieved. But it is preferable that false accusations should be dealt with by the session with counselling and seeking of forgiveness.

However, the fear of being wrong in reporting situations where it is believed that abuse has occurred is not sufficient ground for not reporting the concerns.

### **13. Managing Known Offenders**

If the Church become aware that any person attending any of its services or activities is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse, or has been convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse, they must make this known to the session.

On receiving such information the session must assess the level of risk posed to children by such a person's ongoing involvement in church activities and take appropriate steps to manage that risk. Such steps may require that the known offender always attend meetings under the supervision of a responsible individual named by session. The Church's insurer must also be informed as soon as possible.

### **14. Working with a Body External to the Church**

Using the services of another organisation in child related ministries (e.g. at camping, conference and other sites) is allowed if that organisation agrees to uphold the policies contained in this document.

Decisions to enter into agreements with other churches or organisations for the provision of advice on child protection issues or to conduct appropriate training for church workers will be made by presbyteries.

### **15. Training**

~~Mandatory training in child protection for all leaders in organisations who care for children is being enacted by State Parliaments.~~

It is required that those working with children and the vulnerable be given appropriate training in Safe Church matters. The clerk of presbytery will organise approved initial and ongoing training for all leaders and office bearers in the congregations of their jurisdictions. Records will be kept and details provided to Government agencies as required. Records also are to be kept by the congregational Protection Officers (see item 8.1 above).

~~A different programme of training applies to Scripture teachers in State Schools (Special Religious Education) and an "Annual Assurance" declaration is currently signed by our clerk of Synod for NSW. All Scripture teachers in State Schools should ensure that they undertake the required annual training with an approved provider and that the details are recorded with the clerk of presbytery.~~

**APPENDIX 2**  
**AMENDMENTS TO SAFE CHURCH CODE OF CONDUCT**

**Remit to L&A committee per Synod minutes 19.24.2**

*Synod DIRECT that the minor amendments to the PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct which are proposed by Northern Presbytery (as set out in their remit in Correspondence Item 1), as well as any other minor additions or amendments, be brought for consideration at the next meeting of Synod, with advice from the Law & Advisory Committee.*

**All additions with underline – additions All deletions with strikethrough – ~~deletions~~**

**Overview of amendments:**

**3a** - This paragraph to be specifically about visiting children in their home

**3b** - New paragraph clarifying transportation policy. Renumber subsequent paragraphs.

**3c** - Exception permitting second adult to be a parent observer on occasion but not as norm.

**3j & k** - Clarify protocols on alcohol and drugs

**3l** - Clarify physical violence forbidden.

**3m** - Clarify procedure for temporary or emergency variations to protocol

**7** - Add 'together with your date of birth.'

**SAFE CHURCH CODE OF CONDUCT**

1. As a person in a position of leadership within the church you must always be concerned about the integrity of your position and remember that you are representing the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. You should avoid situations where you will be vulnerable to temptation and where your conduct may be construed to be a breach of God's holy standards.
3. With regard to young people and children, appropriate conduct includes the following protocols:
  - a. When visiting children in their homes, ~~or transporting children in vehicles~~, leaders will only do so if a parent or another appropriate adult is present.
  - b. When transporting children in vehicles, no leader is to be alone in a vehicle with a single child or young person.
  - c. There shall ~~always~~ be at least two approved leaders at any activity (except for crèche where a sole female carer is acceptable). On occasion a parent present as an observer may suffice as a second adult. Preferably there should be male and female leaders for mixed groups with male leaders for boys groups and female leaders for girls groups. It is recognised that there may be occasions where there is a sole leader when breaking up into small groups; but in such cases, the small groups will not be out of eyesight or earshot of others.
  - d. A camp or other activity involving overnight accommodation should include "camp parents" (ideally a married couple over the age of 25 years, of known maturity and Christian commitment) approved by the church. In such overnight accommodation there will be a strict segregation by sex, with the exception of married couples and families. Supervision of children and young people must be provided by a person of the same sex.
  - e. A biblical pattern of behaviour is to be observed with respect to modesty and standards of morality. Adults and children are to respect the privacy of others during activities that require undressing and changing clothes. Leaders are to set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations.
  - f. Initiations and secret ceremonies are forbidden.
  - g. Any activity involving children or young people is open to observation by parents and other adults with a legitimate reason.
  - h. Leaders have the right to ask persons who do not have a valid reason to be present at child related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any such reasonable request.
  - i. If any personal counselling is required, it shall be carried out within the sight of other people (preferably another leader).
  - j. The consumption of alcohol ~~or illegal drugs on the church grounds or~~ during a church or youth activity is forbidden with the exception of communion services where wine is ordinarily used. Other uses of alcohol on church grounds require the permission of the session (e.g. at a wedding reception to be held in a church hall).

- k. Any young person found under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and removed from the activity. Any such drugs found on the church grounds are to be witnessed (by a second person) and removed. Where appropriate, police should be informed. ~~(A small amount of wine for sacramental purposes may be stored on the premises, in a secure location.)~~
- l. In any physical contact with young people or children, leaders will respect the feelings and privacy of those persons. Physical violence of any kind is forbidden.
- m. Where a protocol cannot be followed due to an emergency or unexpected situation, the session (or supervising body) must be notified in writing as soon as practicable. A temporary variation may also be approved in advance. In both cases the supervising body must determine whether or not the circumstances justify the departure from protocol and must carefully document its finding.

4. The Bible commands us very clearly on purity of body and mind, for example in Ephesians 5:3,4, Matthew 5:27-29 and Job 31:1. This is expanded in our Larger Catechism (Nos 138 and 139). All leaders should be familiar with these standards and be prepared to uphold and encourage these values in their personal lives and in all their dealings with others. Any sexualised behaviour (apart from that within marriage as defined by the Word of God) is to be carefully avoided. What is forbidden includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. inappropriate conversation, remarks and jokes of a sexual nature, coarse language, suggestive gestures and impure looks
- b. pornographic literature or media of any kind (from books, magazines, newspapers, posters, videos, movies, DVDs, internet sites, photographs, etc)

5. Leaders are to the best of their ability to take reasonable action to maintain the safety of all persons in their care. This particularly applies to the young, the elderly and other vulnerable persons.

6. State Governments from time to time legislate for reportable offences in the realm of child abuse. These standards vary from state to state. When any such abuse of children and young people is seen or reported to you, these must be notified to the minister or an elder of the congregation for reporting to the Police or Government agency. You also have the right to go directly to the Police yourself and can ask advice from the congregational Protection Officer. The church's own disciplinary procedures may also apply.

You, in your position of leadership, are required to report any of the following (which are defined in the Safe Church Policy):

- physical or sexual child abuse,
- a child or young person at risk of significant harm,
- a child suffering neglect, and
- any sexual misconduct by leaders

7. Before you commence working with children and young people in your position of leadership in the church, you will undertake the Government Working With Children Check (WWCC) and provide a copy of the documentation and approval number to the congregational Protection Officer, together with your date of birth.

8. Initial training and regular follow-up training in Safe Church matters must be undertaken if you are in any position of leadership. Approved training sessions will be organised by the clerk of presbytery.

## APPENDIX 3 COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURES

### 1. MAKING A COMPLAINT

If you are a child, young person or vulnerable adult who has been abused then it is important that you tell someone about it.

Anyone who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child or other vulnerable person has been abused or is at risk of abuse should also report this.

**1.1 Who should you speak to?** You can speak directly to the minister or one of the elders, or you can speak to any leader of a church activity such as a Sunday school teacher or youth leader. All our leaders have been trained to listen to your complaint, to take it seriously, and to report it to the session. You also have the right to go directly to the police or relevant government agency to report abuse.

**1.2 What if the abuser is one of the church leaders?** As a Church we try to be very careful about who we appoint to leadership positions but it is a sad reality that sometimes even a person who was trusted to be a suitable leader may use that position of trust wrongly to abuse others. This is unacceptable and it is important that it is reported to another leader in the Church, or directly to the police or relevant government agency.

**1.3 What if the abuse happened somewhere else?** Even if the abuse happened somewhere else, such as at school, or at a friend's house, you can still speak to the leaders at your church about this. They will listen to you and seek to help you.

#### **1.4 What if the victim is now an adult?**

Abuse by a church leader should be reported even if it happened a long time ago. It may not be easy for a victim to speak about the abuse they experienced but the Church should seek to ensure that help and support are provided to the victim, who should be encouraged to bring a report to police.

#### **1.5 What is abuse?**

Children and vulnerable people have a right to be safe, protected, and looked after in their family, daily life and at church activities. Abuse is when a leader, adult, or even another young person, uses their power or position of trust in a wrong way to hurt or exploit by doing things to a child or vulnerable person, or making them do things, that are inappropriate or distressing. It can take many forms, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as neglect and exploitation.

### 2. OUR RESPONSE TO A COMPLAINT OR DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

**2.1 We will treat all disclosures seriously and record the details** - Our Church is committed to processes that strive for truth and confidentiality and will treat all allegations seriously and act upon them. A child or young person may disclose, deliberately or inadvertently, that he/she is a victim of abuse. Alternatively there may be reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person has been or is being abused. 'Reasonable grounds' is a subjective concept, but this does not remove responsibility from a person to act. In all cases, details will be recorded of what happened, when and where it happened, details of persons present or witnesses, using the complainant's own words as far as possible.

**2.2 We will be compassionate** - We are to ensure as far as possible that a compassionate response is a priority in all reported allegations especially at the time when details are sketchy and it is not yet certain that the allegations are accurate. At these times, when emotions may run high, leaders are not to pass judgment but to offer care and support to the aggrieved person(s) and, if practicable, to the alleged offender.

**2.3 We will report abuse to the relevant church body and the proper civil authorities** - Leaders and any others in the congregation who hear such disclosures or have reasonable grounds for concern should report the matter to the minister or an elder. You also have the right to go directly to the police or relevant government agency yourself and can ask advice from the congregational Protection Officer. From that time the session (or the presbytery if the allegation is against a minister), will appoint a suitable elder who will be the only one to have carriage of the matter for reportable conduct and will become the liaison person with the police and/or relevant government agency. This procedure shall also apply if a child discloses that the abuse has occurred somewhere else other than the church.

**2.4 We will not let fear of being wrong prevent us from reporting abuse** - The fear of being wrong is not sufficient ground for not reporting the concerns.

**2.5 We will take immediate steps to minimise the risk of further harm** – As soon as the session becomes aware of a complaint of abuse they must carry out a risk assessment to identify risks of harm that exist and they must take steps to ensure that those risks are minimised in order to protect the safety of children and vulnerable.

**2.6 We will keep careful and confidential records** – Confidential records (as a record apart) will be kept by the session clerk and controlled under the privacy legislation of the Church. These records will contain the details of any alleged abuse and the steps taken to process the alleged abuse with the resolution of the process and any conditions placed on the parties involved with all relevant supporting documents (or attested copies) attached. Copies will be kept with the session records for 50 years and then archived at the direction of Synod. A duplicate certified copy of the above records will be lodged with the presbytery clerk.

### **3. INVESTIGATING A COMPLAINT**

**3.1 Initial stage** - At the initial stage, allegations of child sexual abuse when the alleged victim is still under 18 years of age must not be further investigated by the Church, and neither should the child/young person or the accused be questioned by the Church. When the matter involves criminal behaviour, this must be investigated first by the police.

**3.2 Confidentiality** - There will be no disclosure to any interested parties connected with allegedly abused child to avoid contamination of evidence and prejudice of investigations. Although the Church minister and session are to be advised, at this stage it will not become a matter for session to act upon nor of presbytery involvement (unless a minister of the Church is the accused).

**3.3 Precautionary suspension** - Any church leader or worker who is accused will be stood down by the session or presbytery from his/her position until the police investigations and Church investigations are concluded.

**3.5 Investigation according to Biblical standards** – When any police investigation is concluded the Church will conduct its own investigation. It is possible that charges arising from the police investigation may not be proved to the satisfaction of the civil court. Nevertheless, the standards of conduct required by the Word of God are to be maintained by the Church. Irrespective of any other action that may be taken, the Church reserves the right to exercise its own powers of discipline over adherents, members and office-bearers.

**3.6 Disciplinary action** – Following investigation by the Church, any minister, office-bearer or other leader found guilty of the sexual abuse of a child, young person, or other vulnerable person, will be immediately removed from office and from all other positions or roles they may hold within the Church.

### **4. PROVIDING SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE**

**4.1 We will seek to provide appropriate support to victims** - Appropriate sensitive pastoral care will be extended to any child, young person or vulnerable adult who has made a disclosure of abuse, by the following protocols:

- not pushing the child or young person to disclose details of the alleged assault
- not attempting to investigate the allegation
- assuring the person that they are understood; that their disclosure is being taken seriously; that what has happened is not their fault and that they are correct in disclosing the incident.
- not making contact with the alleged offender to discuss the case.
- maintaining confidentiality by speaking only to those parties recommended by the police (or delegates), even though this may cause emotional tension.

**4.2 We will provide ongoing care and support for victims and their families** – This is the responsibility of the session and will normally be carried out by the minister or an elder. The Church should also assist victims and families to find information and obtain help from sources outside the Church if desired.

### **5. REVIEW OF PROCEDURES**

#### **5.1 Commitment to review**

We are committed to regularly reviewing and improving our Safe Church standards to ensure that our Safe Church Policy, Code of Conduct and procedures are effective in protecting children and the vulnerable from

harm. We also want our stated procedures to be clear, accessible and easy to follow for all.

An internal review is to be carried out after a complaint process has been concluded. Any causes of systemic failure should be identified and the views of leaders, complainants, and the victim or their family should be sought wherever possible. Details of the review are to be retained as confidential records.

Safe Church training events may provide a regular opportunity for presbyteries to review, with leaders, how well they are able to understand and implement the Safe Church standards in their congregations.

Observations, comments and suggestions should be forwarded to the relevant Synod committee to facilitate improvements to the Church's policies and procedures.

### **5.2 Review with leaders**

Questions to leaders who were involved in reporting or investigating a complaint may be along the following lines:

- a. Was there some inadequacy or systemic failure in the Church's procedures, or in the implementation of these procedures, that resulted in harm to a child or other vulnerable person under your care?
- b. Were you as a leader/session clear about your duties?
- c. Was the complaint process easy to understand and follow?
- d. Was there anything unclear in the Safe Church Policy, Code of Conduct or complaints procedure, or anything in these documents that requires to be clarified or to be updated?

### **5.3 Review with complainants, victims or their families**

The views of complainants, victims or their families should be sought wherever possible in the review process. This will require particular care and sensitivity depending on the nature of the case. They may wish to submit responses in writing or prefer to meet with an appropriate person who has been appointed by the Church to talk with them and record their views. If it has not been possible to obtain these views then the reasons for this should be stated in the report. Questions may be along the following lines:

- a. Was the complaint process easy to understand and follow?
- b. Did you feel listened to and was your complaint taken seriously?
- c. Did you feel the Church handled the complaint appropriately?
- d. Did the Church take proper steps to protect children and the vulnerable from harm?

## TRAINING OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The Committee corresponded over the year by email and some phone contact amongst members, also by Skype conference.

### **Mr Duncan Hickey**

We thank the Lord for the news of Mr Duncan Hickey's successful completion of trials for licensing in the Central Presbytery in 2019. We pray that the Lord will bless him and his family as Duncan seeks to serve the Lord and His church.

### **Rev. Ian Hall**

During the year the Training of Ministry Committee was called upon by Southern Presbytery to assist under section 4.52 of the Handbook in the matter of the admission of Rev. Wesley Ian Hall to the ministry in the PCEA. Following an examination of relevant documents sent by Presbytery, the Committee decided to pursue extra investigations to be assured that we had done "due diligence" before handing the matter on to Synod as is required of us. The outline of our investigations in this matter are detailed in the Committee's letter of recommendation sent to the Synod Clerk 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 (see Correspondence item in Standing Reports). As stated in that letter:

"After a full and cordial discussion of various matters, our unanimous recommendation to the Synod is that Rev. Hall be admitted as a Minister of the PCEA at the next meeting of Synod."

Whilst Rev. Hall had the required Tasmanian certification for working with children, the equivalent Victorian documents were at that time unavailable. As anticipated and notified to us by their Clerk (24/02/20), Southern Presbytery has received Rev. Hall's clearance from the Victorian government regarding the Working with Children Check thus satisfying all documentary evidences. We therefore fully support the Southern Presbytery in seeking to admit Rev. Hall to the ministry of this Church at this Synod and look forward to working with our brother in the Lord's service.

### **Handbook Section 4.52 ADMISSION OF MINISTERS FROM CHURCHES WITH WHOM THERE IS NO MUTUAL ELIGIBILITY [Synod 1983, Act 18, as amended 2004, 2012]**

As a result of the procedure involved in Rev. Hall's admission, we received from Rev. Dr Ward a proposal to (1) change the name of the Committee to Training of Ministry and Admissions Committee; (2) to increase our number to 6 members, two from each Presbytery; and (3) to change the above Act.

For information regarding item (3) the proposed new Section 4.52 is as follows:

#### Proposed Rule:

### **4.52 ADMISSION OF MINISTERS & LICENTIATES OF CHURCHES WITH WHOM THERE IS NO MUTUAL ELIGIBILITY**

*Replacing Act 18 Class 2, Synod 1983 as amended 2004, 2012*

(a) Applications for ministerial standing are addressed to the **Presbytery** but are regulated so as to require a wider deliberation. Application for admission as a minister or licentiate must be made on the **application form** prescribed by the PCEA to the Presbytery in which the applicant resides or proposes to reside. It must include copies of academic transcripts, ordination (or licensing) evidence, dates of induction or appointment to fields of pastoral labour, evidence of clearance to work with children, and the names of at least three referees. These details must be given in summary form in the Presbytery minute together with other background information including any personal knowledge of the applicant known within the presbytery, and the applicant's philosophy of ministry. Special prudence and care is needed in assessing applications from those without at least 5 years experience, those without a settlement, those outside Australia, and/or those from a non-Presbyterian background.

An **interview** must be conducted (normally including the applicants wife) covering specifically at least the following topics: *Family*: wife's support or otherwise of the application, family needs, health; *Personal background* - upbringing, conversion, work experience; *Doctrinal* views, particularly on matters of current concern, any difficulties with the teaching of the Confession of Faith, any idiosyncracies, his love for Christ and

for people; *Practical and pastoral* issues including visitation practice, ability in conducting worship and preaching, evangelistic focus, ability to relate well to others, leadership skills, understanding of Australian society, acceptance of PCEA practice; *Church History*: familiarity with issues in 1846, our attitude to PCA type Declaratory Statements; *Vows* required by the PCEA. *Reasons* for application. *Existing church*: Is he in good standing? Is he well regarded? Has he experienced conflict? Details of the interview in each area are recorded in the minutes together with the result of the verbal interviews with referees.

The Presbytery then records its **decision** on the application, including the actual vote. If the application is viewed favourably, the Presbytery sends the complete minutes concerning it (a) to the Clerk of the other Presbyteries with the request that any comments on the application be forwarded within 10 days to the Training of Ministry and Admissions Committee with a copy to the originating Presbytery.

(b) At the same time the Presbytery sends both the original application and the minutes concerning it to the **Training of Ministry and Admissions Committee**, which shall include two members from each Presbytery. The Committee makes sure all needed information has been covered, and makes such other enquiries as seem appropriate and, takes into account any comments received. Its actions and finding are minuted.

If there are no adverse comments about the life and conduct of the applicant and his ability to integrate and work harmoniously within the PCEA, and if the Committee judges the applicant well qualified and whole-heartedly committed to the authority of Scripture and to the doctrinal position of the PCEA, then, normally no later than 30 days from it receiving the application, it advises the Presbytery that it may proceed to admit the applicant subject to him signing the Formula in the usual way, and the Presbytery advises other presbyteries of its proposal to do so.

However, if dissent has been recorded at Presbytery and/or reservations expressed in Committee, the Committee consults the originating Presbytery and gives opportunity for it to review its initial decision. If the issue is resolved by the Presbytery providing further information to satisfy the Committee or by reversing its earlier approval, there the matter ends. If the Presbytery retains its original position, and the applicant wishes to continue the Committee may decide to refer the application to the next Synod or, if the issue of difficulty is not one having much support or of much importance, it may take the matter to a poll of Synod members to secure a resolution.

(c) **Notwithstanding (b) above**, if the applicant comes from a denomination not a member of the ICRC or from one with which we do not have fraternal relations, or from a denomination that does not have the Westminster Confession and/or Three Forms of Unity as one of its Standards, the Committee will submit its report and recommendation to the next ensuing Synod for its decision. It should be understood that such an applicant would normally be expected to have had involvement in the PCEA for a significant period before application.

[END OF PROPOSED RULE]

After consideration of the matter, the Committee were agreed that:

1. Our numbers are presently small, and retirement of Ministers from a number of charges is foreseen in the near future. We know of no new student candidates considering Ministry in the PCEA. Whilst our work as a Committee in coming years may very well be focussed on the *admission* of men from other denominations with whom we have Mutual or fraternal relations, a change of name may seem to take away the focus from where we should be concentrating our efforts: on encouraging, receiving and helping to *train* students, especially those from Australia and more particularly from within our own denomination. Both roles of training and admission already exist in our remit. We do not see a need for a change of name but leave this to the mind of Synod.
2. Our work regarding Mr Duncan Hickey has finished. There remain some ongoing administrative and development tasks for the Committee. However, there is no pressing demand that would call for more manpower. Due to our small number, Synod members are already called to be involved, perhaps overburdened, in many areas of Synodical work and as such we don't see an expansion of the Committee to be needed at present. The only argument that the Committee saw in favour of a six-person Committee was in giving each Presbytery a clear view of the ongoing work of the Committee, something that should be transparent in any case. We leave this matter to the business of the Administration Committee in appointing members of Committees.
3. The Committee reviewed the proposed changes to Handbook Section 4.52 and agreed that we could not support it in its current form. We have reservations about the scope of the application of this legislation to include those beyond churches with whom we have fraternal relations. We see that, whilst a

streamlined process is advantageous, especially given our projected near-future dearth of Ministers, such a process may yet be troublesome as it bypasses, in the main, detailed and considered review by a convened Synod, whether at its annual meeting or *pro re nata*. We ask that we be allowed to refine this legislation and return to the matter at next Synod.

### **Proposed Deliverances**

1. That the Synod continue in prayer for our Licentiate, Mr Duncan Hickey and his family.
2. That the Synod note our support of the action of Southern Presbytery in seeking the admission of Rev. Wesley Ian Hall to the ministry of the PCEA in accordance with Handbook section 4.52 (Synod 1983, Act 18, amended 2004, 2012).
3. That the Synod consider a change of name of the *Training of Ministry Committee* to *Training of Ministry and Admissions Committee*.
4. That the Administration Committee note, and Synod consider, the possible expansion of the Committee to include 6 permanent members, two from each Presbytery.

## **INTERCHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE 2019.**

Members: R. Tso (Convener 2017), G.D. Ball, J. Forbes, T.I. Leggott, R.S.Ward, J. Klazinga

### **1. ICRC Asia-Pacific Regional Conference, Melbourne 1-3 October 2019**

The ICRC Asia Pacific conference took place in Melbourne with about 40 attendees from Australia Thanks are due to Rev. Dr Rowland Ward for his part in organising this conference along with Rev. Lourens Nel, then of Melbourne, and the CRCA Committee whose other members were interstate. Five PCEA ministers were able to be present and benefit from the addresses and fellowship with ministers from throughout the Asia-Pacific region. A fuller report and picture appeared in The Presbyterian Banner for November 2019.

## **2. CHURCHES WITH WHOM WE HAVE FRATERNAL RELATIONS.**

### **2:1 Free Church of Scotland (FCS). 1954 and 2005.**

### **2:2 Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC). 2018**

#### **Mutual Eligibility**

It will be recalled that the Mutual eligibility with the FCC was approved by our Synod subject to the FCC's confirmation at their 2019 Assembly. An Act along the lines of those we have with FCS, OPC and RCNZ has been drafted and appears in our proposed deliverance. The words in italics are proposed under 4 below for our existing arrangements with the FCS, OPC and RCNZ.

### **2:3 The Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ). 2002.**

During the ICRC Regional Conference Messrs. Ball, Forbes and Yoa had opportunity to meet with representatives of the RCNZ on 2nd October 2019 to discuss past correspondence, present relations and future prospects. The RCNZ expressed a desire that the mutual eligibility arrangement between our churches would involve a greater level of interaction. They would value brotherly conference with the PCEA regarding areas where the views of our churches may diverge. Accommodation can be provided to PCEA ministers who may consider a preaching "holiday" at one of their vacant churches, and an invitation was extended for the PCEA to send a representative to the RCNZ Synod in Hamilton, from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2020.

### **2:4 The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). 2007.**

### **2:5 The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia (RPCA). 2004.**

We look forward to welcoming Rev Graeme Hart as fraternal delegate to Synod.

### **2:6 The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI). 2006.**

Fraternal relations with RPCI were formally agreed following a request of Synod in 2006. It was mistakenly stated in the Inter Church committee's report in 2018 and 2019 that a request for mutual eligibility had also been made to the RPCI at that time. It is clarified here that no such request was made.

### **2:7 The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). 2008.**

Dennis Muldoon advised the Convener that the RPCNA is planning to send short-term missionaries to Sydney, to run a Bible club over the winter holidays in July. The Hunter session has also agreed to receive them to have similar events. This seems an admirable ecumenical endeavour.

### **2:8 The Presbyterian Free Church of India (PFCI). 2010.**

We look forward to welcoming Rev. Samit Misha and Elder Pradeep Kumar as fraternal delegates to Synod.

### **2:9 The Southern Presbyterian Church of Australia (SPCA). 2014.**

We look forward to welcoming to Rev David Lachman of Hobart as fraternal delegate to Synod.

Mr Forbes was invited to speak at their family camp in Feb 2019, and talks have resumed regarding deepening our fraternal relationship.

### **2:10 The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). 2014.**

### **2:11 The United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA). 2015.**

We look forward to welcoming Mr Douglas Field as fraternal delegate to Synod. He was last with us at Synod 2016.

## **3. CHURCHES WITH WHOM WE HAVE CONTACT.**

### **3:1 The Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (PRCA).**

### **3:2 The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPCA).**

Jim Klazinga was able to attend a portion of the EPCA 2019 winter presbytery meeting held in Brisbane [They have two presbytery meetings each year, with the summer meetings held in Tasmania]. He was personally acknowledged and well received. He did not present formal greetings, as the EPCA does not have provisions for this.

### **3.3 Presbyterian Church of Australia**

The Convener was overseas but as Rowland Ward had an historical research task in Sydney at the time of the General Assembly of Australia, he represented us at the GAA held in the Hurstville PCNSW and there was no cost to us. A report appears in *The Presbyterian Banner*, March 2020.

### **3.4 Associated Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. 2018**

We look forward to welcoming Rev John Ferguson as fraternal delegate to Synod.

## **4. Mutual Eligibility Rules**

Our present rules do not include a requirement that other Presbyteries be advised of a proposed call being extended to a minister of a denomination with which we have mutual eligibility. We propose accordingly.

### **5.1 The International Conference of Reformed Churches.**

The next international conference will be, the Lord willing, in 2021 from October 13-19 in Delhi, India (conditional upon the approval of the government of India) or Indonesia. The conference will centre around the theme "Training the church for ministry".

### **5.2 The World Reformed Fellowship (WRF).**

## **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 resolve as follows:

“The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) recognises in the Free Church of Scotland Continuing (FCC) a church whose doctrines and contentings are largely similar to its own with adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith a major requirement for office bearers. Synod, while declining to enter into the merits or otherwise of the division in the Free Church of Scotland in 2000, reaffirms the approval of mutual eligibility approved by PCEA Synod 2019 and notes that the FCC General Assembly in May 2019 the FCC reaffirmed the relation established by the pre-2000 Free Church of Scotland.

The Synod of the PCEA understands and is satisfied that FCC Presbyteries may issue calls to ministers of the PCEA, and likewise affirms the right of the PCEA Presbyteries to process calls to FCC ministers. In neither case does this mutual eligibility impinge on the right and responsibility of the relevant FCC or PCEA Presbytery to require the usual application for admission to be fully and satisfactorily completed and full and satisfactory Presbyterian certificates of character and attainment before admission. These include clearance under any relevant child protection legislation, and assurance that any incoming minister is familiar with the history, doctrine, and practice of the church so that he is able to subscribe to the formula of subscription intelligently and heartily and participate harmoniously and constructively in the life of the church. *The other presbyteries are promptly advised of a proposed invitation, and any response by them should be given without delay.*

Where a FCC minister is potentially or actually under call or appointment by the PCEA, he must, *inter alia*, (a) have read the history of the PCEA and also its Handbook of Practice and Procedure, and have answered satisfactorily questions on them; (b) assure the presbytery that he will maintain the simplicity and purity of the PCEA form of worship; and (c) answer satisfactorily concerning his adherence to the teaching of the Confession of Faith as per Formula of Subscription. His satisfactory compliance with this admission procedure is to be minuted by the Presbytery and must be met before a call or invitation is transmitted so that the minister may know that his acceptance will enable his admission.”

This Act may be cited as Mutual Eligibility (Free Church of Scotland Continuing) 2020.

3. Synod resolve that words *The other presbyteries are promptly advised of a proposed invitation, and any response by them should be given without delay.* be inserted in the mutual Eligibility Acts with the FCS, OPC and RCNZ.

## **YOUTH AND FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

Members: S. Carswell (Convenor), A. Miranda, A. Kerridge, T. Reeve, C. Hamilton, J. Forbes and S. Smith

In 2019 the Y&F committee continued to focus on ministries to strengthen fellowship among the youth and families in the church, as well as encouraging Bible study and scripture memorisation for covenant children.

**Youth Camp 2019:** The 2019 Youth Camp for 15 to 30-year olds was held over the Easter long weekend at John and Judy Greensill's property at Maclean in the Northern Rivers congregation. Their property is well equipped with sheds, outdoor kitchen and eating, toilets, showers and ample space. The hospitality of John and Judy is very much appreciated. Keith and Barbara Schmidt (Brisbane), Judy and her sister Beth (along with husband Stu) donate their time to cooking. Donations by the local PCEA members have kept participants' costs low. The congregation also appreciate the influx of young people for the worship services on Sunday. John Forbes was the speaker and he gave some excellent talks on Creation which generated good discussion. 27 young adults attended from Brisbane, Northern Rivers, Hastings, Manning, Hunter-Barrington and Ulverstone. This was the third youth camp held in recent years and it is encouraging to see return campers as well as increasing numbers.

**Family Camp 2020/2021:** The 2020/2021 Family Camp is scheduled to be held at YWAM Tahlee, NSW from 29 December 2020 to 1 January 2021. The decision to move the camp from Elanora Uniting Venue was due to feedback from previous camps regarding the cost of attendance and the difficulty some families had attending. It is hoped that the change of venue and reduced costs will encourage more people to attend Tahlee is approximately 30-40 minutes from Newcastle airport, with direct flights from Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney. Vehicle transport from the Hunter-Barrington congregation will be available. As the venue is not catered Rev. Robin Tso has agreed to coordinate the planning of meals and the purchase of food. This will further help to reduce costs. It is hoped that the cost of the camp will be approx. \$200 per person. Based on the alternate pattern of PCEA and non-PCEA ministers the speaker for this camp should be external to the PCEA. The speaker has yet to be finalised, but several men are being considered. The committee believes that the Family and Youth Camps are an important event in the life of the church, providing opportunities for strengthening fellowship and deepening our love for God and His Word.

**Essays:** In 2019 essays prizes were given to children from various congregations. The work submitted showed an impressive level of Bible-reading and understanding, which will produce joy and devotion in the spiritual development of children and young adults in the church. The children and Sunday school teachers appreciated the comments back from Andres Miranda regarding the work.

**Prescribed Youth Work 2020:** The prescribed work, memorisation and essay questions were published in the Banner and sent to each congregation earlier this year.

If certificates for scripture memorisation, psalmody or catechism are need please contact the Convenor.

**Birthday Card Greeting:** The Y&F Committee is grateful to Nic and Amelia O'Dell who have continued the role of sending birthday card greetings to the children of the church. Earlier this year (2020) an email was sent to each congregation to update the list of children. Thanks to everyone who responded.

**Search Work:** The Committee is thankful to Irene Steel for her continued commitment to the Search Work. This has been a helpful tool for our children to grow in the knowledge of Christ. Regrettably the number of youth submitting completed search work was very low in 2019 but the committee has been encouraged with the a number of congregations who have indicated they are planning on using the Search Work during Sunday School. The Committee further encourages congregations to utilise the Search work, Essay and Memory work in the teaching and building up the children and youth of the church.

### **Proposed Deliverances:**

1. Synod recognises the importance of giving special attention to children and youth in the Church and commits to continued prayer for the work of Sunday-school teachers and youth leaders as they serve God in our local congregations.
2. Synod uphold Nic and Amelia O'Dell in prayer as they continue in sending birthday greeting to the children of the church.

3. Synod thank Irene Steel for her dedication to the scripture search work and acknowledge God's blessing for her commitment and encouragement in continuing this role.
4. In addition to their responsibilities of shepherding God's flock, both young and older, Synod members are asked to encourage church members to participate in future Family Camps and Youth Camps.
5. Members of Synod commit themselves to continued prayer for the spiritual development of the children and youth in our church. We are mindful of the lure of the world and sin that can draw our young people away from the truth of the gospel and the faith. Therefore, constant intercession be made on behalf of our young people, so that they will have the courage to stand firm in the Lord, to resist worldly pressure, find their identity in fellowship with Christ, and participate joyfully in their local churches.

## MISSIONS COMMITTEE

D.K. Muldoon (convener), J. Greensill, T.I. Leggott, J.D. Klazinga, R. Ball

The committee met at Wauchope on 19 September at 11.15am. We thank Rev John Forbes for allowing us to use the church hall. Rev Jim Klazinga sent an apology. We reviewed the recent visit of Dr Whytock and his wife. We planned a visit of brothers from India in October 2019. This visit did not eventuate because they failed to get visas in time. Updates from the various fields were heard. Further updates are given in this report. There was concern that we have too many fields which we support. It was decided to cease financial support for fields in Peru but to continue with prayer support. AIM as an organization is struggling but we want to support Peter Smith who continues as administrator, and we wish to continue prayer support for ministry among our indigenous people. Peter will be supported with the amount of \$3000pa. Funding for Dumisani will be increased to \$3000pa.

A major new initiative that has been flagged for some time is to support Shakinah Hussain, Mariam's younger sister, as a short-term missionary to Thailand. Although Shakinah is member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in India, Good Shepherd Fellowship in Dehradun, we have close ties with this family and see her as our missionary. The Mission committee recommends supporting Shakinah with \$10,000 in 2020/21 and \$5000 in 2021/22. She has been accepted by Interserve India as a missionary and undergone mission orientation in India. They plan to place her with Project Video in Thailand where she has already worked as an intern. Shakinah has given more details in the following introduction:

### **Introduction to Shakinah and ministry at Project Video:**

For the past two years, I have been working towards the process of going back to Thailand. Earlier, in 2015, when I had gone there to work as a Media and Communication Assistant in Project Video, I learned a lot. Their mission is to share the word of God through video amongst people that cannot read or write, which is phenomenal! Reaching out to the people and sharing the word in their vernacular language is marvellous. The best part of doing this mission I feel is that I can use my talent and study of making videos. Earlier when I had gone I was able to go to the churches in the villages of Thailand and see how God was working amongst them. I had the opportunity to visit a Lahu village. The people over there are strong Christians and have a lot of talent. The best part is that they use their talent for the glory of God. They were doing so much with just the little they had. Also, Project Video aims to teach the people from the community who have already accepted Jesus so they can go and create videos and share the word in their languages amongst their community.

My work in Project Video when I return is going to be a little different. This time, I will be working as a Video Editor and helping in video making as well. It will be a whole new experience for me as I have not really worked as an editor before. I have spent much of these last year understanding how God made this way for me to return. I had never imagined that it would be possible to return to this mission. God has made a way when there seemed to be no way. Going back is a long term plan. This will be my full-time work, and in mission it's impossible to survive without the support of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Prayers, friendship, family, spiritual, and emotional support is vital in the field. I am thankful for this opportunity to share this mission with all of you. I look forward to travelling to Thailand in 2020. It will be for a period of two years initially.

## MISSION FIELD REPORTS

1. Australian Indigenous Ministries
2. Dumisani Theological Institute
3. Mukti Missions
4. Taleem centre, India
5. Dr Dickson, India
6. Central India
7. Colegio San Andres
8. Annie Soper School
9. Christian Witness to Israel

### 1. Australian Indigenous Ministries (Peter Smith, AIM Office Manager)

Much has happened over the last year in AIM. Mr Roy Hatfield ultimately determined that he was not the right person to fill the General Director's position. Despite every encouragement from various members of the AIM Council to continue on, he resigned the charge early in July 2019. On a sad note, Mr John Keane, the Chairman of the AIM Council retired around the same time having been diagnosed with cancer. John had been part of the Council for a very long time and is sorely missed. At the time of writing, the cancer treated with chemotherapy had not grown. Praise the Lord.

Three other long term members of the AIM Council stepped down for various reasons in August and September. There have been some new faces join more recently, in particular, Mr Paul Badman as treasurer. He currently works in Baptist finance in Sydney. There is a significant push to equip the council members to be an effective board and consequently meetings re. Governance etc. have been undertaken. Currently there is an advertisement in CMA, seeking people who may be interested in the General Director position. Despite many meetings, the potential partnership with Pioneers to help AIM with missionaries, has not progressed to anything yet.

The ministry in Western NSW is growing slowly under God's hand. Pastor Henry Louie is ministering in Gilgandra and Pilliga with growth in knowledge, love and commitment to God within the congregations and also some growth numerically. Kids clubs are held regularly in Pilliga and Gulargambone, ably assisted by Sydney Koreans. There are groups in other outlying townships requesting to know about Jesus, however with only one man available opportunities are difficult to follow up. Brewarrina will officially open a new venue for worship services, bible studies and youth group in April. There is good attendance and a thriving youth group meeting here. Pray that the Lord will replicate this in Walgett. Pastor Ike Gordon also leads a Rivers Convention during Easter, visiting seven strategic towns, spending two nights at each place proclaiming the gospel. David and Rose Cox are having a year sabbatical from the Dubbo Church. The church is strong in faith and numbers, but missing their pastor.

Overall, the work in Queensland is small, although Cherbourg and Rockhampton are very well established. Cherbourg is being wonderfully assisted by Max Colon, Rockhampton is blessed with indigenous leaders. Rockhampton church members recently tested a church planting in another suburb and was quite pleased with the results. Woorabinda is a hard place for ministry, but has a small core of believers. Please pray that the Lord will raise up some youth leaders to engage the aboriginal young people in wholesome activities. This would help the community and give opportunity for God's Word to impact them with saving grace. The Queensland Aboriginal Ministry Church Council is looking for a new place for the Inala ladies to meet. There is great potential for growth in this Brisbane suburb, so please pray that a suitable venue will be located and God will raise up a man of His choosing to build His church.

The Northern Territory has work in a number of areas. Both Tennant Creek and Katherine are blessed with good attendance and led by indigenous leaders. Richard Driver, a blind indigenous elder, was asked to give a message at the Community Christmas Carols in December. He was quick to accept the invitation to speak about his Lord. Mr Michael Jones, another Tennant Creek elder, took it on himself last year to be a missionary in Elliott. He and his wife have been wonderful mentors to Harold and Kaye Dalywaters, such that the Dalywaters are seeking funding to attend the Christian College in Darwin. Borroloola and Barunga are led by indigenous people, but much smaller in numbers. There is also a young GP Team Partner in Alice Springs, part time work in Canteen Creek and Epenarra and a presence in Darwin full time, for those who travel to this capital city due to health issues.

AIM has always taken Daniel 3:17 as our moto, 'Our God is Able.' Please remember AIM in your prayers and ask that nothing will inhibit the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ reaching the lost, and particularly the indigenous mobs in this land of Australia.

## **2. Dumisani Theological Institute and Bible School** (from Jack C. Whytock)

*In August 2019 we were privileged and blessed to have Dr Jack Whytock and his wife Nancy visit us here in Australia. They came as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations of Dumisani. It was wonderful to learn what 'Dumisani' means, and read the history of this college in the book specially prepared for this occasion. We learnt so much about the strategic importance of this mission work undertaken in a challenging and even dangerous environment. Jack reminds us of these challenges in the report that follows.*

2019 was an historic year for Dumisani as it was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dumisani. The desire for a Bible School had been stirring in the early 1970s and finally the doors were opened in February 1979. At our March 2019 graduation and awards exercises (24 graduated in 2019) we celebrated this milestone and gave testimony of the Lord's grace and blessings in sustaining this ministry for 40 years. A book was produced to commemorate this event, *Voices of Thanksgiving*, to help people around the world understand a little more about Dumisani and the continuing importance of the Bible School movement. Our new principal was installed, Rev. Wilbert Chipenyu and also our new Vice-Principal Dr. Patrick Diniso at that event. The remainder of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 is the transition to our new leaders. In November a new acting registrar was accepted and Rev Vernon Vera takes up this starting in January, 2020.

In 2019 Dumisani Theological Institute & Bible School had a total of 62 students studying in three programmes: certificate level, diploma level, and degree level, namely Certificate of Christian Foundations, Advanced Ministry Studies, and Bachelor of Theology (in partnership with North-West University). This was carried out over four terms plus a Winter School and a Summer School on expository studies of Exodus and Cults in Africa. There were three Christian Leaders' Workshops held in 2019: the first on Church Revitalisation, the second on Sunday School training, and the third a pastor's conference on the Doctrine of the Church. These three workshops had over 250 participants.

We held two large book sales in 2019 and were able to see much Christian literature distributed through these two book sales and also in travelling around the Eastern Cape and distributing such at various meetings. We also produced literature to be sold through two book ministries.

For our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary we did a major campus renovation project of our campus, lecture halls, staff flat, kitchen and eating areas. The result is a rebuilt teaching centre and kitchen area etc. We thank the Lord for this provision. As the year ended, we began to tackle the next project namely our Library where we have a problem with floors collapsing. This will be the next campus work to upgrade in 2020.

As a Christian institution we very much are a family and we were all greatly affected by the death of one of our recent graduates who continued to be involved very much at Dumisani, the murder of Rev Ronnie Ntabeni in early December, 2019. It certainly brought all to pray for his widow and children but also for the whole community and the need of Gospel light.

We express our thanks for the partnership we have with the PCEA and thank you once again for your support both financially and through prayer. Also, on a personal note it was a real delight for myself and my wife Nancy to be able to visit many of your congregations this past August and to experience deep fellowship and such warm Christian hospitality. It was wonderful to engage with so many about Dumisani.

## **3. Mukti** No report

### **4. Taleem Centre, India** (from Mariam)

It is a joy to look back on the past ministry year and reflect on how God has used us to impact the world around us for his kingdom and his grace. It is also an exciting time to dream and pray for the plans we believe God has for us in the coming years. Financially I look forward in the coming year and plan our budget on faith, faith that God will provide, faith that our ministry partners will grow and faith that God will continue to use to cultivate His kingdom here on earth as it is in Heaven.

Greetings to you all in the precious name of our Lord and Savior. The year has been productive in the village. We moved to a new place; the area is smaller but we have many children coming to spend time at the Taleem center. As we can all recall, we stepped into this village to work among children 6 years ago. The children who initially joined us are now teenagers, they send their siblings here to spend time and learn. The Lord has been

gracious and kind over the years. The village is 1.5hrs from the city Dehradun which is located in the Doon valley in the foothills of the Himalayas, nestled between river Ganges in the east and river Yamuna the west .We rent a room in the village where we have provided some facilities for teaching the children very basic education. We are currently looking for a large room to rent. We have 2 female teachers, plus a lady to help serve the children food and clean and another male who helps us reach the destination. Over the years we were blessed to provide children with midday meals which included nutritious food. However from past two-three years with the fund cuts we are not able to provide meal every day.

#### THE GOAL FOR TALEEM CENTRE

Our ultimate goal is to share the gospel with these little children and also to reach out to the families. We are able to do this very quietly and in a subtle manner. We did encounter huge trouble 2 years ago when people had objection to us sharing the gospel. Many stopped sending their children to the Taleem center; we even had to close down for 6months. We took the courage to reopen it after things were little bit less threatening. I was very scared to return to the village but with the prayers from all the friends at PCEA and other prayer partners, I was able to step in again. After re-starting the Taleem center we have not had any threats or oppositions directly but people do get offended that the work is supported by Christians. I have not been able to take the bible or Christian materials back to the village after the trouble. We are keeping it limited to secular teachings, although teaching of Sunday school songs and bible stories is done during my visits on Sundays; I bring back the material with me. In between I invite the staff to my house where I am able to share the gospel with the three ladies and also help them grow as individuals.

#### INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENT VOLUNTEERS

Ms.Seeba- This young girl has been with us for past 3 years and is quite talented. She works in a school in the village in the mornings and helps here at Taleem centre in the evenings. She is the eldest of the family. She has two younger sisters and a very young brother who also comes to the center. Her mother also helped us for a year for cooking; she comes to see me when I visit.

Ms.Shabana- They look like sisters but are not related. Both the names are similar sounding, this young lady also teaches in the same school and gives us her time in the evenings for the children. I don't know much about her family. This week I was able to meet her mother for the first time. It was nice to exchange pleasantries.

Mr. G and Mrs. J -This couple have been with us for a very long time, they used to come to worship with us when my dad led Murideen Urdu speaking church in North India. This couple are very helpful to us with all the work. They have four daughters and one son. Mr.G is professionally a driver. I think I can trust him to travel to the village in the car. He is a very good gentleman, honest and slow to anger. Of course after his passing people tend to become superstitious and to add more to that superstition we lost a dear member, Mr.Mijan, who was a strong human resource support for us in going to the village. He is gone to be with the Lord and it has been two years already. This also stirred a lot of superstitions in the villagers. As my parents came from Muslim families and were taken away in middle age of their life: it is considered sinful to convert into other religions by Muslims. So they concluded that since they converted this was a punishment from their gods.

#### DAILY ACTIVITY AT TALEEM CENTRE

On a daily basis we have the children coming in around 5-7 p.m. approx. for 2 hours. They are taught some words, little ones alphabets, some writings, poems, math questions are done with them. They are given snacks after they finish their writing. They are also provided with most stationery to do colouring and writing. We also provide sports material for the older children and few games for the younger ones. On Sundays or Saturdays I do my visit. During this visit I get an opportunity to spend time with the children. We do many things like songs, colouring, storytelling. It is like a Sunday School Program for the children.

#### OUR FUTURE

The area here is surrounded by non-believers and our major aim would be to share among people from a particular sector, but of course anyone who loves to hear the gospel the doors are open. Having been here and made relationship with the children and families gives a lot of insight on the social and economic needs of the people. Past five years there have been many international schools and some National universities developed as property is easily available here. However, I have observed that there is no social work /ministry which has been flourished and it does give a chance to use this opportunity. I have a heart desire so see a mission school here someday. I know we can't just do it instantly but I think we can somehow start a tiny school on rent. I did visit

Chappara and felt so touched by such an old school which is standing because of the support of so many people, and it couldn't have started as big as it is now.

#### PERSONAL CAREER and FAMILY

I am working in a non-Christian school and this is my second year here. I am not very satisfied but I do it to earn bread and butter and pay bills. I would love to go into full time mission work, working in the village to reach out to more children and young adults through the work of education. I am attending church and bible study at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary-Good Shepherd Fellowship.

The work in the village is challenging with new rules from government, as it is right wing government and they have many hostile and extremist ideologies. This leads to the second largest population by religion becoming defensive as well. This is the main reason that we faced some opposition to our work in the village; there has been lot of political tension based on religion, and people have been beaten and murdered for eating different kinds of meat. When people feel threatened or targeted they tend to become defensive to everything around them. For decades we have had a government which allowed Christians to preach openly and now we are scared to even share a bible with people.

I am worried as my parents left so much behind when they were persecuted in Nagaland, and my dad was beaten to near to death for sharing the Faith. They left their belongings and only with two daughters and one bag left the city overnight, to a different city of India. My dad did his education and I have his certificates. I have fears of this government doing certain things. My younger brother, Zechariah, is looking to apply universities in overseas countries. He has a very high grade and it seems he will be able to apply for scholarships; please pray that he is accepted if the Lord wills for him to study abroad. My sister Shakinah has been accepted by Interserve and is looking to go to Thailand as a missionary and we are praying to raise support for her.

#### BUDGET FOR TALEEM 2020: (\$per month)

Two teachers	160	
Cook	100	
Driver	70	
Food	230	
Stationery	70	
Travel	70	
Rent	100	Total \$9600pa

#### 5. Dr Dickson, India (from Dickson)

Greetings from Delhi. I am very grateful to God for His mercies and favour towards the work He has started in the suburbs of Delhi. I am thankful to you and PCEA Church for your continuous prayer and financial support. Pray that our efforts would result in many souls would accepting God's free offer of salvation. Pray for us also to have good health and strength to do His work.

By His immense grace we have registered a trust called VETNET FOUNDATION in order to reach out the unreached with professional skills. Please pray that God would use this Foundation to fulfill His purpose in this land. We had our first consultation in Chennai in 1918, and our second in Bareilly, U.P, 2019; 21 vet and vet students attended, along with mission leaders. We explored the growing need for pet practitioners in the cities, as well as needs of farmers and their animals across North and North East India. We plan our next consultation in Guwahati, Assam, in 2020.



I have been invited by Christian organizations to conduct a number livestock training camps during the year. A photo of one group is attached; this was near Delhi. Other camps were conducted in villages near Allahabad and near Bareilly in U.P, also in the states of Manipur, and Tamil Nadu. Hundreds of farmers attended and thousands of animals treated: buffaloes, cows, sheep, goats, pigs and dogs.

In October we conducted a free Veterinary camp in Goyla Dairy. We had it in my clinic as well in the community. Many were benefited. There is a great need for more Christian Vets in North India to show God's love in action.

Testimony from Bareilly Veterinary Camp: *“The camp was a tremendous blessing to me as well as*

*many in the village. The milk production has increased and almost all treated were cured. I thank the Vet Net Team for blessing us” – Ramkhilavan. Ramkhilavan (~45 years old) has a small land for cultivation and three buffaloes. He was a volunteer at our vet camp and enthusiastically worked for the success of the camp. Being a member of the local Grace Fellowship, he was actively involved in organising the camp and helping with all the arrangements. He mobilised many farmers to bring their animals for the camp; he also got his own animals treated for ticks.*

I am grateful to God for PCEA, for the ceaseless prayers and financial support. Please continue to uphold us in your prayers. If you come across any Christian Vets who have got the passion for vet mission kindly introduce them to me.

*Dickson*

## **6. Presbyterian Free Church of Central India (J Greensill from P Kumar)**

### Mission Higher Secondary School, Chhapara:

Christians in India are known to serve communities with education and medical facilities. This has been the case for more than 200 years in India. Even today, we find people who honestly recognize and appreciate Christians for educational and medical services. Mission school has been a historical instrument in bridging the gap to provide a relational platform for the church to spread the gospel in and around Chhapara. Mission school is a monument of Christian service in Seoni District.

Along with the Christian values, characters, and methods of education, the school has been also well known for its historic building, constructed between 1928-30. For last few years, the building was dilapidating at a very high rate. The school management was concerned about it and was convinced that the building required some immediate attention and renovation. This led us to prepare a proposal and seek some financial help from DVN in Netherlands. In due course, the help is granted and given to commence the renovation work of the old building. We are thankful to God and DVN for providing us such a great help to renovate the building that testifies God's goodness and Christian service to the community for more than 100 years.

Also, the sponsorship scheme has been a great blessing for the school. It not only supports the needy children but also allows us to show Christian love to them and their parents in many ways. It is encouraging to notice that most of the sponsors are continuing with their commitment. With the introduction of “Slack” we are hopeful to be more prompt and updated in running this scheme. We extend our thanks to the Synod and all the members of PCEA for such a helpful scheme. This year 37 students are sponsored and we hope and pray to increase this number to 50 for next academic session.

Some of the other highlights of this academic year are listed below:

- a. From the aid of the Central Government, a robotic science lab is being prepared in Chhapara School. The lab is known as “Atal Tinkering Lab.” This will enhance the quality of technical science in the school and will attract many new students to the next academic session.
- b. The students of the schools won many regional and state-wide school competitions.

- c. As per the assessment report 2018, we were able to bring many changes in the education board, management, account keeping, and fee collections.
- d. Regular monthly meetings have resulted in cutting fee collection deficit to 20%.
- e. On Teacher's day, the education board organized a Teacher appreciation program.
- f. DVN assessment team revisited the schools and were happy to notice the developments, as per their previous report, in many aspects of the school ministry.

Presbyterian Free Church – Central India:

Stopping is important, looking back is crucial. "Stopping for a while to look back" is a good Christian practice. As we look back as a denomination we cannot stop praising God for all his grace. He had provided us sufficient resources to do training and discipleship programs as a major and primary means to fulfil our church planting vision in Central India.

This year we continued to support five church planters and evangelists in Madhya Pradesh. In addition, there are four new church planters in Maharashtra. All of this church planting work is mainly supported by DVN. Theological Training in Hindi is also a very important part of our ministry. The third phase of a Diploma in Theology continues with 12 students and we hope to finish the phase by October 2020. The work in Kahani village has progressed well and the church construction work will finish by October 2020. Besides, many of our leaders are providing leadership to Harvest India 72, a nationwide discipleship movement in India.

We, as a presbytery, are now focusing on developing church plant points as churches and regional councils. Out of nine church plant points, we are working to establish two new presbyteries by December 2022. This is done with the prospect of developing local leaders with sense of ownership and mutual accountability. The present practice is to invite them into our presbytery, which is good, but this also slows the local leadership development and increases the attitude of dependability in church planters. Hence, we are leading them towards a set up where these capable men are able to have their own office bearers, make their own decisions, regulate their own finances, and draft and execute their own regional vision.

**7. Colegio San Andres, Peru ... No report**

**8. Annie Soper School, Peru ... No report**

**9. Christian Witness to Israel (from Rhoda Ball)**

Australia had no CWI missionaries since the resignation of Stephen and Lana Holmes 2018. Joseph Steinberg (CEO of CWI UK) has travelled to Australia twice since May 2018 to help reestablish the work here. Two new workers Mark and Rachel Landrum were appointed in Oct '19 and there are also plans to place Eugene Tsai in Sydney to form a new team there. He and his family are currently awaiting immigration clearance. Mark and Rachel are both Jewish believers with wide mission experience between them having shared the gospel with Jewish people in Israel, Europe, North America and Australia.

I wrote to the Australian CWI committee to seek more information about the Landrums. Rob Smith, secretary of the committee, replied informing me that the Landrums had previously worked with Jews for Jesus and that their departure was largely as a result of a team restructure. They left Jews for Jesus in good standing. It was Rev Joseph Steinberg who alerted the committee to their availability and suitability as potential missionaries. The council investigated the Landrums over a period of roughly 6 months, interviewing them on a number of occasions, and exploring their theological beliefs and evangelical practices. The committee found them to be in theological agreement with CWI's statements of faith. CWI requires assent to one of the following statements of faith-

- The 39 Articles of the Church of England
- the Belgic confession
- The Westminster Confession of Faith
- The Savoy Declaration
- The Baptist Confession of Faith

Mark and Rachel have given their full assent to the 39 Articles. They are now members at Bondi Anglican Church who are contributing to their support. They have been undergoing weekly training with Richard Gibson from the UK office. They will come to the end of their probationary period at the end of March. They plan to begin deputation work in the months ahead. Rob finishes by saying "We are very grateful for the support the PCEA has given to CWI over many years. We hope this will continue".

We record with sadness the death of Rev John Graham, former CWI Australian missionary, on 31/10/2019 in Sydney. He reached out to the Jewish community in Sydney over many years and saw much fruit for his labours.

Joseph Steinberg writes in the Herald magazine of Jan '20:-

" As we look back over 2019 in CWI we are extremely grateful to God for all that we saw Him accomplish through our missionary partnerships. In 2019 we saw God draw 27 Jewish people to salvation in Jesus, we saw 2 new missionaries added in Australia, a new Korean missionary candidate accepted for future work in London, and we rejoice over the very successful outreach we had in London in the summer time . . . we exist to tell Jewish people about Jesus. If an activity does not aid that objective, then we do not do it."

The summer outreach this year will take place from 23rd Nov- 4th Dec in Sydney. The Landrums will be leading the outreach. They would welcome volunteers to assist in the venture. Training will be given. Over the past year I have continued to provide prayer requests for the bimonthly Mission Prayer Notes. I commend to you the Herald magazine and the Praying Always prayer points from CWI. For information and prayer letters contact the Sydney office by email: [info@cw.org.au](mailto:info@cw.org.au). The web site is currently under review. The Gentile church must not forget its obligation to bring the gospel to the Jewish people.

### **Mission Awareness Tour**

Following the successful tour to India at the end of 2016, there have been expressions of interest regarding another such tour. In cooperation with the PFCCI, and the Lord willing, we hope to have another mission awareness tour to India at the end of 2021.

### **PROPOSED DELIVERANCES**

- 1.** The Synod gives thanks to the Lord for the opportunity and privilege to be involved in the work of missions at home and abroad, both in giving, in praying and being directly involved during this past year.
- 2.** Synod thanks Rev Klazinga for editing the bi-monthly prayer notes and encourages congregations to use these notes.
- 3.** Synod agrees to support Rev Peter Smith, administrator with Australian Indigenous Ministries, with \$3000pa.
- 4.** Synod agrees to support Shakinah Hussain as a short term missionary to Project Video in Thailand with \$10,000 in 2020/21 and \$5000 in 2021/22.
- 5.** That Synod adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2020/21 and expresses its general agreement with the estimates for this period.

## CHURCH AND NATION and MEDIA COMMITTEE

Members: G.D. Ball (Convener), D.K. Muldoon, R.S. Ward (Banner), D. Kerridge (Website), T.W. Yoa.

What a year it's been: we've seen drought, bushfires, floods and now the worst health crisis in decades. What's next – locusts? As I write a locust plague devastates parts of Africa which will inevitably lead to another food crisis in that continent. The world is in turmoil. The world is sick and broken. People are anxious and afraid. Afraid of a pandemic; afraid of recession and economic collapse; afraid of a shortage of food and supplies; afraid of the effects of climate change; afraid of conflict in the Middle East.

How should we respond? We shouldn't panic. 'If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven' (Ps. 11:4). 'Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God' (Isa. 50:10). Everything is under the sovereignty of the Lamb as a result of His death and resurrection (Rev. 5: 6-10). That includes pestilence, persecution and plague. Jesus reminds us that judgements and plagues are descriptive of this age. He warns, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven' (Luke 21: 10-11). These signs are 'the beginning of birth pains' that point to the Lord's return (Matt. 24:8). When birth pains become stronger and more frequent, we know that birth is imminent. While no one knows precisely when the Lord will return; the signs are to keep us on our toes. We look forward with expectancy to His glorious return. Then the world will no longer be subject to futility but will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8: 19-20). Then the world will be cleansed of all viruses, evil, and even death.

While the world panics in the face of a pandemic by buying up toilet paper and hand sanitiser, we could learn from the church in the Wuhan province of China. They offer a face mask with a gospel leaflet. They know that the church's priority is to show practical concern for our neighbour and to spread the gospel. In a world fixated with bad news we have good news to tell. Jesus Christ came into the world to fix our greatest problem. The ultimate reason for our sickness and brokenness is our rebellion against God. Jesus through His death upon the cross came to bring healing, reconciliation and restoration to all who believe on Him. The gospel message is the only hope for our planet. The Lord has given us an opportunity during this pandemic to show our concern for others by spreading the good news.

**Religious Freedom.** This discussion was prompted by the recognition of so called same-sex marriage in December 2017. The then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull commissioned a panel of experts chaired by Philip Ruddock which provided its report to the Government in May 2018 (although the report was not made public until December 2018). Going into the May 2019 Federal election, the then Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, promised to implement a number of recommendations of the Ruddock Report. After his re-election the promise has been fulfilled in part by the release for comment of two Drafts of a Religious Discrimination Bill. The Bill has not yet (March 2020) been formally introduced into Parliament. The drafts have provoked much discussion and response. Some on the conservative side of politics (e.g. Liberal Senator for NSW Concetta Fierravanti Wells) believe the bill should be scrapped. She said, '*It should be replaced with a new, single framework for all antidiscrimination . . . No bill is better than this flawed bill*'. Rev. Dr. Peter Barnes (Mod. PCA) has also warned of the limits of the Bill, '*we ought not put our trust in princes or parliaments to usher in a society of love, peace and freedom*'. Some secular critics (e.g. former High Court Justice Michael Kirby and former Olympian Ian Thorpe) have also expressed opposition to the Bill. Kirby says religious discrimination laws are, '*a weapon against non-believers*'. Influential law firms (e.g. MinterEllison – with strong Liberal party ties; and Maurice Blackburn – with strong Labour party ties), Trade Unions, LGBTI advocates, and business representatives have also expressed their dislike of the Bill.

How are we to respond? Unfortunately, the Bill has become extraordinarily complex and confusing so that it requires a lawyer to untangle it (which is surely a serious weakness). We acknowledge the work of, 'Freedom for Faith' – a Christian legal think-tank that exists to see religious freedom protected and promoted in Australia; and Associate Professor Neil Foster of Newcastle Law School (NSW) who has written extensively on the subject. Foster writes, '*whether or not one agrees with the specific terms of this Bill, the introduction of the Bill is in my view a welcome development in recognising the importance of religious belief to many Australian citizens, and the need for serious reasons when those beliefs are to be over-ridden for any reason*'.

There is no doubt that since same-sex marriage was legalised there has been a determined attack on religious freedom and traditional Christian values. Think of a few notable examples: - Scott Morrison is regularly

criticised because of his Christian faith (*'we need more than thoughts and prayers'*); Margaret Court's treatment by the media and Tennis Australia. (*'Billy Jean King is considered above criticism, but Margaret Court is beyond the pale'* – Barnes). Israel Folau's battle with Rugby Australia. Ballarat Christian College being sued by a former teacher, with the support of Equality Australia, who disagreed with the school's statement of belief about marriage. Christian GP Dr. David Van Gend's appearance before the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency on charges of professional misconduct for Twitter posts questioning radical gender ideology. Moves by states, including Victoria and Queensland, to ban counselling, prayer and advice for young people troubled with gender identity, under the guise of banning 'conversion therapy'. The boycott and subsequent closure of the bridal magazine *'White'* for their decision not to feature same-sex couples.

While we recognise the Bill cannot produce utopia; and Jesus warned His disciples, 'if they persecuted me, they will also persecute you' (Jn. 15:20). Nevertheless, we should insist that legal protection should be provided for Christian institutions with employees (e.g. schools, healthcare providers, conference centres, radio stations, charities, organisations, etc.) to enable them to maintain their charter.

***Proposed Deliverances:***

1. Synod acknowledges with gratitude God's great mercy and grace in hearing the prayers of His people by supplying abundant rain to fall upon the land thus bringing to an end the prolonged drought and the devastating bushfires. 'Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man' (Ps. 107:8).
2. Synod records its deep appreciation especially for the work of the many volunteers in the various State Emergency Services (including the Rural Fire Service) who gave their time and risked their lives fighting the 2019-20 bushfires, thus preserving many lives and properties. Synod extends its sympathy to the families who lost a loved one as a result of the fires; and to those who lost their home.
3. Synod prays that as a result of the devastating bushfires of 2019-20, and the effects of the coronavirus in 2020, that men and women will not respond by turning away from God in anger or despair but will in time of trouble turn to God in humble dependence and prayer.
4. Synod acknowledges that we are part of a people weighed down by guilt before God because of the sins regularly committed among us. Our national iniquities testify against us. We pray that the Lord will bring genuine repentance to our land and cause His face to shine with favour upon us. We pray this for the glory of God's name that He does not forsake us.
5. Synod urges members to pray for the reformation and revival of the church and nation. The principle stated in 2 Chron. 7: 14 is still relevant. 'If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land'.
6. Synod affirms its conviction that the greatest need in our land is that men and women hear the message of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, repent from sin and set their trust in Christ alone for salvation.
7. Synod encourages its ministers and elders to continue to use the ordinary means of grace 'in the day of small things'. 'Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture' (1 Tim. 4:13). 'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with complete patience and teaching' (2 Tim. 4:2). 'Baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have commanded you' (Matt. 28: 20). 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (1 Cor. 11:26). And, 'men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or quarrelling' (1 Tim. 2:8).
8. Synod advises sessions and deacons courts to organise services and meetings of the congregation consistent with public health regulations and the principle enshrined in the sixth commandment which 'requires all lawful endeavours to preserve our own lives and the life of others'. Provision should also be in place to provide spiritual support, especially to the elderly and vulnerable when physical contact may not be advisable, through the various media means available.

9. Synod awaits with some apprehension the release of the Religious Discrimination Bill. Synod reminds rulers of their responsibility, 'to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good' (1 Peter 2:14).
10. Synod records it's thanks to the acting editor of the Presbyterian Banner, Rev. Dr. R. S. Ward for faithfully producing the magazine over another year. The committee has gratefully received an offer from Rev. Jim Klazinga to undertake (with his son, Ben) the editorship of the magazine. This will be considered under the Banner section of this report. Synod resolves to pray for the ongoing work of the editor and for the witness of the magazine.
11. Synod records it's thanks to Rev. David Kerridge for his work and expertise as website manager during another year.
12. Synod records it's thanks to Rev. Jim Klazinga for his faithfulness in texting daily prayer requests.

## THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER REPORT

Acting Editor: Rev Dr Rowland Ward

I provide the second report since commencing acting as Editor with the March 2018 issue.

**Subscriptions:** The number of subscriptions appears relatively steady with about 101 distributed. The copies placed on the PCEA website appear to receive a similar number of hits as before and previous experience shows the longer they are on the website the more downloads occur, often exceeding 1,000 after 5 or 6 years.

**Production:** I have not purchased special software but used MS Word on my MacBook. This does restrict layout somewhat but given a future editor may have different software and greater ability than I, it seemed the prudent course.

Giving the savings in printing achieved in 2018 it was possible to reduce the subscription price by \$5 in 2019 and still retain a modest surplus.

**Contributions:** We had news from within Southern Presbytery and from Brisbane during the year but little else. The magazine has the potential to be a positive and unifying force but does not realise its full potential. Is this because of a lack of interest in what is happening in the wider church? I have deliberately wanted to limit my own contributions and George Ball has greatly aided in supply edifying material. I have aimed at addressing some current issues, but I've avoided page fillers drawn from news around the world as most readers would have easy access to Barnabas Fund and similar material.

**The Future:** With our older demographic we have to reckon with a continuing need for hardcopies, although this will continue to decline. On the other hand, if there was the concerted, enthusiastic effort that is desirable, the magazine could have a significant role in evangelism and outreach, even if reduced to a quarterly and ultimately confined to electronic media. Despite the extra Synod day in 2019 no time was found to discuss the magazine nor for that matter the vital matter of revitalisation and outreach throughout the denomination. Assuming Synod makes time this year, one suggestion is that we could consider for 2021 a 24-page full colour quarterly magazine in modern format inviting like-minded churches to contribute news and items to its columns.

Detail	2019	2018
Subscriptions (rate reduced in 2019)	2,823.12	3,625.00
Interest net of fees	14.19	2.89
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>2,837.31</b>	<b>3,627.89</b>
Printing	1,581.14	1,926.81
Postage	720.20	764.00
Sundries	124.66	39.00
<i>Total expenses</i>	2,249.00	2,729.81
<b>Surplus for year</b>	<b>588.31</b>	<b>898.08</b>
Plus brought forward from previous year	1,989.57	1,091.49
Total funds at Bendigo Bank year end	2,528.88	1,989.57
Less pre-paid subscriptions at year end	575.00	455.00
Net current assets	\$1,953.88	\$1,534.57

Other assets, plastic bags (nearly exhausted); mail labels, bag sealer.

## PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. That Synod now discuss the place the magazine could play in building communication within the church and furthering outreach including any changes that would further these objects.

## WEBSITE REPORT

The internet is always changing and new technologies are developing fast. Even the notion of having a website is becoming somewhat old-fashioned as the predominance of people using mobile technology rather than desktops demands different forms of delivery and presentation for information. The use of social media is vast and also a sign of the decline in traditional webpages as the face of organisations. Our website is still proving useful and is used regularly (as statistics and download records below show), but it may be that other ways of delivering content may be the way to proceed in future.

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

	Unique Visitors	Number of Visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
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)
2017	22,625	45,780 (2.02 visits/visitor)	640,461 (13.98 pages/visit)	987,776	36.63 GB (838.99 KB/visit)
2018	19,865	36,277 (1.82 visits/visitor)	212,890 (5.86 Pages/visit)	526,581	29.29

The table above shows trends over the last five years. This year there has been a downturn in visits from 2017 levels, but not below the previous two years. The PCEA website has had a renovation, with a new front page and remodeling of some sections at the end of 2018. It may have been that there were some issues with style and presentation through most of 2017 that caused a downturn in interest or, as is generally suggested by those who know web design, that a general lack of new and interesting content has seen people pass us by. Most attention from visitors is paid to the Congregations, Downloads (mostly *Banner* and archives), and News and Views pages.

Operating on a separate and secured website, the MDSS (Missions Donations and Sponsorship Scheme) is now in its fourth year of operation on the web. Like many sponsorship and charitable schemes, we are trying to establish a simple, single \$20/month donation which a user can cancel at any time for themselves rather than previous annual/quarterly and monthly options that needed renewals at various times in the year (manually checked and followed up). This simplifies administration. We do need continued awareness of the scheme amongst people in the congregations. Amelia O'Dell was the coordinator and "Ambassador" for the church in 2018 but had to give up that role at the beginning of this year due to work commitments. We are hopeful that Mr Peter Carswell may take on the role. We have just received our first international sponsor from Scotland, seamlessly using the MDSS, and we hope we can expand our reach from there.

Once again, the PCEA Community pages have been relatively unused, however there has been some encouragement from Mr Cameron Hamilton in the new year. He may yet take on a role as a moderator/administrator of this section, and he is seeking now to use the resource as part of his role on the Youth and Fellowship Committee to encourage communication. We encourage people to use the arena to share and discuss church matters, fellowship and encourage one another online. We cannot really compete with Facebook in this, but it is still the intention to provide a more "sanctified" space, unfettered by secularist strictures on expression.

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 a subdomain <http://elders.pcea.org.au/> (It is editable as a Wiki 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). This sub-domain is in need of collaborative effort to develop a useful resource for Elders and prospective office-bearers in the church, as well as being a resource for the wider Reformed church.

The Historical Magazine Archive averages about 350 downloads per publication (*The Free Church Quarterly Vol. 7 1909-1913* is still the most downloaded, grossing 881 downloads since it was uploaded 8/4/14). *The*

*Presbyterian Banner* issues for February and March, 2018 received the most downloads for the year at 367 and 359 respectively (The most downloaded *Banner* was the March 2014 issue, 1857 downloads). The 2017 Handbook has been downloaded 1911 times, Synod Minutes; 1158 times (Synod 2013), most Minutes around 500 times, whereas Synod Reports have only been downloaded around 10 times each. Other publications available to download: *Understanding Islam* by Rev.Dr R.Ward, 1133 downloads. *The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (1846-2013)*, R. Ward, 1203 downloads. *Short Statements on Issues of Significance* by Church and Nation Committee, 725 pdf downloads.

Regular contributions have been received from Rev. Andres Miranda, and thanks go to him for keeping content alive on the site. He is able to access and write his posts directly. Please talk to him about the ease with which this can be done. All office-bearers have such access – please use it! We again appeal for content from congregations. A website reflects the interests and enthusiasm of those it represents. Please be represented through the website, not just with contact details for your congregation, but with “likes” for Andres’ articles, messages to Cameron and others, and interaction using the social media portion of the site. To be a truly useful gateway and introduction to the denomination we need your help.

#### 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.

## SUPERANNUATION COMMITTEE

R Tso (Convener 2016), Messrs GD Ball, D Ramsay, AH Steel

### **A: SUPERANNUATION**

#### **1. Church Contributions to Superannuation**

##### *1.1 Superannuation Levy on congregations (current rates – percentage of Minimum Stipend)*

- Self-supporting congregations: 16%
- Aid-receiving congregations: 9%
- Vacant congregations: 3%

##### *1.2 Superannuation Support Fund & Superannuation Levy Account*

a. **The Superannuation Support Fund (SSF) Capital Account** balance as at 31/12/19 was \$214,571. The managed funds were revalued. This was an increase of \$8,414.

**The SSF Working Account** balance as at 31/12/19 was \$24,480. There was an increase of \$9847.

b. **The Superannuation Levy Account** balance as at 31/12/19 was \$20,960 after paying contributions totalling \$78,024 to ministers’ nominated superannuation funds.

#### **2. Contributions to ministers’ Superannuation accounts**

##### *2.1 Contribution Rates*

- Inducted ministers (up to 70 years of age):16%
- Inducted ministers (from age 70):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 Pool Fund.

##### *3.2 Performance*

The net return on HESTA Core Pool Fund for twelve months ending 30/6/19 was 7.25%. The historical performance as at 30/6/19 for the past 5 years was 8.32%.

## **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 recommended that annual leave not to be accumulated beyond two years.

## **C. COMMITTEE'S Proposed Changes**

As indicated in last year's report, the committee is making the following proposal of the following changes to our superannuation levy policy. As you may observe, in the past years, we have been blessed with surplus in both our SSF Working and Superannuation Levy accounts.

### *Superannuation Levy on congregations*

- Self-supporting congregations: 15% (from 16%)
- Aid-receiving congregations: 8% (from 9%)
- Vacant congregations: 2% (from 3%)

### Contribution Rates:

-Inducted ministers: 17% (additional funds required because of the reduced levy percentages will be drawn from the SSF working account quarterly)

In addition, vacant charges that are in financial difficult situations may write to the committee for exemption. The committee will liaise with the General Treasurer regarding the application.

### Example:

If the proposed levy changes are approved, the actual figures are shown below:

### *Superannuation Levy on congregations (quarterly)*

- Self-supporting congregations: 15%: \$2163 from \$2307
- Aid-receiving congregations: 8%: \$1153 from \$1298
- Vacant congregations: 2%: \$288 from \$433

### Contribution Rates:

-Inducted ministers: 17%, \$2451 from \$2307

Funds drawn from The SSF Working Account will be, say 10 inducted ministers: \$2160

### Proposed deliverance

1. Synod approves the committee's proposal for changes in section C above.
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), 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 –**

The basis of review was changed from the *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia (Full-time adult ordinary time earnings)* to *Wage Price Index* as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, by Synod 2019.

After taking into account rates paid by other Presbyterian churches in NSW and Victoria, and the *Consumer Price Index* (CPI) the committee recommends the current level of the minimum stipend (\$1,103 per week - to be reviewed annually on 1<sup>st</sup> January) and the present basis of review, *Wage Price Index*, be continued.

#### **2. Stipend Relief**

Central Presbytery advised they had approved a request from Hawkesbury-Nepean Deacons' Court for Stipend relief of up to \$8,000 on a needs basis for current Synodical year. However, this amount was reduced to \$ ...TBA... on a needs basis, from pledges made by Deacons' Courts within the charge vide Handbook 3.17.d.

#### **3. The Capital Assistance Fund**

As at 31/12/19 assets totalled \$869,042 which was an increase of \$21,716 (2.6%) on 2018. The increase resulted from interest received, share dividends and revaluations.

##### **Gifts/Loans –**

Synod 2019 approved in Principle to gift to the Brisbane Congregation up to \$466,000 from the *Synod Capital Assistance Fund* to assist in the purchase of a suitable manse for the Congregation.

A contract to purchase a manse property was entered into in December 2019 and the matter settled on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020 reducing the balance of the *Capital Assistance Fund* to \$403,916.

#### **4. General Treasurer's Report to Synod/ Estimates (Major Working Funds Receipts/Payments)**

General Treasurer's Report to Synod follows the *Proposed Deliverances*.

Estimates for the major working funds to 31/12/20 – See Appendix "A"

### **PROPOSED DELIVERANCES**

1. We record our thanks to God for temporal blessings granted for another year.
2. Adjustment of the Minimum Stipend, Cash and Non-cash components (Excluding Manse, Car and Telephone) for 2020/2021 be made on 1<sup>st</sup> January annually in line with the movement in the *Wage Price Index* as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In the event of a negative movement in any review period, no adjustment be made.
3. Stipend Assistance of up to \$ ...TBA... for 2018/2019 be granted to Hawkesbury-Nepean Deacons' Courts as follows:
  - Strictly on a quarterly needs basis.
  - Applications be submitted to the General Treasurer on a calendar quarter basis ie commencing 1<sup>st</sup> January/April/July/October and be accompanied with a Budget for the quarter being applied for.
  - Be subject to the availability of funds.

# **GENERAL TREASURER**

## **Report to Synod 2020**

### **1. Financial Needs**

All financial needs of the Synod were adequately provided for during 2019 with total funds increasing by \$92,435 (4.8%) to \$2,019,990 after allowing for \$298,574 held on behalf of others (Mission Fields, Congregation Bequests etc.)

The net increase in funds mainly resulted from the revaluation of investments held in equities (Shares in individual companies and Managed Funds) as at 31/12/19.

### **2. Synod General Working Funds**

Synod General Working Funds held, as at 31/12/19 was \$39,378. This was a decrease of \$1,415 on 2018.

Income of \$3,788 came from Congregations (\$1,540) and Interest/Dividends (\$2,248). Expenses totalled \$5,203 including Audit Fees \$840, Computer accounting software \$1,036, Honorarium \$1,000 and Website costs \$1,054. Congregations reimbursed the cost of Synod 2019 amounting to \$5,268.

### **3. Books of Account Audit**

An unqualified Independent Assurance Report has been obtained from GPA Accountants, Chartered Accountants of Punchbowl NSW and is included in the published Financial Statements.

### **Proposed deliverances -**

Nil.

**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 2019.

**Glenridding Cemetery:** Despite inquiry there had been no further action in relation to this matter.

**Deed Box:** The Locked Deed Box of the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia is lodged with Paton Hooke, Lawyers, 25 Albert Street, Taree NSW, under the oversight of the Clerk of Synod and the Synod Treasurer (See Synod resolution 18.45.2).

The deed box was inspected by the Clerk and Rev Peter Smith on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and all was found to be in order. A copy of the list of documents is available from the Clerk on request.

No Deeds lodged during 2019

No Deeds uplifted during 2019

**Common Seal Applications:** No applications

**Investments: Specified Capital Funds (Bequests) - Review of Results as at 31/12/19**

**DIVERSIFICATION**

Actual as at 31/12/19		Asset Class	Investment Strategy	
Amount	Percentage		Benchmark	Range
145,184	42%	Cash (Banks)	5%	5% - 10%
0	0%	1 <sup>st</sup> Regd Mtges	30%	20% - 40%
0	0%	Debentures	15%	10% - 25%
197,675	58%	Shares/Units	50%	40% - 60%
342,859	100%		100%	

No change in the spread of investments was made during 2019.

**Return:**

**Growth –**

Total Trust Funds (Specified Capital Funds) increased by \$23,377 (7.3%) during 2019 against a Target of 1.8% (CPI). “Real value” (keeping up with inflation) was therefore achieved.

When CPI is taken into account since 1998 total Capital Funds lag behind by \$133,228 ( 27%) as at 31/12/19 (31% 2018).

**INCOME – INCOME OF \$15,922 REPRESENTED A RETURN OF 4.97% AGAINST A TARGET OF 2.17% (2019 AVERAGE OFFICIAL CASH INTEREST RATE OF 1.17% 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 –*

Growth – **Achieved** for 2019 but **still behind** with CPI added since 1998.

Income - **Achieved** for 2019.

**QUEENSLAND TRUST CORPORATION{ TC "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 Paton Hooke, Lawyers, 25 Albert Street, Taree NSW. The Common Seal is held by the Clerk of Synod.

The Brisbane congregation sought to enter into a contract for the purchase of a manse in October 2019. The seller wished to handle the sale himself, but with no expertise and much confusion. The sale did not proceed, although the Trustees had progressed to sign and seal a contract.

**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, S. A. Loudon

**1. Property Holdings: The last full listing was in 2015.** No changes since then except (i) a 230m<sup>2</sup> church building plus 22 space car park was erected on the land at 8 William Road, Carrum Downs in the City of Frankston and opened on 21 April 2018. The cost including land was \$898,097 and was fully funded by the Knox Congregation. The current (1/1/2018) Council Valuation is \$900,000 (\$680,000 for the site). (ii) The Knox Congregation purchased the following property in December 2019 (settled 31/1/2020):

<b>TitleRef</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Land Area m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Improvements</b>
12066/208	22 Frost Street, Carrum Downs	360	BV dwg 194m <sup>2</sup> inc double garage built 2019

**2. Bequests:** None Reported

**3. Contents of Custody Packet at Paton Hooke, Lawyers, Taree**

The next inspection should be made in 2020 prior to Synod of that year.

**4. Common Seal Applications during 2018:**

The purchase at Carrum Downs did not require trustees' signatures as under the PEXA electronic conveyancing system now operating in most states; the Solicitors attend to the transaction.

**5. Investments:**

Share values increased some 10% over the year but held back by the banks. Current returns from fixed deposits continue to decline to be typically 1.5%. The only option in many cases is equity investment in shares of some of our well-established companies where returns of 6-8% 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. Bank shares declined significantly in the last quarter of 2019 as a consequence of the disclosures in the Royal Commission, but recovery over the next two or three years can be anticipated. Meanwhile dividend returns are good even if some reduction in dividends has occurred. In January 2020 we sold our small holding in Vicinity Centres (retail property owners) and purchased 27,800 BKI Investment Company shares which raised our share exposure to 80% as approved by Synod 2019.

The rapid escalation of real estate values, particularly in our cities, needs careful consideration. We need major bequest funds to be built up so as to support extension work in our rapidly growing cities.

There is potential to subdivide Geelong land (minimum 2000 m<sup>2</sup>) and/or build a house on part of the site. At Narre Warren perhaps a townhouse could be erected on the site. Both possibilities had some attention by local courts during the year.

**Proposed Deliverances:**

1. Synod commend to our people giving by bequest to aid the extension of the Gospel in Australia and overseas and note specimen bequest wordings are found in our Handbook.

## SYNOD COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The Administration Committee suggests the following structure for 2020/21

**Administration:** Clerk (Convener), Moderator, Moderator-elect, Convener ICR, Convener L&A

**Law and Advisory:** RS Ward (Convener), T Reeve, S Louden, T Leggott, D Kerridge.

**Inter-Church Relations:** R Tso (Convener), GD Ball, T Leggott, RS Ward, J Forbes, J Klazinga.

**Church and Nation, Media:** GD Ball, (Convener Church and Nation), DK Muldoon, RS Ward (Banner), D Kerridge (Website), TW Yoa.

**Youth and Fellowship:** S Carswell (Convener), AA Miranda, T Reeve, J Forbes, Cameron Hamilton, Mandy Kerridge.

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

**Superannuation:** R Tso (Convener), DJ Ramsay.

**Missions:** DK Muldoon (Convener), TI Leggott, JD Klazinga, J Greensill, Rhoda Ball.

**Training of Ministry:** D Kerridge (Convener), JA McCallum, AA Miranda, D Manly, R Tso.

# Correspondence 1



## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA

Northern Presbytery

### Clerk

Rev. David Kerridge,  
36 Bruce Drive,  
Gulmarrad, NSW 2463  
Phone: 02 6645 1694  
Mobile: 0411 023344  
Email: dkerridge@pcea.org.au

16<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

To the Clerk of Synod,  
Rev. T. Leggott

### Overture concerning All Nations Congregation

Dear Trevor,

Following a matter coming to our attention at last year's Synod regarding the status of All Nations congregation, we wish to bring this to the attention of the gathered brethren to be dealt with in a careful and loving manner, yet with due regard to the distinctives of the PCEA. The Overture follows, along with the relevant Extract Minute.

### OVERTURE

To the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia:

#### WHEREAS

it has become known to Synod that the All Nations congregation use drums and uninspired materials of praise in their public worship, Synod never having been formally advised of this previously, it never having been stated to Synod in any report from the Southern Presbytery, nor permission ever having been sought from Synod for a special dispensation to be granted for All Nations and;

#### WHEREAS

the holding of services for Christmas, Christmas Eve and Good Friday have also taken place in All Nations in recent years contrary to the standards of this Church and without reference to Synod;

#### WHEREAS

without reference to Synod, the All Nations Congregation have appointed certain women to a role which is publicly referred to as Deaconess;

#### WHEREAS

if they are not yet able and willing to uphold and maintain the constitutional standards of the PCEA in doctrine, worship, discipline and government in their congregation, it is not appropriate for any congregation nor its office-bearers to be incorporated into the structures of the PCEA with full voting rights on presbytery and Synod;

#### WHEREAS

there is, throughout the PCEA, goodwill towards the All Nations congregation and a desire to encourage and help our brothers and sisters there who may currently have different religious understandings and expectations but who are still to be held in high esteem as brethren in Christ;

#### NOW THEREFORE

the Northern Presbytery respectfully overtures the Synod to take these premises into consideration and to:

1. Declare that Synod acknowledges the members of the All Nations congregation as brothers and sisters in Christ and assures them of the desire of the PCEA for their spiritual wellbeing.
2. Declare that the PCEA has one constitutional standard in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, and requires all its congregations, without exception, to uphold this.
3. Declare that, under the present circumstances, the All Nations congregation cannot be a fully sanctioned charge but be now reclassified as a congregation with a special associated status, having its own interim-session, whose representative elder may participate in presbytery and Synod as an associated member without a vote.
4. Require that the Southern Presbytery work with the All Nations congregation to develop a plan for how the congregation can work towards conformity with PCEA standards, and to report annually on this to Synod.

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

At a duly constituted meeting of the Northern Presbytery at 8 Wharf St Maclean, on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, *inter alia*, it was moved, seconded and carried that;

#### EXTRACT MINUTE

**Item C2** Proposed Overture re Status of All Nations Congregation. It was moved, seconded and carried to receive the correspondence (previously circulated). Rev. Forbes spoke to the Motion and extended discussion followed. It was moved, seconded and carried that the Northern Presbytery overture the Synod in the following terms:

#### WHEREAS

it has become known to Synod that the All Nations congregation use drums and uninspired materials of praise in their public worship, Synod never having been formally advised of this previously, it never having been stated to Synod in any report from the Southern Presbytery, nor permission ever having been sought from Synod for a special dispensation to be granted for All Nations and;

#### WHEREAS

the holding of services for Christmas, Christmas Eve and Good Friday have also taken place in All Nations in recent years contrary to the standards of this Church and without reference to Synod;

#### WHEREAS

without reference to Synod, the All Nations Congregation have appointed certain women to a role which is publicly referred to as Deaconess;

#### WHEREAS

if they are not yet able and willing to uphold and maintain the constitutional standards of the PCEA in doctrine, worship, discipline and government in their congregation, it is not appropriate for any congregation nor its office-bearers to be incorporated into the structures of the PCEA with full voting rights on presbytery and Synod;

#### WHEREAS

there is, throughout the PCEA, goodwill towards the All Nations congregation and a desire to encourage and help our brothers and sisters there who may currently have different religious understandings and expectations but who are still to be held in high esteem as brethren in Christ;

**NOW THEREFORE**

the Northern Presbytery respectfully overtures the Synod to take these premises into consideration and to:

1. Declare that Synod acknowledges the members of the All Nations congregation as brothers and sisters in Christ and assures them of the desire of the PCEA for their spiritual wellbeing.
2. Declare that the PCEA has one constitutional standard in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, and requires all its congregations, without exception, to uphold this.
3. Declare that, under the present circumstances, the All Nations congregation cannot be a fully sanctioned charge but be now reclassified as a congregation with a special associated status, having its own interim-session, whose representative elder may participate in presbytery and Synod as an associated member without a vote.
4. Require that the Southern Presbytery work with the All Nations congregation to develop a plan for how the congregation can work towards conformity with PCEA standards, and to report annually on this to Synod.

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

The Clerk of Presbytery was appointed to present the Overture.

END OF EXTRACT

If further information is required, please contact me.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Kerridge', written in a cursive style.

Rev. David Kerridge  
Clerk of Presbytery