

Synod
2022

The Synod of Eastern Australia

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

RAYMOND TERRACE CHURCH, PCEA HUNTER CONGREGATION

155 ADELAIDE STREET, RAYMOND TERRACE

3RD TO 6TH MAY, 2022

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TIMETABLE FOR SYNOD 2022

TIME	TUESDAY, 3 RD MAY	TIME	WEDNESDAY 4 TH MAY	THURSDAY 5 TH MAY	FRIDAY 6 TH MAY
	SYNOD TO COMMENCE WITH SESSION 1 AT 4:30PM	9:00AM	SESSION 3 Devotions and Prayer	SESSION 6 Devotions and Prayer	SESSION 9 Devotions and Prayer
		M/TEA 10:30AM	Law & Advisory Training of Ministry	Inter-Church Relations Delegates from other Churches	Superannuation Finance Trust Corporations Reports of Examiners of Records Appointment of Moderator-elect Time and Place of Next Synod Closure of Synod
		12:30pm	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH
4.30pm	SESSION 1 Constitution of Synod Retiring Moderator's Sermon Thanks to Retiring Moderator Presbytery Rolls Welcome to new members, guests, associations etc.		SESSION 4 Youth and Fellowship Missions	SESSION 7 Presbytery Reports	SYNOD CLOSSES AT THE END OF SESSION 9 AT 12:30PM LUNCH TO FOLLOW BEFORE DELEGATES DEPART
6:00pm	DINNER	6:00pm	DINNER	DINNER	
7:00pm	SESSION 2 Election of Moderator for 2022/23 Moderator's Address Thanks to Moderator	7:00pm	SESSION 5 Missions Speakers	SESSION 8 Church and Nation & Publications Banner Archivist Information Technology	
7:30pm	Administration			Psalmody	
8:30pm	Close	8:30pm	Close	Close	

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Members: Clerk (Convener); Moderator; Moderator-Elect; Presbytery Clerks

Timetable: Synod is scheduled to commence at 4:30pm on Tuesday, 3rd May and conclude by Friday, 6th May, 2022. A detailed timetable is appended above.

Ministerial Movements: Nil

Expressions of Sympathy: We express our deepest sympathy to the families of the late elders, Mr Neil Triffet (Ulverstone Elder from 8/3/1970 to 8/7/1998 - died 11th May, 2021) and Mr Donald Evander Kerr (St George's Elder inducted 22/6/1975, representative 1985-1991- died 12th February, 2022).

Congregational Statistics: As noted last year, reporting of congregational statistics now forms part of individual Presbytery reports.

Consideration of Committee Structure: After some deliberation, the Administration Committee proposes the following Committee Structure with due regard to Act 7 Class 2 Synod 2011 (amended Act 9 Class 2 Synod 2019 "Committee Structures") Handbook 5.19, particularly sections 2b and 3.:

"The Administration Committee proposes a committee composition for each Synod however delegates and courts of the church are welcome and encouraged to also propose changes to the committees, either by previous contact to the Administration Committee or by petition, overture or notice of motion at Synod. Sessions are encouraged in particular to search out, foster and cultivate suitable people from their congregations to serve, within their God given interests and abilities on Synod committees.

3. 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 being removed (except in cases of church discipline, or other established reason. This to be referred to as 'exit courtesy')."

We have also considered the possibility of including the Moderator as an ex-officio member of *all* Committees and wish to bring that to this Synod for deliberation and discussion.

Committee Structure:

Administration: Clerk (Convener), Moderator, Moderator-Elect, Presbytery Clerks.

Law and Advisory: T Reeve (Convener), RS Ward, D. Kerridge, J. Forbes, I. Miller.

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

Church and Nation and Publication: GD Ball (Convener), I Miller, JD Klazinga (Banner), RS Ward (Archive).

Information Technology: D Kerridge (Convener), R Tso, N. O'Dell.

Youth and Fellowship: S Carswell (Convener), AA Miranda, J Forbes, Matthew Schmidt, Mandy Kerridge

Finance: J Audet (Convener), AH Steel, DJ Ramsay, G. Hamilton.

Superannuation: R Tso (Convener), RS Ward (Insurance), DJ Ramsay, AH Steel.

Missions: DK Muldoon (Convener), ID Hamilton, JD Klazinga, J Greensill, R Tso.

Training of Ministry: D Kerridge (Convener), AA Miranda, R Tso, ID Hamilton, G Hamilton.

Psalmody: D Kerridge (Convener), DA McIntosh, GD Ball, Julie Schmidt, Esther Hamilton.

Correspondence: For ease of reference, copies of correspondence can be found at the back of this report. Correspondence is as follows:

1. Overture from Northern Presbytery re Sale of Grafton Property

2. Overture from Northern Presbytery re Share investment
3. Adherence of Rev. Tut Wan Yoa to Rev. Dr Ward's protest at the *pro re nata* 11th January, 2022.
4. Barrier Act Remits from (a) Northern, (b) Central and (c) Southern Presbyteries re Safe Church.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Correspondence Item 1 be received and dealt with following the Northern Presbytery Report.
2. Correspondence Item 2 be received and dealt with following Finance Committee business.
3. Correspondence Item 3 be received and noted.
4. Correspondence Items 4 (a),(b),(c) be received and noted. They are also mentioned in the Law and Advisory Report.
5. That the Moderator be appointed as an ex-officio member of all Committees.
6. That Synod confirm the proposed Committee Structure as listed in the report.
7. That the following Examiners of Records be appointed:

Northern Presbytery	Rev. A Miranda and Hunter Elder
Central Presbytery	Rev. J Forbes and Geelong Elder
Southern Presbytery	Rev. R Tso and Brisbane Elder

LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

T.M. Reeve (convener 2021), R.S. Ward, T.I. Leggott, D.J. Kerridge and J. Forbes

Commencing in August 2021, the committee conducted its business by group emails, with a subcommittee (appointed in 2019) working separately on Handbook changes for Safe Church matters. These finalised Handbook documents were circulated to the full committee on the 17th February 2022.

1. Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct Class 1 legislation to be voted on again by Synod, following the result of Barrier Act returns for two items sent down last year (21.18 & 21.21.2).

The returns from the three presbyteries were as follows:

Northern (16/10/21) a. Barrier Act remit – Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct – It was moved seconded and unanimously agreed to approve as passed and as amended per item 39, 2021 Synod minutes. b. Barrier Act remit – Repeal of Act 1, Class 1, 2014 – It was moved seconded and unanimously agreed to approve the repeal of Act 1, Class 1, 2014.

Central (15/9/21): The two overtures transmitted by Synod 2021 under Barrier Act procedure were approved *simpliciter*.

Southern (12/3/22): a. Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct - ‘resolved unanimously in favour’
b. Repeal of 2014 Act – ‘resolved unanimously in favour’

The recommendation of the committee is that both of these items of legislation be approved by Synod 2022. If passed, the Safe Church Interim Act of 2021 legislation will be known as the **PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct Amendment Act 2022**. This reminds us that it is a minor update of the definitive 2019 Act (first passed as an Interim Act by Synod 2018).

It is the work of the committee to carefully monitor Governmental legislation and the present intention is to update our Policy every three years (next due for Synod 2024). Of course, any legislation passed during the interval should be brought to the attention of protection officers and complied with as we do with all Government laws (unless contrary to the Word of God). Recently the Victorian Parliament passed legislation as an amendment to their *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*. It prescribes 11 Child Safety Standards in Victoria and will come into force on the 1st July 2022. This information will be passed onto our Victorian congregational protection officers. The NSW parliament has just passed the *Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) 2021 Bill*, which mainly prescribes the increasing duties of this Government agency responsible for the care of children in New South Wales. All states are updating their respective laws as time goes on.

2. New Handbook Chapter on Safe Church matters. Over recent years much work has been undertaken to legislate the new Safe Church Policy for the PCEA. Following on from this the committee has been preparing a new chapter for the Handbook. The aim has been to carefully explain the legislation, so young people may refer to it. It includes also the full wording of the relevant legislation. Having clear statements all together in one place will be more useful than scattered in the chapters dealing with duties of session, presbytery and synod (though not ruling out some references to it in these sections). A dedicated chapter also expresses our resolve to treat this subject with the priority that the State rightly requires of churches.

3. Safe Church Training. Although a matter for the three presbyteries to oversee, it is helpful for Synod members and others to know what is happening in the wider church on the required safe church training. Attached below are brief reports on training from each presbytery for the two years (Covid years), 2020 and 2021.

The Basic Training Courses are required for each new leader and thereafter every three years. A shorter ‘refresher’ course should be undertaken on the other years (Scripture teachers at schools require training annually). Next year the committee plans to document and list some recommended on-line resources available for each State.

Northern Presbytery. (JF) *Five members of Northern Presbytery attended an online training event on 9th February 2021 organised by the Central Presbytery and led by Elissa Donnellan of the PCNSW's Conduct Protocol Unit. A Safe Church Training day was also held locally in the Hastings River congregation on 6th February 2021 led by John Forbes using the PCNSW Breaking the Silence training videos and workbook adapted for PCEA context. Eight members of the Hastings attended.*

Central Presbytery. (TR) *The main training event was held in February 2021 on-line. It was a specially designed course for the PCEA, particularly for protection officers, ministers, elders and deacons, with twelve attending from our four congregations. It was prepared by the Conduct Protocol Unit of the PCNSW under Jon Flood and Elissa Donnellan who delivered the instruction. Various of their resources were kindly made available for use in-house. Two congregations have conducted some in-house training. The next Basic Training Course for all teachers and workers with the young was scheduled for late 2021 but postponed due the disruption caused by Covid and the PCNSW discontinuing its direct role in training. Your Convener also attended on-line training conducted by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, specifically for churches, on 24th June 2020.*

Southern Presbytery. (RW) *Southern Presbytery as such did not organise training during 2021 due to disruption in the PCV schedule caused by Covid, but refresher training in Knox, and perhaps elsewhere, occurred.*

4. Head of Entity. In contacting organisations which deal with children, the relevant State Government agencies require someone to be nominated 'Head of Entity.' This is broadly defined as the "most senior officer who is primarily responsible for executive decision-making in the organisation." [NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, 2019.] The nearest person to this definition in the 'rule by elders' government of the PCEA is the clerk of Synod. However, Victoria, being a bit different, still requires someone from their state to be the Head of Entity. When this changes then there will only need to be one person representing the whole denomination.

5. Listing of all the Acts of Synod. There was a remit from Synod 2021 (**21.15.4**): *'It is important that Acts of Synod past and present be available and accessible to all interested parties. This is not currently achieved in the Handbook/Decision Book which has limitations and evident gaps. Synod instructs the Law & Advisory committee to consider how this end could be better achieved and to bring proposals to the next ordinary meeting'.*

At present some Acts are currently in the Handbook but not always with the complete wording. Some can be found in Synod minutes, which are currently available on the PCEA website from 1981 onwards. In other cases, however, the minutes must be read in conjunction with Synod Reports to understand what has been enacted. The Reports from 2005 are available to Synod members online. It is highly desirable that the full wording of Synod enactments be compiled from the Minutes and Reports of Synod and digitised so that they can be made available on the website, and also in printed form if necessary, for the benefit of all interested parties. Two deliverances are proposed to bring the records into good order and ease of access.

6. NSW Property Act 1918. There was a remit from Synod 2021 (**21.15.5**): *'Synod note that the resolution of Synod 2013 for the NSW Parliament to amend The Synod of Eastern Australia Property Act 1918 cannot be fulfilled under current Government rules. Synod resolved to continue with the 1918 Act and directs the Law & Advisory Committee to provide advice on handling any potential difficulties at its next ordinary meeting.'*

As there has not been a significant problem with the existing legislation, nor any likely to be encountered in the foreseeable future, the committee recommends that no further action is required for the time being.

7. PCEA Statement (guidelines) on Divorce, Separation and Remarriage.

The subject of divorce, separation and remarriage in the church is a major pastoral matter which has increasingly exercised and perplexed most of the congregations of the PCEA. With the outworking of the Australian Government Family Law Act of 1975, which allowed 'no-fault' divorce, the life of our nation has been greatly impacted for the worse. Adultery and divorce are now seen as normal part of pagan family life, though still not regarded as ideal for the raising of children. These ideas have seeped into the church.

Sadly, many people in the pews of the PCEA churches – and possibly some office-bearers – do not have a clear grasp of the biblical position on divorce and remarriage as given in the Scriptures, and as defined by our Westminster Confession of Faith. It would be fair to say that there is some confusion on what the Bible teaches and how it differs from the current Australian laws.

As it is a subject which every long-term office bearer is likely to deal with in the course of his duties, it would be beneficial to have some clear statements placed together in the Handbook. It would be helpful to have everyone on the same page, although each case is different. Unfortunately, the authority of church courts in carrying out proper discipline in such matters is often disregarded so most leave to attend another fellowship where no questions are asked. For others, the embarrassment is too great to have their private matters discussed by men-only courts (though there are provisions for female help with interviews). At least such couples – and all church members - could be given a helpful statement on what the Bible teaches.

One way to prepare such a statement on divorce, separation and remarriage is to appoint a panel under the oversight of the Law & Advisory Committee, including members of the Church & Nation Committee and others, to draft a suitable document for our denomination. As with the formulation of the safe church policy, the drafts could be sent to presbyteries for input and review. Two years should be allowed for the panel to study the subject and to bring proposed legislation to Synod.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct Amendment Act 2022

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 presbyteries, 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, AND WHEREAS all the presbyteries have approved the legislation under the terms of the Barrier Act, NOW THEREFORE Synod 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 the appended file 8.6 and 8.7.

2. Repeal of Act 1, Class 1 2014 (Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct)

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 2021 Synod has adopted new Complaints Handling Procedures which are more child focused and accessible,
AND WHEREAS all the presbyteries have approved the legislation under the terms of the Barrier Act,
NOW THEREFORE Synod repeal Act 1, Class 1, 2014 (Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct).

3. New Handbook chapter on Safe Church Matters (Class 2 legislation)

WHEREAS safe church legislation must be understood easily by young people and others attending PCEA church activities,
AND WHEREAS all such legislation must be accessible and readily found in the one place,
NOW THEREFORE Synod enacts and ordains that all items of enacted safe church legislation, as well as the particular duties of sessions, presbyteries and synod be placed in the Handbook together as the new chapter 8, as set out in the appended files, 8.1 to 8.7.

4. Head of Entity

Synod designates the Clerk of Synod as the PCEA Head of Entity for the purpose of the various state Reportable Conduct Schemes, with the exception of the States of Victoria and Tasmania where the Clerk of Southern Presbytery shall fulfil this role for the time being.

5. Listing of all the Acts of Synod

- a. Synod instructs the Law and Advisory committee to compile the Acts of Synod from past Minutes and Reports and to make them available on the Church website. The assistance of the Synod Clerk, Webmaster, and Archivist to be sought as required.
- b. Synod requires that, in future, full wording of decisions and enactments be included in the Synod minutes rather than a mere reference to Synod Reports. This is to ensure that decisions and enactments of Synod will be clear from the Synod minutes alone.

6. New South Wales Property Act, 1918

Synod notes that the current Act is not causing any difficulties at present and instructs the Law & Advisory committee to monitor any issues and to make recommendations if problems arise in the future.

7. PCEA Statement (guidelines) on Divorce, Separation and Remarriage

Synod resolves to establish a panel, under the oversight of the Law & Advisory Committee, charged with preparing a statement for the PCEA Handbook to provide clear scriptural guidance on Divorce, Separation and Remarriage, and to bring proposed legislation to Synod 2024.

APPENDIX to Law and Advisory Report

Handbook Chapter 8

Contents

- 8.1 Introduction and Overview**
- 8.2 Complaints Handling Procedures**
- 8.3 Duties of Session**
- 8.4 Duties of Presbytery**
- 8.5 Duties of Synod**
- 8.6 Safe Church Policy**
- 8.7 Safe Church Code of Conduct**

8.1 Introduction and Overview

Following revelations of unacceptable incidences of historic child abuse in churches and other institutions, the 2017 report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse highlighted the need for institutions in Australia to improve their preventative measures, and to ensure that they have clear and understandable procedures to safeguard against abuse and to deal effectively with cases that may arise.

In 2018 Synod adopted a comprehensive Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct as a further step towards ensuring a safe church for all who attend our ministries. The ongoing development of these standards is guided by the key recommendations of the Royal Commission, including its 10 Child Safe Standards, and the resolve to maintain a clear biblical basis.

The addition of this chapter to the Handbook is intended to ensure that information about the Church's policies and procedures is collected in one place to be easily accessed by church courts, office-bearers, other leaders and church members alike.

Relevant PCEA legislation is found in the following documents:

- 2019, Act 1 Class 1 - *Adoption of Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct*.
- 2022, Act Class 1 - *Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct Amendment Act 2022*
- 2021, Act 5, Class 2 - *Complaints Handling Procedures*
- 2004, Act 1, Class 2 - *Guidelines for Church Workers*

8.2 COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURES

(This section is Act 5, Class 2, 2021 - *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?

8.3 DUTIES OF SESSION

The particular duties of the session in regard to Safe Church matters are:

1. Actively minimising risks of harm to children and the vulnerable (*Safe Church Policy 2, 10 & 13*)

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.

If 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.

If the minister, elders or other leaders 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 all meetings under the supervision of a responsible individual named by session.

2. Carefully selecting and appointing church workers (*Safe Church Policy 9*)

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). The session should also 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 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

3. Working with Children Checks (*Safe Church Policy 9*)

The following guidance is believed to be correct as at February 2022:

New South Wales – www.ocg.nsw.gov.au

The session (as 'employer') must ensure their congregation is registered with the Office of the Children's Guardian. Two names of session members have to be supplied for notification if a leader ('employee') subsequently offends and is barred. All who have a role in working with children must obtain a Working with Children Check number which they must supply to the Church along with their date of birth. The session through its clerk or congregational Protection Officer will use this information to verify that the person is cleared to work with children.

Queensland - www.bluecard.qld.gov.au

Church employees and volunteers who work with children and young people must hold a blue card. The session through its clerk or congregational Protection Officer must notify Blue Card Services that the individual is commencing regulated child-related work with the Church by submitting the relevant form available from the website.

Tasmania – www.cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/licensing-and-registration

Individuals who will be working with children, whether as employees or volunteers, must register with the Tasmanian government.

The session through its clerk or congregational Protection Officer must check the status of employees and volunteers online before they start working or volunteering with the church. The registration card alone is not to be accepted as proof. It is important that the Church's details are linked to a registration so that it can be notified if there has been a change to the status e.g. suspended or cancelled registration.

Victoria - www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

Individuals who engage in child-related work in Victoria must apply for a Working with Children Check either as an employee or volunteer.

The session through its clerk or congregational Protection Officer must check the status of a worker's Working with Children Check card before engaging them. It's not enough to just see a worker's card. The individual must update their details to include the congregation's name via their MyCheck account and a letter of confirmation will be sent to the Church.

4. Appointing a protection officer (*Safe Church Policy 7*)

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

5. Maintaining proper documentation (*Safe Church Policy 8*)

Within each congregation there will be two sets of records kept in books or folders.

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 25 years. These records are kept by the congregational protection officer.

Confidential records (as a record apart) are 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, in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Policy. A duplicate certified copy of the above records should be lodged with the presbytery clerk. 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 except where there is a statutory requirement to do so.

6. Receiving and responding to allegations of abuse (*Safe Church Policy 10*)

Leaders and any others in the congregation who hear disclosures of abuse 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.

Allegations against a minister or licentiate must be dealt with by his presbytery. The allegation should go immediately to the clerk of presbytery, (or to the moderator if the clerk is the one accused).

Full details of the procedures for responding to and investigating allegations can be found in the Handbook 8.2 (*See also Safe Church Policy section 10*)

7. Determining exceptions to the Code of Conduct in specific cases (*Code of Conduct 3(1)*)

Where a minor 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 session must determine whether or not the circumstances justify the departure from protocol and must carefully document its finding.

8. Review (*Safe Church Policy 3*)

The Church is committed to regularly reviewing and improving its Safe Church standards. Comments and suggestions may be forwarded to the Law and Advisory committee at any time to facilitate improvements to the Church's policies and procedures. In particular, sessions are required to carry out an internal review after a complaint process has been concluded. Further details can be found in Handbook 8.3 section 5.

8.4 DUTIES OF PRESBYTERY

The presbytery has a responsibility to promote Safe Church matters throughout its bounds and oversee the implementation of the Safe Church Policy and procedures within its jurisdiction. The particular duties of presbytery in regard to Safe Church matters are:

1. Careful selection and appointment of ministers, licentiates and other workers

In processing a call to a minister or licentiate, and before licensing, ordination and induction, the presbytery has a duty to ensure that background checks have been carried out and that the individual concerned is of good character and reputation and has a Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance.

If the call is to a minister outside the PCEA, including from another country, who is eligible for call, the appropriate credentials must be sought including a fully completed application form, criminal/sexual abuse checks and at least two appropriate referees' reports.

Other workers appointed by presbytery to particular roles should be well known within the church, having been members of a PCEA congregation for at least 12 months and well attested by that congregation. If they have not been members for 12 months then they should be well attested by their previous congregation, with a minimum of two referees' reports being required.

2. Organising training for leaders (*Safe Church Policy 15*)

It is required that those working with children and the vulnerable be given appropriate training in Safe Church matters. The clerk of presbytery is to 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.

3. Maintaining proper documentation (*Safe Church Policy 8*)

The presbytery clerk will maintain two sets of records kept in books or folders.

Non-confidential records showing the list of ministers, licentiates and other 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 with name of the providers, objectives, content, dates of delivery and attendees. Registers are to be kept showing attendance records of all young people participating in youth events organised by the presbytery, and these are to be retained for at least 25 years.

Confidential records (as a record apart) 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 presbytery records for 50 years and then archived at the direction of Synod. Similar records are also kept by session clerks relating to cases within their congregation. A duplicate certified copy of such session records should also be lodged with the presbytery clerk. These records are to be kept by the presbytery clerk and controlled under the privacy legislation of the Church. Presbytery 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 except where there is a statutory requirement to do so.

4. Receiving and responding to allegations of abuse (*Safe Church Policy 10*)

Leaders and any others who hear disclosures of abuse or have reasonable grounds for concern must report it immediately. They may go directly to the police and/or report the matter to the minister/interim-moderator or an elder.

Allegations against a minister or licentiate must be dealt with by his presbytery. The allegation should go immediately to the clerk of presbytery, (or to the moderator if the clerk is the one accused). From that time the presbytery will appoint a suitable minister or 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 presbytery 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.

Full details of the procedures for responding to and investigating allegations can be found in the Handbook 8.2 (*See also Safe Church Policy section 10*)

5. Approving temporary exceptions to the Code of Conduct in specific cases (*Code of Conduct 3(l)*)

Where a minor 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.

6. Work with a body external to the Church (*Safe Church Policy 13*)

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.

Using the services of other organisations in child related ministries (e.g. at camping, conference and other sites) is allowed if that organisation agrees to uphold this Church's Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct.

7. Review (*Safe Church Policy 3*)

Presbytery should regularly review the implementation and effectiveness of Safe Church matters within its bounds. Comments and suggestions for improvement should be forwarded to the Law and Advisory committee. In particular, presbyteries are required to carry out an internal review after a complaint process has been concluded. Further details can be found in Handbook 8.3 section 5.

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.

8.5 DUTIES OF SYNOD

The particular duties of Synod in regard to Safe Church matters are:

1. Legislating for a clear PCEA-wide approach to Safe Church matters

Synod is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Church has effective and clear policies and procedures in place for the prevention of abuse, and for the processing of complaints about abuse should they arise. The Royal Commission recommended that each denomination have a unified national approach. It is the responsibility of Synod to put in place policies and procedures which apply throughout the PCEA, Australia-wide, that take into account relevant state legislation and the

examples of best practice from other similar institutions. Synod should be advised in this by its Law and Advisory Committee.

2. Reviewing and updating Safe Church legislation (Safe Church Policy 3)

Synod should ensure that the review of its current Safe Church standards be ongoing through its Law and Advisory Committee. Observations of difficulties in implementing or using the Safe Church standards, as well as suggestions for improvements, may be submitted by individuals, sessions and presbyteries to the Law and Advisory Committee at any time but especially following an incident or complaint. Standard questionnaires may be made available to church courts to facilitate feedback. Identification of systemic failures or recommendations for improvement should be made to Synod through the Law and Advisory Committee.

3. Insurance

Synod maintains Australia-wide Public Liability insurance in respect of the activities of the Church but there is no cover for sexual molestation arising from persons known to have been previous offenders or against whom a complaint has been made which has not been appropriately investigated.

It is necessary that certain confidential information be disclosed to insurers to maintain cover. Presbytery clerks and session clerks are required and authorised to release such information upon receipt of a signed request from the person or committee that organises the insurance renewal. Such information is to be used only for insurance purposes and is not to be retained longer than is necessary for these purposes nor is it to be retained electronically by either party.

4. Record Keeping by Youth and Fellowship Committee

The Youth and Fellowship committee must keep a register showing attendance records of all those participating in the camps and other activities which it organises. These are to be retained for at least 25 years.

8.6 SAFE CHURCH POLICY

[PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct Amendment Act 2022]

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 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' (1 Timothy 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 principles which 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
- 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

4. 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

4.3 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

4.4 Risk of Significant Harm: This is a term for situations where a reasonable person has concerns about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child.

4.5 Abuse categories: Each of the following constitutes a reportable offence

(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.

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. 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.

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).

4.6 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.

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 2021

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.

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 (eg. 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

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. Confidential records are not to be stored electronically, nor to be communicated electronically except where there is a statutory requirement to do so. 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.

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 approved congregation, with at least two referees' reports)
- applicants for leadership positions must be approved by the local session
- before they commence working as leaders 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

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 (Act 5, Synod 2021), 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 the 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 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 (eg. 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

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).

8.7 SAFE CHURCH CODE OF CONDUCT

[PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct Amendment Act 2022]

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, 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 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 during a church or youth activity is forbidden, with the exception of communion services where wine is ordinarily used. 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.
- k. 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.
- l. 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, grooming behaviour, 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 (per 4 above)

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.

TRAINING OF MINISTRY

Members: D Kerridge (Convener), R Tso, A Miranda, G Hamilton, I Hamilton

The Committee corresponded by email during the year and met by video conference.

Our desire is to see men raised up to serve in our denomination who seek the glory of Christ Jesus and the growth of His Kingdom.

We continue to look overseas for men ready fitted for ministry, but this is an expensive task. We need to be active in encouraging spiritually minded and gifted men in our congregations to consider the work of Eldership and, further, ordained ministry. Whilst we must never lay hands on anyone hastily, just to fill pulpits, neither should our reflex action be to discourage others from the work, even if our motives are kind. There is too much of the saying: “if you can do anything apart from ministry do that” rather than “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.”

We are not looking for those who just consider the ministry a career, nor for those who think that it is an easy life just working a couple of hours on a Sunday. We have to sift and test and discern with God-given wisdom who may be suited to the task (and there are times when we are painfully wrong in our choices). But we mustn't give up searching among our numbers, and encouraging, even exhorting those in whom we see the pastoral, preaching and teaching gifts.

We pray that our congregations are in prayer that the Lord would raise up workers for the harvest. We pray that our Sessions are active in seeking out, encouraging and discipling men towards office in our denomination.

We sadly have no matters directly before us at this present time. Our ongoing remit, in the absence of candidates, is the training of Elders. The Eldership sub-domain on the website is a resource that needs resourcing and development, but we are also seeking to recommend training courses with Reformed seminaries online. One such resource is provided through the Free Church (Continuing) Seminary. Whilst they cannot offer accredited degree coursework, they are well-placed to provide sound doctrinal training. We look to progress this in discussions with them. We hope to do something similar following discussions with Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in the US.

Proposed Deliverances

1. We seek Synod recognition of the Free Church Seminary (Free Church of Scotland - Continuing) as a suitable college to recommend for online courses.
2. We seek Synod approval for negotiation with Puritan Reformed Theological College as another suitable college to recommend for online courses and distance learning.
3. The Committee plans to review the list of Synod-approved colleges for candidate training, with the hope of bringing a report and recommendations to Synod 2023.

YOUTH AND FELLOWSHIP

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

Youth Camp 2021

It is with thanks that in the providence of God, the 2021 Youth Camp was held over the Easter weekend in Northern Rivers with Rev Tim Attwood, Maclean Evangelical Church (reformed Baptist), as speaker. The camp for 15 to 30 year olds had campers from Brisbane, Northern Rivers and Hastings. Due to uncertainty with travel others wishing to attend from Ulverstone were not able to come.

Family Camp 2021

Again, due to government restrictions it was decided to cancel the Family Camp scheduled to be held at YWAM Tahlee, NSW. It is hoped to hold the camp in early January 2023. The decision to move to Tahlee was to reduce costs and encourage more people to attend. Tahlee is approximately 30-40 minutes from Newcastle. As the venue is not catered Rev. Robin Tso has agreed to coordinate the planning of meals and the purchase of food.

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 and would encourage the members to attend, as they are able.

Essays

In 2021, the essay topic focused Psalm 73 under the topic – God is all I want. The essays are submitted in three age groups; up to 7 year, 8 to 12 years and over 12 year.

Each essay receives a gift card to a Christian bookstore and Andres Miranda comments on each essay showing interest and pastoral care of the young people over the content of their work. In Brisbane, at least, the children and Sunday school teachers very much appreciated the comments from Andres.

Prescribed Youth Work 2022

The prescribed work, memorisation and essay questions were published in the Banner and sent to interested congregation earlier this year.

Certificates for scripture memorisation, psalmody or catechism are available from 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.

Search Work

The Committee is thankful to Irene Steel for her continued commitment to the Search Work. Irene was pleased to report that 7 children did the Search Work -5 did the Senior questions & 2 Intermediate, including 3 children from Ulverstone; 2 from Brisbane & 2 from Wauchope (Hastings).

The Committee encourages congregations to utilise the Search work, Essay and Memory work in the teaching and building up the children and youth of the church.

Resignations

Both Tom Reeve and Cameron Hamilton have expressed the desire to retire from the committee from Synod. Their contributions to the committee over the years have been very much appreciated.

Proposed Deliverances

1. Synod recognises the importance of praying the children and youth in the Church. While at any age we are assaulted and tempted, it seems that it is the youth that are especially vulnerable to the temptations of the world and Satan.

2. Synod gives thanks to Tom Reeve and Cameron Hamilton for their contribution to the Youth and Fellowship committee and their own congregations over the years.

3. The Synod gives thanks and pray for those are involved in the work of teaching Sunday-school and youth classes.
4. Synod thanks Irene Steel for her dedication to the scripture search work and acknowledge God's blessing for her commitment and encouragement in continuing this role.
5. Synod upholds Nic and Amelia O'Dell in prayer as they continue in sending birthday greeting to the children of the church.

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

Members: D.K. Muldoon (convener), J. Greensill, J.D. Klazinga, R. Tso, I. Hamilton

The MC met in person after Synod 2021 in Raymond Terrace. A zoom meeting was held on 19 October 2020 and again on 1 March 2022. Members of the MC gave updates on the various fields.

The subcommittee set up last Synod (2021) to manage the Student Sponsorship Scheme for the Presbyterian Free Church of Central India Mission Higher Secondary School in Chhapara decided, after discussions with the sponsors and the management of the Mission School in Chhapara, to change the sponsorship scheme to a simple donation scheme. Sponsors could continue supporting the school without being linked to specific students.

It was agreed that our churches should hold mission events at which missionaries on the field could be invited online to give an outline and update of their ministry, and answer questions from church folk-as we have done at Synod. This would be undertaken on a Presbytery basis.

Difficulties with sending money to India were discussed. Treasurers are urged to send mission donations through the Synod treasurer who can combine funds for easier and cheaper transfer.

In addition to supporting Christian education and development work on an ongoing basis, the MC met and agreed to send relief to victims of the volcano and tsunami in Tonga. This was done through Tongan members of the Sydney-west PCEA congregation. We also sent relief to victims of war in Ukraine through Reformed church contacts (see budget).

The Synod Treasurer alerted the MC to a synod fund dedicated to the memory of Rev. J.A Harman. The committee agreed with his proposal as set out below:

'That the PCEA Missions Committee, under the terms of the Rev J. A. Harman Memorial Fund (Est 1977), give the Synod Treasurer a standing instruction to donate annually the sum of \$600 from this fund towards the training of pastors at the Dumisani Theological Institute, until further notice, funds permitting'.

The MC notes, along with the rest of the church, the death of a long-serving missionary of the PCEA, namely Dr Helen Ramsay. We ask the Synod to record the memorial minute below.

MISSION FIELD REPORTS

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Australian Indigenous Ministries

Dumisani Theological Institute

Taleem centre, India

Dr Dickson, India

Central India

Annie Soper School

International Mission to Jewish people

Shekinah, Project Video, Thailand

1. Australian Indigenous Ministries (Jim Klazinga from Peter Smith)

Again much has happened over the last year in AIM. Mr Lloyd Ollerenshaw applied for the General Directors position and after a number of meetings with the AIM Council was given the job. After four months however, differences in Lloyd's understanding of the role compared to the AIM Council's was becoming clearly evident. Consequently, Lloyd and the Council met and after much discussion, parted amicably in September. On a very sad note, Mr John Keane, Chairman of the AIM Council who had retired around the same time the year before, succumbed to his cancer and is now with the Lord.

In western NSW this past year the ministry of Pastor Henry Louie has focused on Pilliga and Baradine. Covid necessarily brought challenges, however some meetings were able to be held via Zoom. With the

restrictions eased, gospel meetings continue. It seems significant that some folk in Pilliga only need to spot Henry and they all gather eagerly together to hear more about Jesus! What a wonderful blessing - God's hand is certainly at work. Kids clubs continue regularly in Pilliga and recently, a couple in Warren were drawn to Christ through Henry's ministry. Please pray for them as Henry disciples them weekly in the Word and introduces them to the local Presbyterian Church.

Pastor Isaac Gordon is thrilled to hear that Green Point College on the central coast of NSW have decided to start a Christian school in Brewarrina. The connection to Green Point College happened quite a number of years ago. The then field director, Rev. Stephen Bignall, took Ike and Henry to the college and introduced them to the staff and students. Since then, there has been regular interaction with college students and staff visiting, primarily Brewarrina. The new Christian school will open early in 2023. Please pray that God will provide the right teachers for the school. The congregation in Brewarrina consists mainly of younger couples, with a few oldies. The youth there are very respectful of the church work, with a thriving youth group. Please pray for Bourke and Walgett as the youth there are a law unto themselves.

There are groups in other outlying townships requesting to know about Jesus, however with only two men available opportunities are difficult to follow up, especially with the current cost of fuel. Pastor Ike Gordon continues to lead the Rivers Convention during Easter, visiting seven strategic towns, spending two nights at each place proclaiming the gospel. David and Rose Cox in Dubbo are asking that doors of opportunity will be opened in that great city to make Christ known! Keep praying too, that God will richly bless the Mercy ministry within the community, as another means to build His church. Overall, the work in Queensland is still small. The church in Inala is yet to start, with no venue as yet. The Rockhampton folk are strong: a vibrant church well established, blessed with Godly indigenous leaders. Cherbourg is ably assisted by Max Conlon. Martin and Rose Ebel, long term missionaries in Woorabinda were shocked when Martin was diagnosed with aggressive brain cancer in May. Some regrowth was removed late in the year and the most recent MRI is still clear. Early detection has given extra life in the providence of our mighty God! Please rejoice with Martin's whole family for the bountiful blessings that come from our heavenly Father.

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. The Tennant Creek elders are training up suitable younger men (in their 50's) to take over the leadership. Harold Dalywaters attended the Christian College in Darwin towards the end of 2021 and revelled in the wondrous teaching of the Scriptures. He especially enjoyed learning about Moses. Borrooloola and Barunga are led by indigenous people, but much smaller in numbers. There is also 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.

'Our God is Able' - Daniel 3:17.' 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 (Ian Hamilton from Jack C. Whytock)

On Saturday March 5th, 2022, DV, the graduation exercises for Dumisani Theological Institute & Bible School in King William's Town, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa will be held. There will be 25 graduating with either a Certificate in Christian Foundations or a Diploma of Theology. BTh students are recognised in their partnership arrangements but do not technically graduate through Dumisani. Each student recognised will receive Bible commentaries, books for Sunday School teaching, and ministry specific books provided by donors.

Dumisani has faced a difficult year in 2021 as have so many others globally due to the impact of the restrictions placed upon it concerning Covid-19. The good news is that all courses managed to be taught using several innovative means despite internet broadband problems, data costs which were unaffordable for most students, and issues of the lack of electricity etc. Some courses had to be converted to paper distance mode but by Term Four traditional classes, the preferred model for almost all students, were able to be held and an excellent face-to-face Summer School in November ended the

year on a high note. Thanks, be to the Lord for this blessing. Thanks are given to both South Africans and those from overseas who came to teach and allow Dumisani to continue to offer its full sleight.

One of the large challenges facing Dumisani has been the push by the department of higher education for accreditation of all certificates and diplomas in Bible Institutes and Bible Schools. The partnership now in place for the accredited BTh has satisfied this requirement but the certificate and diploma needed to be accredited. The Principal Wilbert Chipenyu has spent much time working on this along with our late Registrar Rev. Vernon Vera who passed away in June 2021. This issue of accreditation is facing so many Bible Institutes and Bible Schools across Africa with perhaps the most difficult challenges now underway in Rwanda where the government is forcing all pastors and churches to have accredited degrees or churches will be closed. The years to come will prove a challenge like a tightrope walk for all such institutes and Bibles Schools in so many Africa countries. This is a matter for prayer.

The Board of Governors has just appointed the widow of our late Registrar to step into his shoes as the new Registrar for 2022. We rejoice that Mrs Vera is able to do this.

Please remember the Principal, Registrar, Vice Principal, visiting lectures and all staff and governors at Dumisani for 2022 especially as the issues of accreditation are navigated. Please also pray that in no way will this take away the focus as a servant to the churches of the Eastern Cape but this will remain the heart and soul of Dumisani in our 43th year of ministry. Also, from all at Dumisani a sincere thanks to the PCEA for kindly helping us at Dumisani financially, and also your remembering us in constant prayer.

3. Taleem Centre, India (from Mariam)

It has been challenging few years now with COVID getting in the way of normal life. In September 2021 we reopened the Taleem center; it was so wonderful to be in the village with the children and listen to all their wonderful stories as I was not able to meet with them for many months. We were gradually having children come for their after school activities but again, due to the threat, we had to close down. We had another lockdown in January 2022 and again we needed to close the Taleem center under the government restrictions. Now we are able to restart it from first week of February 2022.

Year by years things are getting very difficult in India with politics and religious beliefs of citizens. The international news must be airing all the unrest in the southern parts of the country on the Muslim women wearing Hijabs. This is certainly an issue to remember in prayers as everyday people are coming up with ways to incite disharmony.

The Staff in the village are well. Mr.Gulfam and his wife Julekha are overseeing a house of theirs under constructions. We are still looking at when it will be ready and if we could get a bigger room in it. The elder daughter of the couple lost her new born baby in November 2021 and is still very depressed about it. Please continue to pray that she feels better with time. The two teachers, Sabeena and Seeba, are working as teachers during the morning hours in a school near the village and after their working hours they assist in the Taleem Center. We are looking to create activities and games for the children so that they are able to spend this time together and enjoy their time at the center. We are hoping there will be no more lockdowns so we continue this small work for the extension of His kingdom. The little children suddenly seem to become taller after almost two years of following restrictions and protocols of covid.

When we first started the Taleem Center in 2013 and this was the year my dad went to be with the Lord. There were families from this village who attended worship service in the church planted by my dad; he focused in sharing the word with seekers from Muslim background. Many of the little children have now grown up to be teenagers and are studying in other schools, some stopped attending schools, and few got married. We have many new children now, little ones who are enthusiastic about being in a place where they are able to sing, draw, color and listen to stories. We have about 25 regular children coming to the center and some come occasionally.

I have resigned from my teaching position as it was affecting my health with a lot of work pressure with many weekends and Sundays demanding to report to work. I will be looking for jobs once I have completed my last working day in my present workplace. I also would like to spend some more time at the Taleem center as now we are not having strict restrictions and I can give my time for the Lord's work, which I thoroughly enjoy doing. The church of which I am a member has started in campus worship and it is wonderful to be able to go and be with church family and have fellowship. There have been few changes in the life of my siblings: my brother Zechariah (Zach) is pursuing his Masters from the Netherlands; he is right now working part time as well. Shekinah leaves for Thailand on the 1st of March; she also got engaged to Nathaniel Bouterse on the 12th of March. She is looking forward to her mission work as it is long overdue. Please pray for her travel and the Lord's work that she will be part of.

4. Dr Dickson, India

In India the pandemic continued in 2021, with a massive surge in COVID cases as a second wave from April to June. We lost a few servants of God, and many others went through a big crisis. We continued the online platform of training, for both farmers and veterinarians. While the pandemic brought many challenges, it helped us to network extensively across India and with the neighbouring countries.

I Professional Webinars for Veterinarians

We conducted 42 free professional webinars in the year 2021 with guest speakers covering various topics including both large and small animal medicine, and surgery. This empowered and educated hundreds of veterinarians across India and in the neighbouring countries. An average of 80 to 100 veterinarians attended each webinar.

II Online training for farmers and rural leaders

Caregivers' training (March 2021)

The ongoing pandemic put many farmers in distress, and they were not able to secure a sustainable income. Caregivers/Rural leaders were identified and given the responsibility to disseminate the knowledge obtained during the training with other farmers in their local villages. Some caregivers in attendance owned cultivable land and some owned small numbers of buffaloes, goats, and chickens. Despite the challenge of having limited smartphones and poor network connectivity in the rural areas, 10 to 12 farmers from various parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat attended the training. They were taught about common diseases and how to control them at the village level. They were also taught about common first aid medicines and deworming and vaccination protocol.

Goat caregivers training for Odisha and Chhattisgarh farmers (Nov – Dec 2021)

Ten sessions of Goat caregivers training were conducted for the benefit of caregivers from the states Odisha and Chhattisgarh. The farmers from this area had indicated that they needed training regarding ways to keep goats in a profitable way in remote locations. Most of farmers in attendance belonged to the Parja tribal people who live in the interior regions and speak their own language so we needed a translator. Moreover, few farmers had a mobile phone; they attended using only one phone shared among many, gathering at the top of mountain to get reception. The desire to learn new skills was evident among the participants.

III Distribution of first aid kits

We distributed 60 first aid kits to some of the caregivers in April 2021; these were caregivers who had attended our training programs. Farmers from Ghazipur (Uttar Pradesh) and Koraput (Odisha) benefitted from the first-round of distribution. Each first aid kit has an antiseptic cream, deworming medicine, mineral mixture, and other such useful medical provisions. The participants found it very useful and were able to administer the resources to their animals. Our volunteers conducted small in-person training while they distributed the kits to the farmers.

IV COVID relief measures

a. Free dry Ration

We distributed free rations to deserving people living in the interiors of Uttar Pradesh as the second wave severely affected millions.

b. Free N95 masks and sanitizers distribution

Over the course of the year, we distributed more than 3000 free N95 masks and hundreds of sanitizers to the people who needed it across various parts of the country to curb the spread of COVID19. In Delhi hundreds of masks were distributed to impoverished people living in Bamnoli, and Goyla Dairy to curb the spread of virus. We initially distributed these masks to our attendees at the computer centre and sewing centre, and later we distributed to the larger public. Hundreds of N95 masks were distributed to the blind students and blind women in Rajpur, Uttarakhand. During the second week of January 2021, Vetnet Foundation volunteers distributed free masks to 100 leprosy patients living in a village called Thokampatty in Dharmapuri Dt (Tamilnadu).

c. Medical help

Vetnet foundation rendered financial assistance to a few farmers who had a tough time during the second wave of COVID. The second wave caused the acute crisis of bed and oxygen shortage in many parts of India. Our staff Rekha was infected with COVID during the second wave and recovered by His grace.

V. JOSH virtual conference

Vetnet Foundation organised the first Annual Conference virtually on 9th October 2021. This was a two day programme organised via zoom, attended by 35 Christian Veterinarians across India and overseas. We had a few guest speakers challenging the audience to go into cross cultural ministry. Dr Muldoon was able to join, along with others from overseas. We felt God's presence and the abundant blessings upon these initiatives.

VI. Global VETNET chain prayer

Vetnet Foundation organised a one hour prayer via zoom every Tuesday at 6 pm/ 7 pm from 4th May 2021 which was well attended by the prayer warriors. This was started as a response to the second wave of COVID and is still continuing and unites believers in spirit.

VII. In person activities

World rabies day

We celebrated the World Rabies Day in Delhi on 28th September 2021 by inoculating dogs for free and did a Rabies Awareness program for the youth. Approximately ten people attended the seminar and clarified their doubts about rabies. It was an eye opener for everyone who heard about rabies first time. Rabies continues to be a dreadful disease in India killing approximately 20000 people every year. Ignorance about the disease is the main cause for the fatalities. Of the 59,000 annual human deaths estimated to occur globally due to dog-mediated rabies, about 35% occur in India. Over three-quarters of cases in India occur in rural communities with poor access to diagnostic facilities and post-exposure prophylaxis, which are key to preventing development of disease

We organised a free Veterinary Camp near Goyla Dairy on 2nd October 2021. We did free treatments, deworming, vaccinations, and a simple training about animal health. People living in the urban slum have shown their gratitude to the staff members of Vetnet Foundation.

A team of 3 veterinarians visited the villages around Varanasi and Ghazipur in the month of November 2021. This was done in collaboration with one development agency called UP transformation network.

Conclusion

We have had a busy year this year, despite the limitations caused by the pandemic. We thank God for the way He made it possible to complete one more year amidst the challenges of Covid-19. We are grateful to you for your continuous prayers, your financial support and encouragement to reach out to the underprivileged people in rural India using Veterinary skills.

5. Presbyterian Free Church of Central India (J Greensill from Samit Mishra)

1. Churches

We praise God for all the blessings that He has been bestowing upon us. This year was a mix of severe struggles and plenty of success. The second wave of Covid hit India very badly and we were shocked by the numbers of death around us. There were many among us who were infected and hospitalized, but all recovered and are keeping well. In this course, Rev. Shaym Babu lost his wife. The heart-breaking Covid happenings in India also allowed us to seek God's mercy to help us serve the community in practical manner. God provided us resources from PCEA, FCS, DVN, Word & Deed and CRWRF to enable us to serve more than 2000 families with one-month grocery kits and Covid-Immunity kits in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The service was well-accepted and appreciated in all the places where we have churches and church plants.

This year, we had also seen increase in leadership capacity. Rev. Vishal re-joined the presbytery and was installed as a pastor of Chhapara congregation. Sanjay, another graduate of PTS, was taken under care to help Rev. Samit Mishra in church planting and social activities. Rev. Samit Mishra accepted the call of Lakhnadon congregation and is busy in bringing back psalm singing and catechism classes for children, youth and new believers. This year he was also able to translate and publish Westminster Shorter and Larger Catechisms in Hindi. Rev. Emmanuel Ekka took the challenge to plant a church in Dhuma, a mission extension of FCS in 1970s. The church construction work in Kahani is completed and the believers are able to gather for worship and fellowship. In Kahani, after the completion of work, a mob attacked the church to stop us worshipping in the building. It was real chaos, but God helped us to lodge complaints against the mob to secure the property, as well as, our constitutional rights to gather and worship in church. Taking this into God's providence, the attack allowed the church to get its identity established before the government officials.

This year, we also completed the third phase of Diploma in Theology Course in Hindi. Soon, 12 students will be getting their diplomas. All the church planters in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are doing well in the field and there are lots of stories of God's regenerating work. The challenge ahead for the church is to get newly planted churches established and start functioning as formally as possible. Of course, financial sustainability in rural churches is still a far vision.

2. Mission Schools

The schools in Chhapara and Lakhnadon also have a mixed year of success and struggles. The Covid, yet again impacted the financial status of the parents, thus causing a great damage to the fee collection process and plans. Worse than that, the State Board and local examinations were cancelled. This caused many senior children, preparing for competitive exams, depression, as they did not receive the marks as per their preparation and expectations. Besides, the online teaching experience in rural context is not satisfactory. Only 50% of students have devices and network to attend online classes. In many ways, rural society has lost two years of education. Also, due to Covid caused unemployment, there are lots of poor students who had either dropped from the schools or joined a nearby government school. This is raising concerns for private schools with Hindi language, the student numbers keeps decreasing in these schools. Despite of all financial struggles, the management was able to plan and disburse salary to staff every month. PCEA's financial help with that regard is highly appreciated. The sponsorship fund was used to cover the fees and educational needs of more than 50 students, and half of the amount was used to sustain the regular salary of the staff.

The infrastructure development in Chhapara School is going on. It is bringing fruit as many parents are pleased to see the change; even the government officials are counting it as the school with best facilities available. Of course, the things are changing in schools in Post-Covid season, yet we rejoice in the fact that God has done a great miracle by transforming the school into a new look, his miracle will sustain the work and service of the church for many next decade. This year, the Education Board retired Mr. Alexander John from the post of the manager and appointed Rev. Samit as an Interim-Manager. Rev. Vishal has also been accepted as a member of the board. Mr. Pradeep Kumar accepted the challenge

and charge to oversee Lakhnadon Mission School and turn it to an English Medium school in a few years time. Mr. Michael John is leading the schools to the best of his potential, making the atmosphere lighter, more relational and social in this time of Covid-crises and stress. Mr. Sanjay Masih has gone through some really difficult health challenges in his family, yet he is faithfully and earnestly serving the school.

3. Lakhnadon Christian Hospital

We praise God for hearing the prayers of many in India and abroad to get the Lakhnadon Christian Hospital opened on 5th January 2022. The recommencement of the hospital brought joy and excitement to Christian and non-Christian community in and around Lakhnadon. The hospital has started with Dr. Sumit Singh (MBBS, MS), his wife Dr. S. Vincent (MBBS, DPM, MD), Dr. Stephan Baireto (MBBS), with full capacity for nursing care and paramedical facilities. Initially, the hospital aimed to function only with OPD services and, later, introducing surgery and in patient services. However, the hospital is still doing only OPD and anticipating surgery and completing nursing care service by the end of this month.

Mr. Nitiraj Nanda is leading the hospital in quite efficient manner. He is getting engaged with local church, government officials, and community very relationally. The doctors may take more time to get themselves associated with local people and develop relationships. The staffs are enthusiastic about serving the community, but will have to come out of the hospital campus often, as their relational involvement in the community will enhance the network of the hospital wider. In fact, all the authority and staff would have to intentionally and strategically promote the work of the hospital by being part of the community life.

The following two years are really crucial for the hospital, as the community had witnessed a great missionary medical service. This is a challenge for the hospital for now. We as church are standing with the hospital. Though we have no administrative relationship with the LCH and have no privilege of being part of the local Unit Management Committee, as the case used to be till 2007, yet we are committed to serve and help the hospital in whatever manner possible. Please continue to pray for the hospital authority and staff, the start seems to be slow but steady and we are hopeful of God again using it for His glory and purposes.

6. Annie Soper School, Peru (Robin Tso)

Since the retirement of Mrs Pilar Urquieta, Mr David Sanchez, has become the new Principal of Annie Soper. He has been actively seeking to promote the work and ministry of Annie Soper, through facebook and youtube videos. <https://youtu.be/MFFVoI55nyU> gives us a good introduction. We are grateful for the effort of David and others at the school.

David has also offered to meet with our congregations for missions night, through electronic means, giving us the opportunity to learn and to pray for the work. The Committee is currently considering a suitable time for the planned missions night.

He has also kindly provided a report on the progress of the school.

In the area of ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT and PLANNING, the following was established:

1. A.S. BIBLE VERSE:

Proverbs 22:6

“Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from it.”



2. A.S. VISION:

By 2023, we are a benchmark institution for the development of proficient skills, technology and the practice of Christian values, framed in high educational quality.

3. A.S. MISSION:

Provide quality education by competent teachers, through various skill sets, knowledge management and formative evaluation, in accordance with the development of science, technology, skills and multiple intelligences, within a culture and practice of Christian values.

4. STRATEGIC PILLARS OF DEVELOPMENT:

Love and faith in God with the study of His Word.
Science and technological development with innovation and creativity.
Bilingual, face-to-face and digital communication.
Leadership and business preparation.
Pre-university training.

TEACHERS TOTAL: 28

STUDENTS TOTAL: 329



San Andres School- Lima, Peru

Shortly after our ordinary Synod meeting last year, Mr César Morales Campos has kindly reached out to us desiring to renew contact with us. Since 2017, César has been serving as the headmaster of Colegio San Andres. We are thankful for the regular prayer points sent to us.

“Good to hear from you.

Thank you for keeping us in mind for prayer support.

We finished 2021 celebrating our Graduation Service. Because of restrictions we were not able to use our own facilities but a local church rented us their own.

Fifty nine students were part of Class 2021 "Bicentenario de la Independencia" (200 years of national independence). We felt very glad to celebrate that event even keeping social distance. So far we are preparing our facilities to welcome our students and staff after two years of virtual education. However, there are several improvements that should be made and we are not sure to finish them on time. We expect to start our academic year on March 1st but we are not sure about students' schedules yet because Peruvian Government is not clear about it. We have to wait until some official policies may be given. Regarding coronavirus, I can say that we are in the middle of the third wave. Omicron is spreading very fast among our population. Although it is not as deadly as it was last year it is still dangerous. Several members of our staff got the virus. Fortunately, they are getting better now. Two families of our students had a big loss last year (the father of each passed away) as a consequence of COVID.

When COVID-19 started in Peru we had 740 students enrolled in our school. We finished 2021 with only 610 students. That situation made a great impact on our economy. We pray for more students this year.

We trust that we are in God's hands and He will continue leading San Andres as He always does.”

7. International Mission to Jewish People (Robin Tso)

Mark and Rahel Landrum have been ministering to Sydney's Jewish community with IMJP faithfully, and we had the privilege of having them at our last ordinary Synod. Indeed, just like with the previous year, their work and ministry faced several challenges, due to the Covid restrictions. Rahel herself had faced some difficulties in returning back to Australia after the passing of her mother in Israel. We are thankful for the Lord's travelling mercies, in enabling Rahel to come home by the end of last year.

We are delighted to know that the Lord has blessed Mark and Rahel with a new team member, Tomer, featured in the Herald magazine.

Praise:

1. Praise God for Tomer, our new missionary trainee here in Sydney, who is Jewish himself and has connections with other Jewish people in the community and is trying to reconnect with them to share his faith.
2. Praise God for Lilli, an Israeli who came to know the Lord with Rahel before she left Israel to get back to Australia.
3. Praise God, He has kept us in good health to be able to continue sharing the Hope we have in the Messiah.

Prayer:

1. Tsvi is an Israeli Jewish man who has lived in Australia for a long time. Please pray for his physical and spiritual healing. At present he has so much pain that he cannot concentrate. Pray that Mark will have a great witnessing opportunity with him and that he soon receives Jesus as his Messiah.
2. Please pray for Alana, an unsaved Israeli who meets with Rahel. As she has several health problems, please pray she will be open not only to prayers but to the One who answers those prayers.
3. Please pray for Ronit, an unsaved young woman who is into Jewish mysticism, for her eyes to be open to the reality of Jesus as she studies the Bible with Rahel.

8. Shekinah, Project Video, Thailand

After I started working with Project Video online, I was handed over to coordinate with the Nepal team. The team is name Rejoice Media. There is a small center in Nepal of Project video where they have currently started to record short sermons and post it online. Also, they are planning to dub various other projects, like Abraham and Isaac video, in Nepali language. In the latest update I got they are also planning to record a Nepali song and make a video later, after the covid situation improves. Nepal studio has Mr. Ashish and Pastor Sharma as a team who have set up a studio in a Bible college.

We also had a beautiful development in India. Jasmine is our Field Coordinator received an email from Christopher who is from Dehradun itself and happens to be our old neighbour. He wanted to volunteer in Project Video. Jasmine interviewed him and later a meeting was scheduled with all three of us. I was also asked to do an analysis if he was fit to work with us. And, later it was decided that he can work with us from Dehradun. Since then, we have started a YouTube channel from Dehradun and the team is called 10:40 media.



Christopher has been working hard and I have been coordinating the work in Dehradun. We have together completed quite a few projects in Dehradun, and hope that in the future we can grow with a bigger team and complete more. We need prayers as we need more volunteers in Dehradun so more work of translation of videos can be done.

We recently completed the translation of ‘Creation to Christ’ series in Tamil language, here in Dehradun. Christopher found a person who has been living in Dehradun and knows Tamil, his name is Sam. We were able to record his voice. And I spoke to Mr. Isaac Gajendran who is a professor in P.T. Seminary who was able to help us with the translation on the script from English to Tamil.



Sam opened his house for us to record, and I was also able to help in the whole set-up and recording.

Below, I have added the links to the Youtube channel where the whole series of Creation to Christ is uploaded.

- Creation to Christ Part 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6H5CL4jtcsM&t=83s>
- Creation to Christ Part 2 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CkzQEeraFe0>
- Creation to Christ Part 3 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxEY8oaHLhE>
- Creation to Christ Part 4 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3e1F8eZO0w>
- Creation to Christ Part 5 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8YJmD5X4y0>
- Creation to Christ Part 6 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ct9G99AI-4>
- Creation to Christ Part 7 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lsp63OMIMyE>

We were also able to translate the Prodigal Son video to Hindi, in which Christopher was able to find someone who volunteered and recorded the passage Luke 15: 11 – 32. I have also added the link below of the video. Last month when we had a call with Jasmine our Field Coordinator, I also suggested that we can record this video in other Indian languages as it doesn't really need a script, the person just has to read the passage and record the audio. We are thinking on working on it and see if we can find people who are willing to volunteer.

Prodigal Son Hindi - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLoiwbgv1G8&t=1s>

Last year, I also help Interserve India with editing and creating a video which was based on the environment protection associated with the World Environment Day. For this I had to coordinate with

2-3 people from the ISV office and direct them with how to record the video and where the best place is to do so. I was also able to give my voice and say a line about the topic. With the help of Interserve partners, we were able to create a video on Environment for education purpose and motivate people on how we can Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

For the past year, I have been working on the monthly newsletter of Interserve and contributing in writing articles and news story based on national and international news. For the articles and stories, I interview Interserve partners and write their stories. Some stories are based on miracles they have seen and some where they have seen the lives of other people change around them through God's work. Some are based on their life and how they are working to spread the Good News.

Since the time I have joined Project Video, I have also been studying Thai which will prepare me for the time I reach Thailand already. Every Monday and Wednesday I had classes, and on Thursday I was practicing with one of my colleagues. Also on Wednesday we have an office meeting and I have been attending it every meeting, and there are discussions on what are the plans for the next week and also reports are shared of what has been done in the past week. Fridays we have Bible Study, but this week we had it on Wednesday and I lead the Bible study. I talked on Jonah's prayer from Jonah 2.

I am booked on a flight to Thailand on 1 March and I will be quarantining for 1 day in Bangkok and will be flying to Chiang Mai on 2 March. Shekinah arrived safely and has joined the Interserve and Project Video team in Thailand.

Mukti (Jim Klazinga)

Currently, the PCEA synod is partially supporting four young girls through the Mukti Sponsorship program: Shital Pandharbale, Stutti Katarnavare, Durga Ubale and Priyanka Shinde. Please continue to remember these girls in prayer.

From the Mukti website (<https://mukti.org.au>):

“By partnering in the Mukti Australia Sponsorship Program, you can transform the lives of vulnerable women and children. Education empowers children to grow into adults who can make choices about their future. Providing children with education enables them to have a brighter future and have broader career opportunities in the future.

Sponsorship provides:

Education or after school tuition (as appropriate)

Higher education opportunities

Health care and health education

Dental and medical checks

A safe place to live (India)

Educational books and school supplies

School uniform, shoes and school bag

School excursions

Christmas and Birthday gifts

and much more.”

Mission Awareness Tour

The mission awareness tour to India planned for the end of 2021 has been put on hold because of the pandemic.

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.The Synod thanks to Rev Jim Klazinga for editing the bi-monthly prayer notes and encourages congregations to use these notes.

3. Synod agrees that the PCEA Missions Committee, under the terms of the Rev J. A. Harman Memorial Fund (Est 1977), give the Synod Treasurer a standing instruction to donate annually the sum of \$600 from this fund towards the training of pastors at the Dumisani Theological Institute, until further notice, funds permitting.

4. As a result of the difficulties of maintaining the sponsorship scheme for the Chhapara Mission School, especially during the pandemic, a sub-committee was appointed last Synod. This committee, comprising of Alex Steel, David Kerridge and John Greensill, implemented change from a sponsorship scheme for individual students to a much simpler donation scheme. This enables the schools at Chhapara and Lakhnadon much more flexibility to apply funds where needed.

Synod commends the donation scheme to all, and thanks those who have continued to keep up their support.

5. Synod approve a memorial minute to Dr Helen Ramsay as follows:

Of all the women missionaries to leave the shores of Australia to serve the Lord, Dr Helen Ramsay was one of the most notable- not that she ever wanted or accepted any praise for her many years of service as a medical doctor in rural India. Helen was the only daughter of Rev M. C. Ramsay, who ministered on the Manning for almost thirty years. Helen grew up in Taree, and in 1952 she graduated MBBS from the University of Sydney. Helen went to serve the Lord in India in 1955. She ministered at a small rural clinic in Chhapara, MP, from where she travelled out to villages for eye camps and to train village health workers. She travelled by bullock cart to these villages, one of which can now be reached by a sealed road. Helen came home on extended leave 1970 to look after her ageing parents. In 1976 she returned to India to serve another nine years. She contracted Multiple Sclerosis and spent her latter years in a nursing home in Sydney. She maintained a prayerful interest in the work in India and rejoiced when brethren from India were able to visit her nursing home. She died on 12 October 2021 at the age of 93.

Dr Helen's missionary service in India impacted many in our churches, and a number ended up on mission fields. Young people grew up with a deep sense of the importance of 'foreign missions' through listening to Dr Helen's talks at Mission Gift Evenings. Her greatest impact however, was upon the lives of many in India, from where the following tribute was sent: 'We are thankful to the Lord for sending her into our midst and enabling her to serve faithfully and joyfully, despite the lack of many comforts and privileges of her homeland. She was a perfect demonstration of the gospel. In fact, it was her service that still makes our proclamation of the gospel much easier and accepted in many villages today'.

6. When mission donations are to missions supported by the Synod, congregational treasurers are urged to send funds through the Synod treasurer.

7. Synod recommends that our churches hold mission events at which missionaries on the field could be invited online to outline and update their ministry, and field questions from church folk- as we have done at Synod. This would be undertaken on a Presbytery basis.

8. Synod adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2022/23 and expresses its general agreement with the estimates for this period.

INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS

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

Due to the covid restrictions both interstate and internationally, much work of the committee was curtailed in many ways without in-person meetings occurring. Many denominations have either postponed their Synod meetings/General Assemblies or moved to online platforms with no visitors. However, with the relaxation of restrictions and the reopening of the international border, we look forward to renewing our interchurch relations with the various churches.

1. The International Conference of Reformed Churches

As mentioned in the previous report, it was decided to re-schedule the General Meeting of the ICRC to be held in Windhoek, Namibia, from October 12 – 19, 2022. The conference will centre around the theme "Training the church for ministry". However, the committee is concerned about the covid restrictions for international travels, along with logistical difficulties in getting into Namibia. A letter has been sent to the ICRC asking for postponement and change of location for the ICRC meeting. We have also asked for the ability to join in electronically if the decision remains unchanged.

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

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

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

We have received an invitation from them to attend their 88th General Assembly, which is scheduled to meet June 8-14, 2022, on the campus of Eastern University, 1300 Eagle Road, St. Davids, Pennsylvania. Rev Jim Klazinga may be in Canada about this time and if so has agreed to attend their General Assembly on our behalf, or by electronic means if physical attendance is not possible.

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

Rev John Forbes participated, by video link, in the Annual General Meeting of the RPCA Presbytery on 1st May 2021. He was invited to observe their proceedings and was given opportunity to bring greetings and an update about the PCEA. Rev. Andy McCracken had recently joined from the RPCNA to minister in their Frankston congregation and was able to attend the PCEA Synod the following week as their representative.

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

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

Regrettably, due to the covid restrictions in the past 2 years, overseas travelers were not allowed to enter Australia. As a result, the RPCNA could not send short-term missionaries. We hope to liaise with them regarding future opportunities of this admirable ecumenical endeavor.

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

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

We are grateful to the SPC for their support to, and interaction with, the Ulverstone congregation throughout the years. Last year, Rev Robin Tso was able to give 3 weeks of pulpit supply to the Launceston congregation, and to bring greetings on our behalf.

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

We have received an invitation to attend their Synod in Launceston, from the 1st to 6th of May 2022. Rev Jim Klazinga has kindly agreed to attend on Monday 1st May to represent us.

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

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).

3.3 Presbyterian Church of Australia

3.4 Associated Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. 2018

4. The World Reformed Fellowship (WRF).

The committee would like to draw your attention to their General Assembly in Florida, USA, from the 27th to the 30th of October 2022. Useful information about WRF is on their website <wrfnet.org>

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 appoint Rev Jim Klazinga as its delegate to OPC's General Assembly in Pennsylvania, June 8-14, 2022 and agrees to contribute appropriately to his economy airfare and travel insurance if he is able to physically attend.

PRESBYTERY REPORTS

NORTHERN PRESBYTERY REPORT

Moderator: Rev. Jim Klazinga **Clerk:** Rev. John Forbes

	Elders/ Deacons	Communicants				Typical Attendance of different persons each Lord's Day		Church Community by Age Total attendance if everyone present who worships at least once a month plus the housebound but not including visitors passing through.								Baptisms	Sunday School classes/ pupils	Youth midweek participants
		2020	+	-	2021	2020	2021	>4	4-11	12-18	19-30	31-45	46-64	65+	Total			
Brisbane																		
Northern Rivers	4/4	36	0	0	36	30	35	1	6	1	0	3	4	35	50	0	0	0
Hastings	3/1	27	3	1	29	45	65	6	11	9	6	10	6	26	74	5	2/18	N/A

Brisbane: We give thanks to God for His continuing purposes being worked out in the life of our congregation during 2021.

Services: Services were held most Sundays at our Emma Street building at 10 am and 5 pm. The livestreaming of services continues, for use by those unable to attend the services in person. We continue to accommodate seniors 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 regularly, on average about once every other month. The congregation has been blessed by the consistent presence of visitors at our worship services, a number of whom have been attending regularly.

Membership: Ben and Claire Klazinga were blessed with the birth of their first-born child, Samuel Phillip, born 20 October. He was baptized 5 December. Two people were welcomed as communicant members in 2021: Stephen Smith and Claire Klazinga. We rejoiced with Stephen Smith and Jessie Carswell, who announced their engagement in December. No members of the congregation died, and no disjunction certificates were requested during 2021.

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, and as the Safe Church officer. 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 2021.

Deacons' Court: The Deacons' Court is made up of the pastor, the two other elders, and the three deacons. Keith Schmidt continues to serve as clerk, while Stewart Carswell serves as treasurer. Thanks to the generous giving of our members, our contributions are more than our expenses. Our surplus has made it possible to continue making repairs on the church property, and improvements on the manse. We continue to collect money for our Diaconate Fund, which is available to help members and others who find themselves confronted with a financial emergency. Both the Session and the Deacons' Court held regular meetings, all of which were on zoom.

Education and Fellowship: Our Sunday morning pre-service psalm singing class continues during the school year, as well as the Sunday School. The young adult group met when they could for study and fellowship, led by Julie Schmidt and Matthew Schmidt. A younger youth group also met, led by Lawrence and Mary Buckingham. These groups are made up of members of our congregation, as well as having some regular participants from other churches.

Two fortnightly mid-week Bible Studies met on zoom on alternate weeks.

The minister led the occasional Pastor's Class during the Sunday School time, and a men's Discussion Group, held occasionally following the Sunday evening worship service. Women would meet 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, focussing mainly on the members and activities of the congregation

Church Camp: The Annual Family Camp was not able to be held at Lennox Head in NSW, but we did find a venue Queensland: the PGL Adventure Camps in Kindilan, located near Redland Bay. We met from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon on the second weekend in December. Rather than one speaker, we had three: Rev. Paul Seiler gave a talk on the divinity of Christ on Friday night, on Saturday morning member Hainian Yu gave a presentation on Bach's St. Matthew and St. John's passions, and the pastor led the Sunday morning worship service.

Northern Rivers: The year 2021 was a difficult one for all of us. The COVID situation, which had eased a little at the end of 2020, resurfaced and brought with it doubt and perplexity. Restrictions on worship, on travel, and the basic functions of everyday life left us jaded and anxious, hampering fellowship and gathering to be fed by the Word.

Even so, the Lord has been gracious to us, and we have been brought through this to what seems, at the time of writing, to be brighter times.

Services have continued in Maclean, either in person or online when locked down. However, due to various factors including COVID restrictions and dwindling numbers due to age and infirmity, the services in Grafton, which had been paused in 2020, were suspended indefinitely. The issue of reigniting a witness in Grafton has been reviewed throughout 2021, culminating in the decision of the Deacons' Court to request that the property be sold in 2022. Regular maintenance is costly on all Northern Rivers properties. It is anticipated that other buildings will need major renovation work done in coming years. A redistribution of resources is considered practical, especially as cash assets bring low returns.

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.

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.

Mid-week Bible studies were intermittent in 2021. When they were held they were a real blessing in being able to gather together in the Word.

The Annual Youth Camp had been such a blessing for the years it was held at John and Judy Greensill's farm at Palmer's Channel. Whilst the 2020 Camp was cancelled, we were able to host the 2021 Camp. The speaker was a local Reformed Baptist pastor, Tim Attwood, who has been, along with their assistant pastor, Dan Gilbert, a great encouragement and help to us, giving supply and sharing in ideas to develop the work in Maclean. One of these ideas is a Reformed resource centre/library for a growing number of people interested in Reformed doctrines. Renovations of the front room of the Hall (once the Maclean Book Nook) have commenced with these brothers' help to realise this vision.

In a year of adversity, we have sought the Lord to sustain us. At the time of writing, we have seen the signs of His continued presence with us as we have a new family worshipping with us morning and evening, the hope of another family coming regularly, and a Sunday school recommenced after many years in abeyance. Morning service times have changed to 10am accommodate this with a morning tea and lessons following.

Hastings: Public worship services are held in Wauchope each Lord's Day at 10am and 4pm and follow a simple format with a focus on the Word of God and singing of psalms. We are thankful to the Lord that the congregation appears to evidence warm fellowship and a sincere desire to grow in God's word, and we have been encouraged by the addition of new families.

A video and audio live-stream facility has been beneficial and well used by congregants who are unable to attend services in person. It has also proved to be an outreach to those outside the congregation.

Two midweek meetings are held each Wednesday. The bible study and prayer meeting at 10am is attended by 6-10 people and followed with coffee and fellowship. It's not such a convenient time for those in education or employment so we also have a 7pm Westminster Confession study and prayer which is attended by adults and some teens.

A congregational lunch has been introduced and held on each fifth Sunday of the month. This is well attended and provides another context for fellowship.

Sunday School & Youth: We are very thankful to have an eager group of young disciples attending the services and Sunday school at the Hastings. Following a time of fellowship after the service, the children gather together and after an interpretation, recital and singing of a memory work Psalm and a prayer by our superintendent Glen Hamilton, we break off into two classes for age appropriate learning. This year Chris Freebairn worked through Catechism lessons previously prepared by Tom Reeve with the older group, typically Year 6 and above. Mary Forbes uses colouring in and word puzzle materials to engage the children in a character study of Joseph. Our year was somewhat disrupted again with restrictions but all the children managed to learn material and received certificates for their memory work and a book prize.

As an end of term celebration the children, parents and members of the congregation participated in a Sunday School activity day on our church premises on Saturday 11th December 2021. With the usual trip to Pilot Beach in Dunbogan not possible due to the restrictions it was decided to make the most of the church premises where, thankfully, people were allowed to continue to gather freely. We were blessed with fine weather and enjoyed an afternoon of games, races, food and fellowship.

Kindee: A service in Kindee continues at 7pm on the 3rd Lord's Day of each month, regularly attended by 8 locals from Kindee and Long Flat. Some others travel from Wauchope to support (approx 40km).

CENTRAL PRESBYTERY REPORT

Moderator: Rev. Dr. Dennis Muldoon. **Clerk:** Rev. George Ball.

The Central Presbytery met on two occasions during the year - on 15th September 2021 and 15th March 2022. The planned visitation of St. George's had to be postponed due to Covid restrictions. We plan to conduct it this year on 14th September 2022.

Following are the reports submitted on 15th March 2022.

The Manning: With Pastor George the elders are Clive Alley, Peter Smith, and Trevor Leggott. We have managed reasonably well with the coming and going of Covid restrictions during the year and it is very refreshing to be able to meet now with no restrictions. George's pulpit ministry is very well received, and we continue with services by telephone, as well as on-line live and recorded video services. There are two services every Lord's Day and two Bible studies during the week. With some appropriate alterations we managed to maintain our communion services on the months with a 5th Sunday. Plans are to continue our regular prayer mornings on the Saturday before communion.

The elders meet monthly and, together with the pastoral oversight of the pastor, look to maintain contact and visit members as regularly as mutually convenient. There are presently 37 members and 10 adherents, with an average total attendance of about 48 persons for both services on the Lord's Day. A

few of our aged and infirm find it difficult to attend services, and it's good to be able to provide the telephone and live-stream services for these folk.

Overall, there is a good spirit of fellowship amongst the congregation, but there is a recognised need for younger people and families to find a spiritual home in our church. The elders recognise the difficulty of encouraging folk to join in the fellowship of the church in this day and age. We none the less continue to seek the Lord and explore how He might lead for the future.

The Deacons meet every second month. Deacons, and others in the congregation at times, have given help and counsel to folk with housing relocations, furniture, and equipment. Time, skills, materials, transport, and tools etc. are offered freely and put to good use. Deacons seek to keep a close eye on church property and have upgraded several things in the past year.

The congregation supports the ministry and, with many giving through direct debit, our giving has increased in the last year, despite Covid restrictions.

We continue to support Manning Area Christian Education (MACE) which funds a Scripture teacher in the two local High Schools. A member, Young Lee, teaches Scripture full time in several local primary schools.

Mission is a major interest of the congregation with visiting speakers, and the profits from the regular garage sales do direct to various missions. This past year support was given to 18 different areas of interest both at home and overseas.

The Hunter: Due to the covid-19 related restrictions, Lord's Day worship services were conducted for an extended period via video link. Once restrictions were relaxed and physical attendance permitted, worship services resumed as usual at Raymond Terrace (am) and Cardiff (am & pm). Rev Tso preached through the Gospel of Matthew in the mornings and the ten commandments and later James in the evenings.

Our sick, aged, and other interested persons accessed the Lord's Day worship services in increased numbers. A combined count of audio & video listeners/viewers was about 4000 in 2021 compared to 1500 in 2019. Some of the persons accessed services from interstate, the United Kingdom, North America, and Canada. We are thankful for Rev Tso's faithful and challenging ministry.

Combined Raymond Terrace area-Newcastle area prayer meetings/Bible studies were conducted mid-week via video link. Rev Tso led helpful studies on Romans 1-5, and the early chapters of Exodus. Prayer for the persecuted Church world-wide, local and world mission, our sister PCEA congregations, and spiritual growth have been priorities. Ladies Bible studies were suspended due to the covid-19 restrictions.

Rev Tso conducted the baptism of two infants: Charlotte O'Dell and Jonathan Oringo. The conduct of the Cardiff all age Sunday School was also significantly limited.

Limited young people/young adults fellowship was conducted by the Minister and his wife in their home. We are grateful to the Lord for their hospitality.

Mr Tasman Ellem was received into communicant membership. There were two deaths, Mrs Beryl Murray and Mrs Tosia Cribbin. The membership roll is static - it was 47 persons in 2021 compared to 47 in 2018. Typical Lord's Day attendance (including online access) remained static at an average of 65 during both 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Local mission activities were generally impeded by the pandemic restrictions. Almost 100 Samaritan's Purse boxes of donated gifts were collected at Raymond Terrace which operated as an area collection centre.

Mission presentations included the Taleem Centre, AIM and the International Mission to Jewish People which featured at Synods' Mission Night. Each speaker provided helpful insight into the challenges and blessings of such endeavours.

The visiting preachers, including Rev George Ball and Rev Don Burgess, were appreciated.

Session enjoyed continued harmony in seeking to serve as Christ's under shepherds, though in a limited capacity. Members of Session and Deacons' Court shared the responsibility of maintaining contact with the congregation. The valuable contribution of Mr Alex Steel (assessor elder) is gratefully acknowledged.

With humble gratitude we ascribe all glory to the 'Mighty Fortress', our Sovereign God who has graciously blessed and kept us throughout 2021.

St. George's: St. George's was able to provide three worship services each week, but venues and times varied because of Covid 19 restrictions as well as repair works on the church steeple. We were unable to use the church building from the end of February until the end of the year. Thankfully we were able to rent rooms just one block away which most adequately met our needs.

When unable to meet, the Minister with the help of others including Rev. Robin Tso, were able to pre-record complete worship services from the manse, including congregational singing from earlier days. These were broadcast, at the set service times via the internet and telephone. In September approximately 350 services were downloaded from the church website which included approximately 50 from 11 overseas countries.

We were not able to observe the Lord's Supper in 2021 because of our circumstances.

Restoration work on the church steeple was held up for 6 months. Stage 1 of the works was completed in December and a dismantling notice was issued for the scaffolding. We returned to meet in the building on 9th February 2022.

The congregation continues in generally good spirits. We are thankful to God for His grace toward us. We are thankful for His provision of a faithful minister and opportunity to access the public worship of God.

Mount Druitt: By the grace of God, the work in Mount Druitt congregation has continued for another year. There are two services every Lord's Day at 11 am and 5 pm: two Sunday School classes and two Bible Classes: and a Tongan fellowship at 10 am. A prayer meeting is held every Friday. The minister conducts a weekly service in a nursing home each Friday. The Covid 19 restrictions have proved a challenge. One Tongan lady was welcomed into membership. The Tongan members have been distressed because of the volcano which affected Tonga. They are thankful for the good rain that has since fallen which has helped to wash away the volcanic ash. There are plans for an election of a new deacon(s). There is the need for a new treasurer.

It is intended that future congregational reports will include the number of members, adherents, and children; and the Clerk will keep a dedicated record of such.

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY REPORT

Moderator: Rev Dr Dennis Muldoon **Clerk:** Dr Donald Ramsay

Southern Presbytery	Elders / Deacons	Communicants					Typical Attendance of different persons each Lord's Day		Church Community By Age Total attendance if everyone present who worships at least once a month plus the housebound but not including visitors passing through.								Baptisms	Sunday School classes/pupils	Youth midweek partn.
		2020	+	-	2021	Deaths	2020	2021	<4	4-11	12-18	19-30	31-45	45-64	65+	Total			
All Nations	2/0	68					105												
Carrum Downs	0/0	9	2	2	9	0	19	23	0	3	3	3	4	9	8	30	0	2/5	0
Gedlong	1/0	10	0	1	9	1	9	10	2	0	0	0	2	2	11	17	0	0/0	0
Knox	4/0	29	2	2	29	0	32	32	0	3	6	2	10	6	16	43	0	2/8	0
Narre Warren	3/0	23					33												
Ulverstone	1/1	23	0	2	21	0	35	35	4	1	3	9	4	8	6	35	0	2/6	15
Total	9/3	162	4	7	68	1	233	100	6	7	12	14	20	25	41	125	0	7/45	15

This past year has brought some significant challenges for Southern Presbytery and its congregations. The impact of COVID-19 and the associated restrictions have been wide-spread but different for each congregation. Worship services have been disrupted, attendance has dropped, and finances have been adversely affected, particularly in metropolitan Melbourne. This has been compounded by the dysfunction within Southern Presbytery which prevented the presbytery from meeting throughout the year to address these problems and provide much needed support. Presbytery is particularly grateful for the actions of Synod and its members who intervened to restore order, and to appoint assessors to strengthen and provide assistance in these extraordinary circumstances. We are now beginning to experience the hope that comes from perseverance in times of tribulation (Romans 5:3-5).

ALL NATIONS

(Session Clerk – RS Ward)

The All Nations Congregation had a difficult year with constant lockdowns and outbreaks in the south-east (Dandenong-Cranbourne). About a dozen church families were badly affected, mainly through their children. In addition, we had to vacate our premises in April when the long-delayed building work began. We could not secure alternative premises other than the use of the Narre Warren premises for an afternoon service for which we paid \$100pw. We were grateful for this although it is not so suitable for our people. Mr Yoa and some of the people attended the Carrum Downs morning service, and Mr Yoa was active in pastoral care and livestreaming. We ran four Biblical Counselling sessions during the year which have been reported in the Banner and were greatly valued. Sunday School was not possible. The largest physical attendance during the year was 90, but commonly much less. Offerings suffered (averaging \$769pw) but carry over of JobKeeper and special receipts meant we managed satisfactorily with about \$30,244 in general funds at year end. The building project began officially with the receipt of a State Government infrastructure grant of \$500,000 on 12 April. However, this corresponded with serious building material delays. By the end of June, the demolition and underground sewerage/drainage were the main works completed. Some minor design changes were made to reduce costs. The slab was poured in September, fire service in October and structural steel in November. February 2022 saw distinct progress and the timber frame is virtually complete as of 11 March 2022. Our builder, who also built the Carrum Down church, is most co-operative and generous. The budgeted cost of \$632,000 including car-park extensions is likely to be exceeded but that has been provided for. Anecdotally one hears in Christian circles that the lockdowns have impacted younger people and their attendance has dropped off. We trust this will not occur at All Nations when, hopefully, we can occupy the premises in July. The upper floor consists of separately accessed offices for African organisations, and the rent will benefit the congregation; the enlarged hall, kitchen and toilet facilities occupy the ground floor.

CARRUM DOWNS

Dr Ward had kept in regular contact with Mr Hall during the year, and Mr and Mrs Yoa were regular attenders at the 10.30am service for much of year after the All Nations building was unavailable. Mr

Hall had worked steadily during the year developing contacts with people round about, welcoming new arrivals and extending hospitality including after the service. In number and potential, the work is equal to a number of our established congregations. The report showed local offerings at \$25,572 (last year \$20,018). Funds at bank of \$22,654 (last year \$26,926).

Mr Hall provided the following report on the work in 2021.

The Carrum Downs congregation, when legally possible, met for public worship each Lord's Day at 10.30am & 3pm. The congregation observed the Lord's supper on three occasions: 21st March 20th June, and 28th November.

During the year seven new people began to attend the services. There are now thirty people who are attendees, twenty-two of which are regular attenders. The fellowship among the people has strengthened. The tea & biscuits after the morning service, the opportunity for folks to have Sunday lunch at the manse, and other social events have all been beneficial.

The Sunday school continued through the year with four children attending, drawn from two families. Regular outreach to the local community also continued throughout the year.

The prospects for 2022 are good. Plans are in place to develop the work, including a young adults bible class, a mid-week face-to face-prayer meeting (which has been requested), further development of our outreach is planned, a church cleaning roster, and possibly psalms practice & fellowship evenings.

GEELONG

While the Geelong congregation has been vacant for more than 8 years, God has continued to provide for the members and adherents that faithfully worship Him here. Weekly Sunday services were held at 10:00 am throughout the year on all but the 10 occasions when COVID-19 restrictions prevented this. Our small numbers and generous building meant that we were able to meet when larger congregations in rural Victoria were not. As a consequence, we sometimes attracted visitors from other local churches when they were unable to meet. The pulpit has been filled regularly this year by reformed ministers from Geelong and one of our senior church members. We have enjoyed encouraging and challenging preaching series throughout the year on Genesis, Revelation, Mathew 5, and holy living. Our Interim Moderator, Rev Andres Miranda has only been able to conduct the Lord's supper twice this past year due to COVID restrictions on travel from metropolitan Melbourne and his other congregational commitments. We look forward to the possibility of more regular visits this year.

The congregation was saddened by the passing of Mr Gordon Thompson early in 2021. He was a faithful member of the congregation and happy to serve in many ways around the church, including auditing the church accounts for more than 10 years.

By God's providence, the manse was leased to a Christian family at the beginning of 2021. This happened unexpectedly, as the property was not listed for rent at the time, and their desire to continue renting for several years provides a significant measure of financial security for the congregation. As a result, considerable interior work was required to replace or repair some worn out furnishings and fittings. The new tenants were happy to undertake much of this work themselves, with the church providing the necessary materials. Through the generosity of the congregational giving to regular offerings and mission work, we were able to provide \$831 to support various missions, as well as \$2,000 to assist the Narre Warren congregation's request for stipend relief.

A regular feature of our fellowship time after morning worship is our discussions with the preacher on his sermon and on other topics of particular interest. This helps to reinforce the practical applications of each message. A loving commitment to one another and a strong desire for corporate worship and fellowship has grown out of the many challenges we have faced. As always, we give thanks to our Lord and Saviour for His blessings and protection throughout 2021 and pray that He will enable us to remain faithful to Him in the year ahead and conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).

KNOX

At Knox we have had as steady a year as one can, given 19 weeks when we could not meet face to face. Everyone was keen to be back when the rules permitted. Our older folk are now all triple vaxed. Our

ministry intern Dr John Lee has preached almost every morning and evening service each Lord's Day since May with much acceptance. The morning is live-streamed initially on Facebook but latterly on YouTube; details at www.knoxpcea.org.au . On 12 December 2021 John Lee and Rahul Raniga were ordained and inducted as elders by Rev Tut Yoa following great unanimity, with Rev. Rowland Ward inducted to the eldership on the same occasion. We have had a number of visitors during the year and three are currently regular attenders. We ran our mid-week Prayer Meeting & Study via Zoom in conjunction with Carrum Downs with Rev. Ian Hall and John Lee taking most of these, but only managed three communions and one luncheon during the year. Elder Chris White ran Sunday School and youth activities along with other helpers. Financially the work was well supported. Plans for the new year include further outreach efforts, although the present surge in Omicron cases is making people wary of meeting others. Our morning Lord's Day service will continue to be livestreamed and a refresh of our media presence is planned.

On the financial front offerings were almost exactly the same, investment income was maintained and capital values rose and some property maintenance was completed. There was a surplus of some \$9,417 plus rent from the manse after meeting commitments to All Nations and Carrum Downs and gifts to MERF, Reformation Translation Fellowship, Mukti Australia for India and Sri Lanka, and Synod Stipend Fund.

NARRE WARREN

Projects

There is still interest from Optus Company for the installation of a telecommunication tower in the church premises. This is a summary of the most recent activities on the Church property: Geotechnical engineers visited the site on December 10, 2021 to perform soil tests. The inspection team visited the proposed site again on January 27, 2022. The underground locator visited the site on March 1, 2022 to verify services and drainage under the proposed Optus compound. If conditions remain favourable for the project, construction is generally forecast 12 weeks after the completion of all necessary observations, which is expected to happen in May or June. This may change depending on how things go with the Council and unforeseen delays.

Pastoral

With reference to the life of the church, we can report that God continues to supply diverse resources for the constant development of our faith and Christian personality in the Gospel. Women's study groups meet biweekly at church, under the leadership of Betty Holmes. The literature chosen by the study facilitator always brings about a closer contact with God and the fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures. The leader of this group receives support, supervision, encouragement, and a personal word of appreciation in one-on-one meetings throughout the year. The other study group continues to meet through virtual platforms and has also been a steady source of spiritual strength and theological learning for all participants. The first block of study for this year is focused on a practical analysis of the problem of evil in God's creation. The study is based on a thorough analysis of Romans 9:22-23, which aims to show there is a biblical solution, and that calling it a "problem" is a misstatement. The study is also intended to help believers cultivate a theological response to suffering in the world.

This year the church has received three visitors, an adult couple in their sixties and a university student finishing her last year of training to become a school teacher. They all stated that participation in our worship was an uplifting experience and that the group of believers in Narre Warren made a good impression on them. We are also sad to report that the health of some members of the congregation is rapidly deteriorating and, therefore, active participation in public worship is no longer an option for them. The leadership is in regular contact with the family, and especially with church- members facing health problems.

Among other things, our ministry also includes personal visits as well as supporting the growth of congregational relationships in a context of hospitality. This takes place at least once a month in the pastor's home. A brief comment on the leadership of Narre Warren.

With genuine concern, the Session/Deacons uphold their commitments to the church with integrity and with an attitude of mutual respect and cooperation, always striving to be an example of godliness to the flock in their care.

Financial

On a financial note, we can only reiterate the urgency of our financial circumstances, which have regained a degree of stability thanks to the efforts and relief contributions of the Deacons' Courts in the South Presbytery, including a generous donation of \$1, 000 from Brisbane leadership. Relief contributions requested by NW on 8/11/2021 were immediately supported by the Deacon Courts of SP (\$7,000) and Synod (\$8,000), for a total of \$15,000. An additional \$2,000 has been received from Geelong (agreed on 9/2/2022) and Ulverstone (agreed on 6/3/2022). Financial pressures did not allow Knox deacons to contribute at this time.

ULVERSTONE

The Ulverstone congregation continues its ministry on the North West coast of Tasmania. The congregation commenced in 1965 when it was received into the Southern Presbytery of the PCEA. At the time of writing this report we have 24 members and 12 adherents. Our weekly Lord's Day 10:30 AM service is attended by around 35 in either onsite attendance or audio connection. Since the pandemic started the service has been available to the housebound on the Zoom software. With the border opening in December some families have been in greater isolation.

The services over the last year have been led by visiting ministers from our church, visiting men from other parts of Tasmania, or by our local elder. After the service there is a time of morning tea and fellowship. This is followed in school term by a concurrent adult study and Sunday School. The adult study has been going through the book "When Grace comes home" by Rev Terry Johnson. The Sunday School has six students in two classes and we continue to be very encouraged by the work of the students. In recent months we have restarted the monthly luncheons which provide a time of additional fellowship.

On the 6th March we had a particularly special service led by our Interim Moderator Rev Andres Miranda. This included the Baptisms of one adult and three children, these being Matilda Hamilton, Kyra and Lewis Hamilton, and Logan Keast. We also welcomed Wilma Fry and Andrew Hamilton into membership via letters of transfer.

The congregation has been without a full-time pastor for five years but we have an ongoing interest in the ministry of Mr Zach Dotson of the USA, with whom we have obtained a Sponsorship Agreement. Zach is currently waiting for a response to his Visa application. We trust that we will know the outcome of that soon. We hope that they can here in person, for example to celebrate the 100th birthday of Mrs Jean Hearps (in June).

Meanwhile we have very good contact with Zach and his wife Wilma and their children. One example of this is the monthly online Saturday morning meeting. During this meeting Zach has been leading a study in the book "The Christian's High Calling" by Rev Maurice Roberts. It has been a special blessing to us.

A number of other meetings of the congregation continue, among these are the Thursday midweek meeting, Friday fellowship night and camps, Ladies WMU and craft meeting, and annual winter car rally. We were able to do neighbourhood outreach in December last year. Part of this included distribution of TBS Bible text calendars.

Our missions' interest has included a special collection last year for Rev Babu. We are conscious of God's ongoing care for us in challenging times and circumstances. A number in the congregation have increasing frailty and disability and we pray for and support them as best we can. We are blessed with a range of ages and experiences and this creates a rich fellowship.

CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

Members: G.D. Ball (Convener), I. Hall, J. Klazinga (Banner), D.K. Muldoon.

John Newton wrote a letter to a Mr. and Mrs. Bull on February 24, 1778.

“The whole system of my politics is summed up in that one sentence, ‘The Lord reigneth!’

The times look awfully dark indeed; and as the clouds grow thicker, the stupidity of the nation seems proportionally to increase. If the Lord had not a remnant here, I should have very formidable apprehensions. But He loves His children; some are sighing and mourning before Him, and I am sure He hears their sighs, and sees their tears. I trust there is mercy in store for us at the bottom; but I expect a shaking time before things get into a right channel, before we are humbled, and are taught to give Him the glory.

The state of the nation, the state of the churches, both are deplorable. They who should be praying, or too many of them, are disputing and fighting among themselves. Alas! How many professors are more concerned for the mistakes of government . . . than for their own sins! When will these things end”?

Though Newton wrote more than two centuries ago - when the American colonies were in revolt and Australia had recently been discovered by Europeans - he packs a lot of useful wisdom into these few lines. We could all agree with him that the times ‘look awfully dark indeed’. We are still lingering under the effects of the pandemic that has cast a cloud over everyone’s lives. We have witnessed devastation and loss in Brisbane and the Northern Rivers as many have lost homes, possessions, businesses, even their lives, because of the catastrophic floods of March 2022. The clouds grow darker still as we witness the horrendous carnage, destruction and distress in Ukraine which has all the potential of sparking another world war. The days indeed are dark.

WAR and DISASTERS: These things should sadden us, but not surprise us. Jesus predicted that in this age we will hear of wars and rumours of wars, for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains (Mat. 24:6-9). Every war reminds us of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. In Revelation 6 John saw four horses with riders (released concurrently). He saw a white horse, its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer (vs. 2). He saw a bright red horse representing suffering and bloodshed (vs. 4). He saw a black horse representing famine, hunger, and inflation (vs. 5-6). He saw finally a pale (green/grey) horse representing disease and death (vs. 8). What does the white horse and its rider represent? Opinions are divided. Some (e.g., Hendriksen) see the rider as representing Christ because of the similarities to the vision in chapter 19:11-16 of Christ on a white horse. However, it seems better to see the horses as a quartet - a gang of four - all wreaking havoc, destruction, and disaster on the earth. The white horse therefore represents the lust for power, conquest, and oppression. The world, in probably every century, has seen the release of this horse and heard its galloping hooves as it ruthlessly pursued the conquest of its victims. We see it today in Ukraine.

Does this therefore mean that in this age evil men, evil rulers, and evil powers prevail? Certainly not. Remember the vision of the four horsemen is a continuation of the vision in chapter 5. There John saw a vision of the Lamb which had been slain (the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David) take the scroll amidst the praises of heaven. The scroll has been described as God’s plan for judgement and salvation, the blueprint of human history. Because of the Lamb’s death, resurrection, and ascension, He has conquered and overcome death and Hades. He is now seated at God’s right hand far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:20-22). The Lamb reigns on the throne. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Matt. 28:18). He alone has the authority to execute the plan and will of God. Newton was right when he wrote, ‘The whole system of my politics is summed up in that one sentence, “The Lord reigneth!” That must be our clear and absolute conviction too.

Significantly, it's the reigning Lord who opens the seals that release the four horses and riders which are responsible for the mayhem. They are clearly under His authority. They cannot move a muscle without His permission. They do His will. Yet, as Scripture insists, He is not the author of sin; yet sin is under His control.

His relationship to Satan and evil is illustrated in the book of Job. Satan was granted a long, but limited leash: he was not permitted to destroy Job's life. Likewise, these horses and riders are granted a limited authority - restricted to 'a fourth of the earth' (vs. 8). This means that while many people on earth will be directly affected by calamity and disaster, the majority will live largely unaffected lives.

What then is the purpose of the horses and riders? Why does the Lord allow these calamities to happen? One commentator writes 'these destructive events are brought about by Christ for both redemptive and judicial purposes . . . Through His death and resurrection, Christ has made the world forces of evil His agents to execute His purposes of sanctification and judgment for the furtherance of His kingdom' (Beale). He identifies two purposes. There is a redemptive, sanctifying purpose, in the lives of God's people. When the sightless Saul reached Damascus, his initiation into the Christian life included the sombre warning that 'he must suffer for the sake of my name' (Acts 9:16). He went on to warn his early converts that they too must go through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

The Lord would have us improve our sanctification 'through many dangers, toils, and snares'. There is also a judicial purpose. These events that cause such distress and destruction are an expression of God's judgement upon a world in rebellion against Him and His Anointed. They foreshadow the Great Day of the wrath of the Lamb described in Rev. 6: 12-17. They are a wake-up call alerting the watching world there is an approaching Day of Judgment, which will not be limited or partial, but universal and terrifying. The desperate question, 'Who can stand in the face of God and the Lamb' (vs. 17) is thankfully answered in chapter 7.

John writes, 'Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' (Rev. 7: 13-14). Only those washed in the blood of the Lamb can stand.

C. S. Lewis famously wrote in *The Problem of Pain*, 'Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.' Can we not therefore conclude that these horsemen are God's megaphone? Every earthquake, volcano, flood, fire, conflict, and war is a warning to every one of the urgency of repentance (Luke 13:1-5). To ignore King Jesus is both foolish and futile and is to head towards a fate even more tragic than anything ever witnessed on earth.

CHURCH and NATION: We might also agree with Newton's statement that, 'The state of the nation (*and*) the state of the churches, both are deplorable'. While the sins of the nation today are different from Newton's day, they just as wicked.

U.S commentator and author, Rod Dreher, commented recently on the American scene: but it's just as applicable here. 'Religion has collapsed in Europe and is collapsing in the US. We are raising a generation that doesn't know what a man and a woman are. Our young men are addicted to porn and are struggling to form relationships. Our institutions are in the grips of left-wing ideologues who behave like Soviet commissars, and who don't care about quality and performance, only meeting ideological goals. Drug abuse is soaring. Crime in the cities is out of control. Marriages are declining. Economic inequality is getting worse and worse. People are afraid to say what they think out of fear of being fired or punished. The leaders of our country, in both public and private life, pursue ideological goals that are training Americans to hate their own history, and to loathe and mistrust each other.'

How should we respond? With anger or despair? Neither. Lot (hardly a paragon of virtue) while he lived in Sodom was 'distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men and was tormented in his righteous

soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard' (2 Peter 2: 7-8). Jesus wept over the hardness and unbelief of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41). Paul was greatly distressed to see Athens full of idols (Acts 17:16). The Psalmist says, 'My eyes shed streams of tears because people do not keep your law' (Ps. 119:136). We should respond with grief and prayer and preaching.

We also grieve over the sins of the wider Church; over its tolerance of evil and its embrace of the world's philosophy (it's shocking to think that many within the professing church are now in favour of same-sex marriage).

While it's easy to point the finger at others - what of our own backyard? What should our response be to the state of religion in our church? When Nehemiah was told that the people in Jerusalem were 'in great trouble and shame' he was distressed. He sat down, wept, mourned for days, fasted, and prayed before the God of Heaven, because he was concerned for the honour and reputation of God's name. The broken-down walls epitomised the state of the church - damaged, despised, and disgraced.

Matthew Henry wrote: 'No one will do worthy work at rebuilding walls who has not wept over the ruins.' We must weep and pray for the broken-down walls of our church. We must weep and pray over our lack of godliness; our lack of growth; our lack of love; our lack of influence; our lack of converts; our lack of new office bearers. Newton's comment may be apposite, 'They who should be praying, or too many of them, are disputing and fighting among themselves'. Could this be true of us?

To quote Newton one last time, 'If the Lord had not a remnant here, I should have very formidable apprehensions.' During these dark days the Lord still promises, 'I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Matt. 16:18). The Church is precious to Him. He will see to it that death and disaster will not overpower it. We should pray with the Psalmist, 'Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy Lord and grant us Your salvation' (Ps. 85:6-7).

The Religious Discrimination Bill: We've been monitoring the progress (or lack) of this promised Bill for a few years now. It sat simmering for almost the full term of this current Government, and then in the last week of the parliamentary sitting, the Prime Minister tried to push it through, which included some proposed amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act, that resulted in many Christian groups withdrawing their support for the proposed Bill. Paul Kelly in *The Australian* reported that 'Scott Morrison's effort to entrench a religious discrimination law in Australia has ended in parliamentary fiasco, government disunity, deep Liberal-Labour differences over religious protection, and another blow to the Prime Minister's authority.' The proposed Bill is now in limbo (metaphorically of course!)

The Victorian Conversion Therapy Bill: The Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act came into force in Victoria on February 17, 2022. As a result, pastors, parents, teachers, counsellors, churches, organisations – indeed anyone who believes and teaches orthodox Biblical sexual ethics is at risk and may come under investigation.

The Human Rights Law Alliance (HRLA) states that, 'For the first time in an Australian law, prayer is specifically outlawed. Not only that, but Victorians who experience unwanted same sex attraction or identity confusion are banned from seeking spiritual or therapeutic help which in many cases has radically transformed their lives for the better.' The HRLA report concludes, 'Christian pastors, teachers and preachers should not be intimidated into silence. Christians can still meet, and churches can still preach the Gospel. They should however be wise about how they share their faith with the world while they still have the ability to preach and teach the Gospel!' The Lord requires us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matt. 10:16).

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Synod reaffirms its conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is the only Saviour of sinners. As a result of purchasing salvation for His elect, He has received from His

Father a position of glory, honour, and authority, so that He now reigns as the King of kings and Lord of lords and is worthy of universal worship and obedience (Matt. 28:18, 1 Cor. 15:25, Phil. 2:9, Eph. 1:20-22, Rev. 19:16).

2. Synod acknowledges the dark and potentially dangerous days in which we live and exhorts members to intercede for the spiritual well-being of our nation so that men and women will seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near (Isa. 55:6).
3. Synod urges members to pray for the reformation and revival of the church in the words of the Psalmist, 'Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy Lord and grant us Your salvation' (Ps. 85:6-7).
4. Synod appoint (say) 30th July 2022 as a Day of Prayer to seek the Lord's mercy and favour. The meeting could be hosted by 'Zoom' and organised by the Clerks of Presbytery, with the technical assistance of Rev. Robin Tso.
5. Synod records its thanks to the editor of the Presbyterian Banner, Rev. Jim Klazinga, for producing an attractive and informative magazine, and resolves to pray for him in his editorial work, and for the witness of the magazine.
6. Synod records its appreciation to Rev. Jim Klazinga for his diligence in sending out regular prayer texts.
7. Synod notes that 'The Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act' is now law in Victoria. It urges pastors, teachers, and members not to be intimidated into silence, yet to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves as they seek to share the faith (Matt. 10:16).

BANNER REPORT

Editor: Rev. Jim Klazinga

Subscriptions:

For 2022, there are currently 103 paid subscriptions, and 13 mailed out at no charge, making for a total of 116 subscriptions.

12 out of the 13 congregations have bulk subscriptions. At the time of the writing of this report, six of these congregations have paid their 2022 subscriptions (total subscriptions: 48), while six have not (total subscriptions, using last year's numbers: 50). If those congregations who haven't paid yet continue with the same number of subscriptions as last year, this makes for a total of 98 bulk subscriptions.

Congregations that are focussed on in the individual issues are sent an extra four copies of that month's edition. Currently, 130 copies are printed each month.

Currently, a low resolution pdf copy of the magazine is sent to 163 email addresses, many of whom are not PCEA members. Some email subscribers forward copies to others, so it's difficult to know the exact number of email recipients. Higher resolution pdf copies of each issue are made available on the PCEA website.

Banner Finances:

Balance as of 12 March 2021 - \$4320.67

Income:

- Subscription Payments - \$2970.00
- Bank Interest - \$1.94

Expenses:

- Printing Expenses - \$2214.92
- Postage Expenses - \$1037.80
- Bank Fees - \$2.10

Balance as of 19 March 2022 - \$4037.79

2022 Subscription fees owing as of 19 March - \$1530

Estimated Costs for rest of year - \$2790

Estimated Balance at the end of 2022 - \$2780

At this point, it is not anticipated that we will need to increase subscription costs in 2023.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Synod continues to endorse the Presbyterian Banner as the official magazine of the PCEA and encourages members and adherents to read it and contribute material to it.
2. Synod expresses thankfulness for the assistance of the Presbyterian Banner liaisons from each of the congregations and encourages them to continue in this work.
3. Synod supports the printing and mailing of paper copies of the magazine, along with making pdf copies of the magazine available online and by email.

ARCHIVIST REPORT

Rev. Dr Rowland Ward

A comprehensive report was provided in 2014 (*Reports*, 21-25). During Covid in 2020 opportunity was taken to further organise the arrangement of the archives taking account of more recent material that had not been fully integrated. As it was opportune to bind or rebind some early magazines, including the only known copy of *The Australian Witness* (1853-54), the final volume of *The Free Churchman* (making our set complete) and the complete two volumes of the *Free Presbyterian* (South Australia), there was some cost to Synod in 2021. For some years previous any costs have not been charged to Synod. The scanning of these items makes the content accessible and searchable so in that sense the paper record is less significant, but it is still important.

The last years have seen Robert Hingston of Ulverstone continue his valuable scanning of early magazines and they are nearly complete to 2006. My job, apart from supplying the magazines for scanning is, where possible, to combine as many issues as possible into the into one file, compress and turn into a pdf. Unfortunately, distractions over the 2 or 3 years have delayed this work but one can expect considerable updating shortly, if not before Synod 2022. The combining of the individual issues placed on the site since late 2006 into annual or multi-year files is desirable but not something I can do readily. Hopefully someone with the expertise would offer to do this.

Anyone working in family history or academia will realise the importance of the internet and its democratising knowledge through searchable files unknown in an earlier generation. John Audet has made excellent use of internet resources and our electronic files to recover a more detailed understanding of aspects of PCEA history including a valuable monograph on the Riley Street Mission of the PCEA in Sydney c.1879-90.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

As scanning of earlier magazines nears completion after commencement in 2013, Synod again record it appreciation for the laborious work cheerfully undertaken by Robert Hingston of the Ulverstone Congregation.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Members: D Kerridge; R.Tso

Website

The PCEA website is the online gateway to the denomination. It receives regular visitors and has been used as the contact point for a number of individuals and representatives of other churches throughout 2021. We are looking towards an update of the backend of the site to the latest version of Joomla (the website “operating system” in 2022). This will include an update of components. There may be some design changes along the way to streamline the site.

We hope also to obtain the domain name rights to the newly released direct .au addresses (eg. pcea.au pointing to pcea.org.au or vice versa), available from March 2022, to avoid possible (although unlikely) conflicts with redirection, and provide easier access. The cost is minimal (\$8.67/ year with our current ISP).

The Banner and Archive sections continue to be the most accessed parts of the website.

The draft Training of Ministry Committee’s Elder’s Course continues to have a presence on the website under the “Elders” Menu at a subdomain <http://elders.pcea.org.au/> . This sub-domain has stalled in development and is greatly 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, in line with the remit to Training of Ministry Committee.

Intranet

The intranet is up and running with all Synod members, Committees (and Presbyteries), having access. Each member should have access with their own [initial][surname]@pcea.org.au email address (If you have not been able to access Microsoft office online, have not received your password, or are having trouble using the system, please contact itc@pcea.org.au).

Microsoft Teams is the first point of contact for online meetings. We believe it will be used by Southern Presbytery for meetings in the early part of 2022 (after the writing of this report), thanks to the interest and enthusiasm of Donald Ramsay. Microsoft Sharepoint (accessed at <https://pceanorthern.sharepoint.com/>) is now the common repository for documents (particularly Minutes and Reports, Decision Books etc) and general information for the work of our Synod and various Committees. Work can be done and shared in real time on Microsoft 365 (formerly Office 365) suite online using Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Outlook, etc. Such an ability would be invaluable for collaboration on Committee reports, for instance.

DocuSign

DocuSign is a digital signature platform which allows documents to be “signed” electronically and executed very quickly. PCEA Trustees have utilized the system to execute documents for St George’s congregation in 2021. The deed was executed within 18 hours, once distributed. Previously, such a document would have to be physically mailed out to each member of the Trustees, taking days to weeks to return to solicitors for execution. The Information technology Committee request that a subscription to DocuSign be purchased for the use of the denomination.

Video Streaming

Recent restrictions on gathered worship have entailed the use of various video streaming platforms, most usually YouTube. Whilst most everyone has had a lighting introduction to the use of video streaming over the last two years, and may already be utilizing various platforms for services and Bible studies, the Committee can offer help and advice on best practice and new technologies.

Audio Streaming and Phone Service

If they have the technology and aptitude, many elderly people in congregations are using audio and/or video streaming on devices. However, there are a number for whom the telephone is the best way of accessing worship services. Rev. Robin Tso has set up telephony software on a server to handle some congregations' phone services. He also has an application ready to serve the need of those who wish to use audio streaming online. The Committee seeks to establish a centralized phone service server available to all the congregations of the PCEA, both for reasons of cost and ease of administration for Mr Tso.

Committee Membership

Mr Nic O'Dell, a member in the Hunter congregation, has post-graduate qualifications in Robotic Engineering. He is already working on the Hunter website and associated technologies alongside Mr Tso, has been approached and has agreed to join the Committee if appointed. We need assistance and the local help that can be given to Mr Tso in the expanding work of the ITC would be invaluable.

Information Technology Committee Budget

Up until now, the website has been funded on a needs-basis from Synod general funds with annual costs for domain registration, ISP hosting, SSL certificates, component application updates, etc, ranging from \$800-\$1200 each year (2022 may be above this due to an overdue update of operating system and components of the site and sub-domain). Now with the broadening of matters coming under the purview of the Information Technology Committee, the members thought it appropriate to set out a budget for their ongoing work.

Proposed Budget

Website Costs	\$1300
DocuSign	\$150
PCEA Phone Server	\$700
Online streaming service	\$300
Other hardware/software	\$450
TOTAL BUDGET	\$3000

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Synod commend the PCEA website to delegates and congregations and they be encouraged to participate in the life of the church online by active registration, collaboration and comment.
2. The Information Technology Committee proposed budget for 2022 be approved and funds provided for the work of this Committee.
3. Mr Nic O'Dell be appointed as a member of the IT Committee.

PSALMODY REPORT

Members: David Kerridge (Convener), George Ball, Donald McIntosh, Julie Schmidt, Esther Hamilton

The practice of exclusive Psalmody in our churches, as a constituent part of the purity of worship we declare, is fundamental to our existence as a denomination. Or to put it more plainly: the fact that we sing Psalms is a defining factor of who we are, and so Psalm-singing should be at the forefront of church life in the PCEA. To this end, the Psalmody Committee was re-established in 2019 and began its work in 2020.

The survey that Rev. Jim Klazinga distributed in 2021 was helpful in narrowing our focus on the work ahead in the next years.

Of first importance to those who responded to the survey was education in the Biblical warrant for Psalmody (78% of respondents). We will seek to have articles on the website, in the Banner (with the Editor's permission), with a view to compiling a booklet on Psalm-singing for distribution to congregations in 2022-23.

The actual practice of singing praise each Lord's Day is led by the various precentors. They have the burden of making congregational singing tuneful, appropriately-paced, attractive - ultimately worshipful. Our precentors are already engaged in leading singing in worship, but there needs to be support for them and the Committee needs to provide a hub for resources for them. The Sharepoint intranet site (<https://pceanorthern.sharepoint.com/sites/psalms>) is already set to be a place where contact can be established, and resources located and used. Microsoft Teams is also in place for contact and meetings.

Training of precentors is one area that needs assistance from the Committee. A congregation (such as the Convener's own) can rely heavily on one precentor until it is realised at the last that a new person is needed urgently. Training of new precentors is obviously something that Sessions should be aware of, but the depth of talent amongst our precentors in various congregations needs to be made available to teach and train new precentors to take over where the previous generation have served so faithfully. The Psalmody Conference that has taken place for years in Central Presbytery is a great example of joining together to improve our congregational singing and to have fellowship. The Northern Presbytery has tentatively agreed to hold a Psalmody conference similar to the one undertaken in Central. Our (normally) biennial Family Camp is another opportunity for extended Psalmody practice. We need such occasions to foster a love of the Psalms, to show one another what a joy part-singing is, and to fellowship in the Lord in His praise. A common repertoire of tunes is invaluable for these occasions, but also for those visiting other congregations not to be at a loss when a new tune, unheard previously in their own congregation, is sung. Whilst this process of sharing and learning new tunes is somewhat organic in one regional area with closely situated congregations, it is not so at a wider distance. Further, we can all get stuck singing the same tunes to the same Psalms interminably because we have not had the opportunity of hearing others. The Committee proposes that through the collaboration of the Committee with precentors, a common repertoire of tunes be advertised (much like the list of tunes set for Youth and Fellowship prescribed work each year), rehearsed throughout the year and sung together at Presbytery conferences and Camps.

Proposed deliverance 4. agreed at Synod last year was a direction to the Committee to "discuss whether a single common Psalter is needed and to make a recommendation on this matter to Synod 2022." For various reasons this matter has not been addressed and we seek a further remit to investigate this issue.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. The Committee seeks to extend the remit given in 2021 to further investigate the matter of a common Psalter for the PCEA.
2. We encourage the continuation and multiplication of Psalmody conferences in Presbyteries and that a common repertoire of tunes be announced in the Banner and online to facilitate this.

SUPERANNUATION COMMITTEE

Members: R Tso (Convener 2016), Messrs D Ramsay, AH Steel, RS Ward

A. SUPERANNUATION

1. Church Contributions to Superannuation

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

- Self-supporting congregations: 15%
- Aid-receiving congregations: 8%
- Vacant congregations: 2%

1.2 Superannuation Support Fund & Superannuation Levy Account

a. **The Superannuation Support Fund (SSF) Capital Account** Balance as at 31/12/21 was \$226,299. The increase of \$16,784 was entirely the result of the revaluation of invested funds.

The SSF Working Account balance as at 31/12/21 was \$37,254. The increase of \$9,368 was income generated by the capital account.

b. **The Superannuation Levy Account** balance as at 31/12/21 was \$26,277, which was a decrease of \$1,609. Payments to ministers' nominated funds totalled \$92,257. All congregations were up-to-date in terms of payment of their levy.

2. Contributions to ministers' Superannuation accounts

2.1 Contribution Rates

- Inducted ministers :17%

3. Superannuation overview

3.1 Default Fund

All but three of our members have chosen HESTA, our default fund, for their contributions. The default for HESTA is Balanced Growth Fund.

3.2 Performance

The net return on HESTA Balanced Growth Fund for twelve months ending 30/6/21 was 19.3%. The historical performance as at 30/6/21 for the past 5 years was 9.39%.

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

One of the agreed changes from last year's Synod was that every minister receives the same amount of superannuation, regardless of their age. However, it has been brought to our attention that ministers aged 75 and above cannot accept non-mandated contributions. Therefore, there is a need to amend the policies in both congregational levy (with ministers over the age of 75) and the contributions to ministers over the age of 75, in line with the government legislations.

Note: The St Georges' congregation has paid the full levy last year since the new policy was adopted, but only the Superannuation Guarantee amount has been credited to the minister's Superannuation Fund. There is a need to refund the difference.

Proposed changes:

To add:

Superannuation Levy on congregations

- Self-supporting congregations (with minister aged 75 and over): Superannuation Guarantee Rate (currently at 10%)

Contribution Rates:

- Inducted ministers (from age 75): Superannuation Guarantee Rate (currently at 10%)

D. Church Insurance

The church-wide liability cover began in 1985 and extended to property excluding St Georges) in 1990. Deacons' Courts will be familiar with the Insurance arrangements for Church Property from the information sent prior to renewal each year on 30 September. Following Synod 2021 Dr Ward was added to the Committee and in August 2021 duly reported on the scheme arranged through ACS Financial. In particular he noted that alternative quotations obtained on the residential properties showed an extremely favourable result in NSW, and a still favourable but more modest advantage in Victoria. Interestingly two insurers declined certain risks in Northern Presbytery because of flood risk. In earlier days cheques were written by individual congregations to ACS (or Ansvar prior to 2015) but now everyone pays by EFT to Knox PCEA. Accordingly, in future it is appropriate that payments be sent to the Synod Treasurer who will consolidate them and remit to the Insurer. It is likely that the recent horrific floods will impact renewal in 2022 and rates or excesses may rise, although we understand at this point that no PCEA properties have suffered loss from this cause. It is important to recognise that insurers generally require property to be well maintained and reasonable care taken to avoid liability for accidents or molestation. Loss from failure to do so is not likely to be compensated.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Synod approves the committee's proposal for changes in section C above, starting from the 1/7/21.
2. Synod approves a refund of \$2980 from the Superannuation Levy Account to the St George's Deacons' Court.
3. Synod directs that Deacons' Courts transfer their annual insurance premiums, as invoiced by the Synod *Superannuation and Insurance* Committee, to the Synod Bank account (633-000 140199514)
4. 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)

Members: J Audet (Convener), AH Steel, DJ Ramsay, G Hamilton, DE Kerr (to Feb 2022)

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

After taking into account rates paid by other Presbyterian churches in NSW and Victoria, movement in the WPI, and the *Consumer Price Index (CPI)* the committee recommends the current level of the minimum stipend (\$1,143 per week - reviewed annually on 1st January) together with the present basis of review be continued.

2. Stipend Relief

In November 2021, a pro re nata meeting of Southern Presbytery approved a request from Narre Warren Deacons' Court for Stipend relief of up to \$10,000 for immediate needs up to 31 March, 2022. \$2,000 was pledged by a Deacons' Court in the Presbytery to offset this amount vide Handbook 3.17.d. As the need was immediate, and the request could not be presented to Synod because of timing, the request was referred to the Administration Committee. After deliberation, the Administration Committee added its recommendation to the request. [Note: After the pro re nata meeting of Presbytery, there were further pledges from two more Deacons' Courts in the Presbytery, and one outside the Presbytery. These have assisted in meeting needs beyond 31 March.]

The Finance Committee recommends ratification of the payment of \$10,000 made to Narre Warren Deacons' Court in December 2021, in respect of this request which could not be presented to Synod for approval in the usual way because of timing.

In March 2022, Central Presbytery approved a request from Hawkesbury-Nepean Deacons' Court for Stipend relief of up to \$14,000 on a needs basis for Synodical year 2022/2023. The request was received by the Clerk of Central Presbytery too late for the requirements of 3.17.d to be fulfilled. Accordingly, Presbytery further agreed that each Deacons' Court should consider their ability to contribute to the stipend relief and inform the Finance Committee accordingly before Synod. The Convener of this Committee will provide an update on this matter when presenting this report.

The Committee recommends approval of the provision strictly on the basis of need. Requests for relief to be made to the General Treasurer at the beginning of each calendar quarter supported by a budget demonstrating the need.

In March 2022, Southern Presbytery approved a request from Narre Warren Deacons' Court for Stipend relief of up to \$30,000 on a needs basis for Synodical year 2022/2023. A total of \$4,000 was pledged by two Deacons' Court in the Presbytery to offset this amount vide Handbook 3.17.d.

The Committee recommends approval of the provision strictly on the basis of need. Requests for relief to be made to the General Treasurer at the beginning of each calendar quarter supported by a budget demonstrating the need.

There are not expected to be sufficient designated Stipend relief funds to meet these two requests for 2022/23. If both requests are approved and fully drawn, a deficiency in the order of \$20,000 is estimated by the time of Synod 2023. There are adequate general funds to meet such a deficiency.

3. The Capital Assistance Fund

As at 31/12/21 assets totalled \$411,607 which was an increase of \$4,418 on 2020. There was no expenditure. The increase was from income and the revaluation of investments.

4. Training of Ministry Working Funds

At 31 December 2021, working funds for Training of Ministry stood at \$212,793, of which \$148,736 was held as cash and term deposits. The General Treasurer proposed to the Training of Ministry Committee that a further \$50,000 of working funds be invested in equities. The Training of Ministry Committee agreed with that proposal. The Finance Committee recommends the proposal.

5. Investment Benchmarks: Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia

The investment benchmarks for the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia are tabulated in the Trustees' report to Synod. It is proposed to adjust these benchmarks to reflect an investment mix which has the prospect of providing enhanced income and capital performance over the long-term.

Capital funds are required to be preserved, so the necessity of selling during a market downturn does not arise. A higher exposure to equities can therefore be tolerated. It is recommended that the revised benchmarks be: equities 80% (+/-10%) and cash/term deposits 20% (+/-10%). The recommended benchmarks would be applied to the New South Wales bequests including bequests held for congregations, Synod Committee Capital Funds, and the capital of the Joseph Harman Memorial Fund.

6. 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 31/12/22 – See Appendix "A"

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. We record our thanks to God for temporal blessings granted especially during the time of pandemic restrictions during 2021.
2. Adjustment of the Minimum Stipend, Cash and Non-cash components (Excluding Manse, Car and Telephone) for 2022/2023 be made on 1st January 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. Emergency Stipend Assistance of \$10,000 paid to Narre Warren Deacons' Court in December 2021 be ratified.
4. Stipend Assistance of up to \$ 14,000 for 2022/2023 Synodical year be granted to the Hawkesbury-Nepean Deacons' Courts as follows:
 - Be strictly on a quarterly needs basis.
 - Applications be submitted to the General Treasurer on a calendar quarter basis ie commencing 1st January/April/July/October and be accompanied with a Budget for the quarter being applied for.
 - Be subject to the availability of funds.
5. Stipend Assistance of up to \$30,000 for 2022/2023 Synodical year be granted to the Narre Warren Deacons' Courts as follows:
 - Be strictly on a quarterly needs basis.
 - Applications be submitted to the General Treasurer on a calendar quarter basis ie commencing 1st January/April/July/October and be accompanied with a Budget for the quarter being applied for.
 - Be subject to the availability of funds.
6. A transfer of up to \$20,000 be made from general funds to stipend relief funds to cover any deficiency in stipend relief funds arising from these approvals.

7. A \$50,000 investment in equities be made from Training of Ministry working funds.
8. The investment benchmarks for the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia be adjusted to: Equities 80% (+/-10%) and cash/term deposits 20% (+/-10%).

GENERAL TREASURER Report to Synod 2022

1. Financial Needs

All financial needs of the Synod were adequately provided for during 2021. Total funds grew by \$913,058 to \$2,460,207 after allowing for \$313,822 held on behalf of others (Mission Fields, Congregation Bequests etc.).

The increase was principally the bequest of the late Margaret Hockett (\$794,669). The value of invested funds also increased as share prices continued their recovery from pandemic-related lows. Dividend receipts also improved, boosting the value of various working funds. Companies which had suspended dividend payments in 2020 due to pandemic-related uncertainty resumed payments in 2021.

2. Synod General Working Funds

Synod General Working Funds held, as at 31/12/21 was \$839,664. This was an increase of \$804,951 on 2020. This was, again, principally due to the Margaret Hockett bequest. Refer to the printed Balance Sheet and Statement of Income & Expenditure as at 31/12/21 for details. The Statement of Income & Expenditure records the payment of donations amounting to \$14,000. These were the two donations authorised by Synod decision 21.62.

3. Books of Account Audit

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

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. That the General Treasurer, John Audet, be authorised to open a Community Fees Saver account with National Australia Bank, with any two of John Audet, Alex Steel, and Stewart Loudon authorised to operate the account, including internet banking.
2. That any two of John Audet, Alex Steel, and Stewart Loudon be authorised to give instructions to National Australia Bank in relation to term deposits in the name of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.
3. That the General Treasurer, John Audet, be authorised to give instructions in respect of any managed funds held in the name of the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern of Australia.
4. That the General Treasurer, John Audet, be appointed account operator of the Commonwealth Securities share trading accounts held in the names of The Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia and the Trustees for Victoria of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.
5. That the provision of \$3,000 from general funds as assistance towards the purchase of computer equipment for the Synod Clerk be ratified.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT APPENDIX "B"

**BUDGET - SYNOD MAJOR WORKING FUNDS
for 12 months ending 31/12/22**

Fund	Balance as at 31/12/21	Estimated Income Int/Divnds to 12/22	Estimated Givings & Other	Estimated Expenditure to 12/22	Estimated Surplus (Deficit)	Estimated Credit Balance 31/12/22	Estimated Deficit Balance 31/12/22
Capital Assistance Fund	411,607	3,000	0	0	3,000	414,607	
Church Extension	2,626	70	100	0	170	2,796	
Stipend Relief	17,721	3,000	500	24,000	-20,500	0	-2,779
Missions - General	23,564	10,000	3,000	13,000	0	23,564	
Miss Relief (Equities)	159,010	0	0	5,000	-5,000	154,010	
Miss Rel (Working Fnd)	6,188	10,000	0	14,400	-4,400	1,788	
Training of Ministry	212,793	7,500	400	0	7,900	220,693	
Youth & Fellowship	17,780	1,000	500	300	1,200	18,980	
General Funds	839,664	3,000	750	10,000	-6,250	833,414	

Youth and Fellowship excludes camp income and expenditure

TRUST CORPORATIONS
NSW TRUST CORPORATION
THE TRUSTEES FOR THE SYNOD OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA
Members: Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer

Bequests: Nil

Glenridding Cemetery: No correspondence has been entered into or received from the UCA on this matter.

Deed Box: The locked Deed Box of the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia is now lodged with Daniel Butt and Co., Solicitors, Suite 4, Level 1, 1 Stanley St, Maclean, NSW as notified to Synod 2021.

The Solicitor has advised in a letter this year as follows:

“We note that the Deed Box contains many Certificates of Title. We advise that on 11 October 2021, the NSW land title system moved to “100% eConveyancing” and all Certificates of Title were cancelled. Existing Certificates of Title have no legal effect and are no longer required to be produced to have a dealing lodged for registration. No new Certificates of Title are being issued.

In the words of the Registrar General: “The Torrens Title Register has always been and will continue to be the single source of truth as to the ownership of a person's home. The Torrens Title Register is securely stored and backed up by both NSW Land Registry Services and the Office of the Registrar General.”

Your NSW Certificates of Title are now more akin to historical records than legal documents. You may wish to review how they are stored.”

[See also NSW LRS website here <https://www.nswlrs.com.au/About/About/Announcements/157> . The Act cited there is *Real Property Amendment (Certificates of Title) Act 2021*.]

The holding of hardcopy Certificates of Title for other States remains necessary, and so it would seem practical to continue to hold the NSW certificates along with these for archival safe-keeping (and for back-up). We seek further advice from Synod as to the handling and storage of the Certificates of Title relating to NSW properties.

No deeds were lodged or uplifted during 2021.

Common Seal:

DocuSign (a digital signature application) has been used very effectively to quickly execute Trustee documents (2 of 3 in 2021 and one just now at the time of writing this report in 2022.

17/6/21 - Application to Commonwealth Securities for share trading account designated for Northern Rivers congregation

8/10/21 - Contract for Sale of Land (vacant land, being part 41 Campbell Street, Wauchope)

1/12/21 - Deed of Novation (St. George's steeple)

Review of results as at 31/12/21 (see table over)

Diversification

Actual as at 31/12/21		Asset Class	Investment Strategy	
Amount	Percentage		Benchmark	Range
152,869	41%	Cash	5%	5%-10%
0	0	1 st Registered Mortgages	30%	20%-40%
0	0	Debentures	15%	10%-25%
217,016	59%	Shares/Units	50%	40%-60%
369,885	100%		100%	

No change in the spread of investments was made during 2021. The change in spread compared to 2020 was the result of changes in valuations only.

Return:

Growth -

Total Trust Funds (Specified Capital Funds) increased by \$27,841 (8.1%) during 2021 against a Target of 3.5% (CPI). "Real value" (keeping up with inflation) was therefore achieved. This was the result of recovery of share markets from their COVID-19 lows, and from the compulsory sale (due to takeover) of a large holding in Milton Corporation at a premium to market price. When CPI is taken into account since 1998 total Capital funds lag behind by \$127,896 (~26%) as at 31/12/21 (~29% 2020)

Income-

Income of \$15,433 represented a return of 4.17% on funds against a Target of 1.1% (2021 Average Official Cash Interest Rate of 0.1% + 1.00%). Income returns improved as a result of dividend payment rates recovering after uncertainties over the effects of COVID-19 were mostly removed. Milton Corporation also paid a large special dividend prior to the completion of its takeover. Returns on cash continued to decline.

Investment Strategy Objectives -

Growth - **Achieved** for 2021 but **still behind** with CPI added since 1998.

Income - **Achieved** for 2021

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Noting the change in NSW practice regarding conveyancing, Synod direct the Trustees to continue to hold NSW Certificates of Title with the Deed Box for archival safe-keeping.

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

Deed Box and Common Seal: All title documents relating to the Queensland Trust Corporation which were previously held with Paton Hooke Lawyers, 25 Albert Street, Taree, NSW have been lodged with related NSW and Victorian documents with Daniel Butt and Co., Solicitors, Suite 4, Level 1, 1 Stanley St, Maclean, NSW. The Clerk of Synod holds the Common Seal.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES Nil

THE TRUSTEES FOR VICTORIA OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA
Incorporated by The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia Property Act 5691, Victoria 1953

Trustees: WI Hall (Secretary 2021), RS Ward, Synod Clerk, Synod Treasurer, SA Louden (expires 2022).

1. Secretary

Formal handover of the work of Secretary due on 1/9/2021 was delayed by mutual agreement of the trustees due to Covid-19 issues, but was formally transferred from Dr Ward to Mr Hall on 10 February 2022.

2. Property Transactions

There have been no property transactions in 2021 and no applications of the corporate seal.

3. Investment performance

The Synod accounts show the funds held by the corporation for Synod at 31/12/2021 totalled \$435,327. Of this \$347,406.67 is held in shares listed on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX). Share values increased by 15.87% over the year. Overall return on funds (shares and cash) was 4% including franking credit due of \$3,802.

4. Titles to old Free Presbyterian Church of Victoria properties

During lockdowns in 2020/21 due to Covid-19 some time was spent by the Secretary to locating old titles to properties dating from the 19th century in rural areas and current title records searched. There was no cost to Synod. The first three properties in the table below have been visually inspected by the then Secretary.

Title & Land Ref.	Street Address, Zoning & Use	Name on Title	Details
GRE GRE CT 01108/514 CA55B Parish of Gre Gre TP622873F 1 acre (vacant)	NW corner of Jesse Plant Rd and Wimmera Hwy, North Gre Gre Farming; dam (approx. 18km from St Arnaud)	Arthur Paul of St Kilda; Hugh Campbell, Donald Mackay & Alexander Munro, all of Gre Gre	Deed of Grant by purchase 1879, not held. Have draft of trust deed in pencil in Paul's hand, unsigned and ? not lodged. Parish plan shows 'Presbyterian Church 10/3/1879'
KELLALAC/AILS A CT 01331/070 Allot 1, Sec 1 Township of Ailsa TP776824H 1 acre (vacant)	Ailsa-Wheat Road, Kellalac (west side, just south of Ailsa Road) in effect cnr of Ailsa. Used by neighbouring farm	Duncan McLennan	Deed of Grant by purchase £2, 1/12/1881 Caveat by John Arnot Nicol 30/10/1884 Trust in favour of FPCV registered 29/4/1885 (folium 42 in the Register of Successory Trusts)
BURREREO CT 01845/815 Part CA 168 Parish of Lallat TP905552B 1 acre (vacant)	Minyip-Banyena Rd (north side approx. 750m east from F Krelle Rd) Pioneers Memorial on the south side is about 150m back.	Arthur Paul of St Kilda; George Oram of Burrereo; Duncan McGilp & Malcolm McDougall both of Minyip; James	Signed Trust Deed dated 10/8/1886 held. (modest (? recent) road cutting hinders access from road)

	Used by neighbouring farm	McLeod of Burrereo.	
HOTSPUR CA5, Section 11 Township of Hotspur TP625432W ½ acre (vacant)	Unnamed road, Hotspur (between original RC and C of E reserves, opposite school) Farming Zone.	William McDonald of Hamilton John McDonald and Archibald McLean both of Hotspur	Deed of Grant £2, 7/12/1879 held.

We have had occasion in earlier times to transfer similar properties to adjoining owners for a nominal sum plus the expense of transfer. The facts in the table are reported for information. While it is understood that adverse possession rules do not operate against charity lands (as they are for a purpose not for persons) it is not thought that at this stage any steps need be taken even though it would be nice to have these matter cleared up. It is possible that one or more additional sites exist that have not left church ownership.

5. Trustees

Dr Ward's membership was extended by a year after he had reached the normal for retirement of 75. Mr Loudon was appointed on 3/05/2017 and his initial period of service ceases midnight 30/6/2022. Members appointed need to be of some experience and capacity for the task (Act of Synod 2013). Mr Loudon has indicated that he does not want his membership renewed for a further five years.

6. Optus Tower Lease (Narre Warren P.C.E.A.)

The location of an Optus tower at Narre Warren will provide rent to the church of \$16,000 during the first year of the lease, increasing by 3% per annum. The lease term is for five years with three five year options thus a potential of twenty years. It was approved in draft by trustees in late 2021 subject to an inflation of 3% rather than 2% (agreed by Optus) and is expected to commence about June 2022 when Council approval is secured by Optus. Trustees executed lease on 12/03/2022

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

Synod extends the appointment of Rowland Ward by one year to 30th June 2023.

CORRESPONDENCE

ITEM 1

Northern Presbytery

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Clerk of Presbytery:
Rev John Forbes
9 Bindi Close,
Crosslands, NSW 2446
e. johnforbes@cantab.net
t. 0414 208533

16th March 2022

OVERTURE – SALE OF GRAFTON PROPERTY

To the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia,

WHEREAS,

The Grafton property has not been used for worship for an extended period of time and cost of maintenance and insurance is considerable,

AND WHEREAS,

It has been agreed by the congregation at a duly convened meeting on 2nd February 2022 that the sale proceed,

THEREFORE,

The Presbytery respectfully overtures Synod to take these premises into consideration and to approve the sale of the property at 136 Fry Street, Grafton, on which a place of worship is situated, the proceeds to be used for the maintenance of existing property and further development of the charge. Or do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.

John Forbes

Sale of Grafton Property

EXTRACT MINUTE 1 - Presbytery

At 10.15am on Saturday 26th February 2022 the Northern Presbytery of the PCEA met and was constituted with the reading of Scripture and with prayer.

Inter alia:

10. Overture - Sale of Grafton Property – Mr John Greensill presented an overture from the Northern Rivers Session in the following terms:

To the Northern Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia,
WHEREAS,
The Grafton property has not been used for worship for an extended period of time and cost of maintenance and insurance is considerable,
AND WHEREAS,
It has been agreed by the congregation at a duly convened meeting on 2nd February 2022 that the sale proceed,
THEREFORE,
The Session respectfully overtures the Presbytery to take these premises into consideration and to further overture the Synod to approve the sale of the Grafton property on which a place of worship is situated, or do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.

It was noted that petition may be a more correct approach than overture in this case but that some confusion exists and Synod may need to provide clarification in due course. It was moved, seconded and agreed that presbytery receive the overture and grant its crave, they overture Synod in the following terms:

To the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia,
WHEREAS,
The Grafton property has not been used for worship for an extended period of time and cost of maintenance and insurance is considerable,
AND WHEREAS,
It has been agreed by the congregation at a duly convened meeting on 2nd February 2022 that the sale proceed,
THEREFORE,
The Presbytery respectfully overtures Synod to take these premises into consideration and to approve the sale of the Grafton property on which a place of worship is situated, the proceeds to be used for the maintenance of existing property and further development of the charge. Or do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.

ITEM 2

Northern Presbytery

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Clerk of Presbytery:

Rev John Forbes

9 Bindi Close,

Crosslands, NSW 2446

e. johnforbes@cantab.net

t. 0414 208533

OVERTURE – INVESTMENT OF FUNDS FOR NORTHERN RIVERS

To the Synod of Eastern Australia,

WHEREAS,

The Deacons' Court of Northern Rivers seeks to maintain real value in investments, according to directions in Handbook 2.15,

AND WHEREAS,

An attempt by the Deacons' Court to open an investment account through Commsec (according to section 2.15 of Handbook) was rejected by Commsec without satisfactory explanation.

AND WHEREAS,

Investments are held on behalf of other PCEA congregations by the Trustees for the Synod of Eastern Australia, and periodical dividend payments are made to these congregations from the investments,

THEREFORE,

The presbytery respectfully overtures Synod to take these premises into consideration and grant that the Trustees for the Synod of Eastern Australia invest congregational funds for the benefit of the Northern Rivers congregation to the value of \$200,000 in Argo investments Pty Ltd, through the Trustee Share Account. Or do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.

Signed:

Date:

Investment of Funds for Northern Rivers

EXTRACT MINUTE – NORTHERN PRESBYTERY

At 10.15am on Saturday 26th February 2022 the Northern Presbytery of the PCEA met and was constituted with the reading of Scripture and with prayer.

Inter alia:

11. Overture – Investment of Funds for Northern Rivers – Presbytery took up consideration of an overture from the Northern Rivers Session in the following terms:

To the Northern Presbytery of Eastern Australia,

WHEREAS,

The Deacons' Court seeks to maintain real value in investments, according to directions in Handbook 2.15,

AND WHEREAS,

An attempt by the Deacons' Court to open an investment account through Commsec (according to section 2.15 of Handbook) was rejected by Commsec without satisfactory explanation.

AND WHEREAS,

Investments are held on behalf of other PCEA congregations by the Trustees for the Synod of Eastern Australia (TSEA), and periodical dividend payments are made to these congregations from the investments, THEREFORE,

The Session Respectfully overtures the Presbytery to take these premises into consideration and to further overture the Synod (TSEA) to invest congregational funds for the benefit of the Northern Rivers congregation to the value of \$200,000 in Argo investments Pty Ltd, through the Trustee Share Account. Or do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.

(It was noted that a petition directly from Deacons' Court to Synod may be a more correct approach but that some confusion exists at present and the process needs to be clarified by Synod). It was moved, seconded and agreed that presbytery receive the petition and grant its crave, they overture Synod in the following terms:

To the Synod of Eastern Australia,

WHEREAS,

The Deacons' Court of Northern Rivers seeks to maintain real value in investments, according to directions in Handbook 2.15,

AND WHEREAS,

An attempt by the Deacons' Court to open an investment account through Commsec (according to section 2.15 of Handbook) was rejected by Commsec without satisfactory explanation.

AND WHEREAS,

Investments are held on behalf of other PCEA congregations by the Trustees for the Synod of Eastern Australia, and periodical dividend payments are made to these congregations from the investments, THEREFORE,

The presbytery respectfully overtures Synod to take these premises into consideration and grant that the Trustees for the Synod of Eastern Australia invest congregational funds for the benefit of the Northern Rivers congregation to the value of \$200,000 in Argo investments Pty Ltd, through the Trustee Share Account. Or do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.

ITEMS 4 (a), (b), (c)

Northern Presbytery PCEA

Extract Minute

Barrier Act Remits from Synod 2021

At 10am on Saturday 16th October 2021 the Northern Presbytery met by Zoom video conference and the meeting was constituted with the reading of Isaiah 61 and with prayer

Inter Alia:

8. **Barrier Act remit – Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct** – It was moved seconded and unanimously agreed to approve as passed and as amended per item 39, 2021 Synod minutes.
9. **Barrier Act remit – Repeal of Act1, Class 1, 2014** – It was moved seconded and unanimously agreed to approve the repeal of Act 1, Class 1, 2014.

Extracted from the minutes of the Northern Presbytery on 10th November 2021 by J Forbes, Clerk.

The Central Presbytery of the PCEA met on Wednesday 15th September 2021 at 1 pm by 'Google Meet'.

The Moderator, Rev. Dr. Dennis Muldoon, led in worship. Psalm 122 was sung. Prayer was made. 2 Chronicles 36: 11-23 was read and a brief exhortation was given.

Present: Ministers - G. Ball (clerk), R. Tso, J. McCallum, D. Muldoon.
Commissioned Elders - T. Leggott, D. McIntosh, T. Reeve, A. Steel.

The minutes of the 9/3/21 as circulated were confirmed.

Matters Arising: Tom Reeve indicated he was planning to hold a 'Safe Church Training Day' sometime in November in the Hunter - with 'Zoom' facility.
It was agreed to postpone the visitation of St. George's until September 2022.

Call to Rev. Robin Tso: Robin informed the court he had received a unanimous call from Launceston Southern Presbyterian Church on 27/7/21 and has subsequently declined it. He was grateful that Presbytery members had expressed their satisfaction with his decision.

Day of Prayer: Robin Tso proposed that, 'Presbytery appoint a day of prayer and humiliation that we might call upon name of the Lord that He may show mercy upon His Church and our nation'. After some discussion it was agreed that we meet by 'Zoom' on Saturday 2nd October from 9.30 am - 12 noon. Robin and the Clerk to confirm details.

Vaccine Passports: George Ball presented a statement for consideration re: the proposed introduction of vaccination passports in churches in NSW. After discussion it was proposed to adopt the statement in principle - subject to various suggested changes - to be confirmed by Friday 17th. It was approved with one recorded abstention (John McCallum).
(Find the statement following the minutes).

Robin Tso proposed that, 'In view of the NSW Government "Roadmap to Freedom for the Fully Vaccinated" Presbytery encourage Sessions not to bar any attendee from public worship who has not had the double vaccination'.
After discussion it was approved with one recorded abstention (John McCallum).

Barrier Act: The following two overtures were transmitted by Synod 2021 under Barrier Act and were approved.

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 Majority Report 2021.

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 2021 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).

Date of Next Meeting: was arranged for 15/3/22 in Raymond Terrace.

Psalm 143: 1-8 was sung. Robin was thanked for hosting the meeting by 'Google Meet'.

The Moderator closed the meeting with prayer at 3.55 pm.

Moderator:

Clerk:

Date:

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY



Presbytery Clerk
Dr Donald Ramsay

14-20 McPherson Road
Waurin Ponds, VIC 3216
donald.ramsay@gmail.com
Mobile: 0435 180 664

14th March 2022

Mr Tom Reeve
Convener
Law & Advisory Committee

Dear Tom,

Please find below the extract minutes of Southern Presbytery with respect to the Barrier Act remits 21.18 and 21.21.2 from Synod 2021.

EXTRACT MINUTE

The Southern Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia met for ordinary business on Saturday 12 March 2022 at the Narre Warren church. Having been duly constituted with prayer, Southern Presbytery resolved:

Inter Alia:

11. BARRIER ACT REMITS

11.1. SAFE CHURCH POLICY AND CODE OF CONDUCT AMENDMENTS

Southern Presbytery took up the remit from Synod under the Barrier Act and resolved unanimously in favour of the proposed “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 Majority Report 2021.”

11.2. REPEAL OF ACT 1, CLASS 1, 2014

Southern Presbytery took up the remit from Synod under the Barrier Act and resolved unanimously in favour of the proposed “repealing Act 1, Class 1, 2014 (Procedures for Dealing with Allegations of Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct).”

Extracted from the records of the Southern Presbytery by the Clerk.

Donald Ramsay
Presbytery Clerk