

Synod
2023

The Synod of Eastern Australia

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

RAYMOND TERRACE CHURCH, PCEA HUNTER CONGREGATION

155 ADELAIDE STREET, RAYMOND TERRACE

2ND TO 5TH MAY, 2023

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA |

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TIMETABLE FOR SYNOD 2023

TIME	TUESDAY, 2 nd MAY	TIME	WEDNESDAY 3 rd MAY	THURSDAY 4 TH MAY	FRIDAY 5 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	Causes 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 Superannuation Finance Trust Corporations	SESSION 7 Presbytery Reports Missions	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 Church and Nation & Publications Banner Information Technology Psalmody	SESSION 8 Mission Speakers	
7:30pm	Administration				
8:30pm	Close	8:30pm	Close	Close	

NOTE: The Synod anticipates a number of delegates from other churches to be attending this Synod (see [Inter-Church Committee Report](#)). Each, in turn and according to availability, will be invited to speak at the beginning of a session, or after a break.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

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

Timetable: Synod is scheduled to commence at 4:30pm on Tuesday, 2nd May and conclude by Friday, 5th May, 2023. A detailed timetable is appended above.

Ministerial Movements: Nil

Expressions of Sympathy: We express our deepest sympathy to the family of the late Rev. Raymond Murray. A Memorial Minute is provided below, reproduced from Rev. Wes Hanna's *Banner* article and Northern Presbytery Memorial Minute, with the addition of some details of Rev. Murray's Synod appointments.

Congregational Statistics: As a reminder, reporting of congregational statistics now forms part of individual Presbytery reports.

Consideration of Committee Structure: The Administration Committee proposes the following Committee Structure:

NOTE: As resolved at Synod 2022 (Minutes 22.2.9.5), the Moderator is an ex-officio member of *all* Committees.

Committee Structure:

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

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

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

Church and Nation and Publication: GD Ball (Convener), I Miller, JD Klazinga (Banner), ..(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 (and Insurance): R Tso (Convener), 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. Items that are sensitive in nature will be circulated at Synod according to Standing Orders concerning closed court matters. Correspondence is as follows:

1. Overture from Southern Presbytery re Candidature of Mr Zach Dotson
2. Overture from Southern Presbytery re Candidature of Dr John Lee [Withdrawn]
3. Adherence of Rev. Tut Wan Yoa to Rev. Dr Ward's protest at the *pro re nata* 31st January, 2023. (email 1/4/23)
4. Petition from Rev. Trevor Leggott re Deposition of Dr R. Ward.
5. Letter from Mr J Louden
6. Memorial from members of Knox Congregation.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Correspondence Items 1 and 2 be received and dealt with following the Training of Ministry Report.

2. Correspondence Item 3 be received and noted.
3. Correspondence items 4 and 6 be taken with Causes as usual at the end of Standing Committee business.
4. Correspondence item 5 be received and noted.
4. That Synod confirm the proposed Committee Structure as listed in the report.
5. That the following Examiners of Records be appointed:

Northern Presbytery	Rev. I Hall and Hunter Elder
Central Presbytery	Rev. J Klazinga and Geelong Elder
Southern Presbytery	Rev. R Tso and Brisbane Elder

6. That Synod incorporate the following Memorial Minute for Rev. Raymond Murray in the permanent record.

Memorial Minute

The Rev. Raymond William Murray October 7, 1941 – July 7, 2022

On the 7th October, 1941, a son was born to Sam and Alacoque Murray of Nabiac in New South Wales. He was given the names Raymond William and was the youngest of six children. The family moved to Bunyah and Ray grew up there under the ministry of the Rev. M.C. Ramsay. All his life he retained a strong love of Bunyah and it was one of his great joys in his retirement to return there from time to time.

Ray was received as a student for the ministry in 1961 and commenced studying at the University of Newcastle, graduating with a BA degree in 1964. He then proceeded to Scotland to the Free Church College in Edinburgh, where he studied from 1964-67. A defining event of Ray's life also occurred during this spell in Scotland – he met Roberta MacPherson and they were married in 1967. In that year they went to the United States where Ray had enrolled at the Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pa. under the supervision of Cornelius van Til. Some years later he submitted a thesis on this work and was awarded the degree of Master of Theology.

On his return to Australia in 1968, Ray was called to the ministry of the St. Kilda Congregation in Melbourne, where he served faithfully until 1972, when he received and accepted a call to the Brisbane Congregation which had been formed a few years earlier. During their time in Melbourne, the Murray family was increased by the arrival of their first child, their daughter Susan. As the first minister of the new Brisbane congregation Ray was a driving force in its development and growth over those formative years. Never afraid of hard work, he almost single-handedly dug out tons of heavy clay from under the manse to develop a room where the congregation could meet for mid-week Bible studies, etc. (the congregation was worshipping in rented premises at the time). During his time in Brisbane, he also negotiated with the Queensland Government the Incorporation of the PCEA in the State of Queensland.

During the Murrays' time in Brisbane they took leave of absence to visit Scotland in 1975 and then returned there again on a period of Long Service Leave in late 1980, this time as a family of four, Jonathan having arrived in that same year. During their time in Scotland, Ray received and accepted a call to the Glenurquhart congregation of the Free Church of Scotland, where he remained until 1983.

After returning to Australia in 1983, Ray served as the minister, firstly, of the Grafton-Lismore congregation. He then served for a short period as the minister of both the Grafton-Lismore congregation and the Maclean congregation and, finally, when these had been combined to form the Northern Rivers congregation, he accepted the call to be its minister.

During his time as the minister of Grafton, Ray also worked as a teacher of Religious Education in the South Grafton High School. He also, at various times, taught Religion in several other schools. We cannot know how many young lives he influenced during that time.

During his ministry Ray made a large contribution to the work of the Church. Over the years he was Moderator of Synod three times (1979, 1987 and 2002), Assistant Clerk of Synod, Clerk of the Northern Presbytery, and Editor of the Presbyterian Banner (1970-72; 1987-8), as well as convening various Synod committees, notably the Training of Ministry Committee. His knowledge of church law and procedures was encyclopaedic and so he was well equipped to perform these tasks. He had a keen mind and an incisive reasoning power – a worthy pupil of the great van Til!

In his retirement, and even after the onset of that illness to which he finally succumbed, Ray worked for His Lord, taking services wherever there was a need. His last sermon was preached in Wauchope at the morning service on the 26th August, 2018. He became ill during the service but managed to complete his sermon. It was preached on 2 Chronicles 24:16. He finished by saying we should all aspire to be like Jehoiada and that in due time we will hear these words, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord”. What an appropriate end to a long and faithful ministry! Now he is hearing those words himself!

Our deepest sympathy goes to Roberta, to Susan and Jonathan and to their families.

LAW & ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Members: T.M. Reeve (convener 2021), R.S.Ward (to February 2023), D.J. Kerridge, J. Forbes and I.J. Miller

Commencing in October 2022, the committee conducted its business by group emails. Prior to that date, two members (JF & DK) commenced the checking and listing of Acts and Decisions of Synod, whilst other members (TR & IM) began the panel work on the proposed Divorce, Separation & Remarriage statement. The report for 2023 was finalised by an on-line meeting on the 21st February 2023, during which Rev. John Forbes was appointed vice-convener.

1. Listing of the Acts of Synod Act 22.2.13.5a (Class 2) was passed at the 2022 Synod as follows: *'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.'*

During the past year David Kerridge and John Forbes have commenced examining the Reports and Minutes for the years where decisions are not available on the website. It is planned that this project will be completed by Synod 2024.

2. Safe Church legislation. As indicated before, the committee intends to update the Safe Church legislation every three years. Given that changes go down under the Barrier Act procedure, it is a two-year process to enact any updates. So please be noting any improvements to the SC Policy for our committee to consider and recommend to Synod 2024. Meanwhile we monitor any new Government legislation. 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 came into force on the 1st July 2022. Although a preliminary examination of this legislation shows that little change is required to our current SC Policy, it will be examined in more detail in the coming year.

Similarly, the NSW parliament this year has passed the *Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) 2021 Bill*, which mainly prescribes the increasing duties of this Government agency responsible for the welfare of children in New South Wales. All states are updating their respective laws as time goes on.

3. Safe Church Training providers. We have compiled a list of suitable organisations who conduct the Basic Training in Safe Church matters. Although individual training can be done on-line, it is more helpful to gather in groups as a congregation or presbytery. Basic Training takes approximately 3 hours and is mandated by our Policy once every three years, - and for new leaders commencing at any time - with congregational refresher sessions in between.

For NSW the following information is provided (further work is required to source suitable providers in Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania):

1. Scripture Union does not provide such courses.
2. The Resilience Centre, Epping tends to focus on relationships building and conflict resolution.
3. The Anglicans provide an online course and also group training workshops (face-to-face) at Sydney locations. They advertise the courses.
4. The Baptist Church provides an online course and also organise face-to-face group courses at various Baptist Church locations. A zoom online workshop is available from time to time which they advertise. Cost is \$25 per person. Prior to the workshop all participants are required to complete an online module "Creating Safe Spaces" at \$10 each.

5. Australian Christian Churches (association) offer online and group workshops in face-to-face, one location mode only. They require a minimum of 30 persons per workshop.

6. The Presbyterian Church of NSW (Jericho Road, Conduct Protocol Unit) offers an online basic training course using their 2020 edition of 'Breaking the Silence' programme. There are pauses throughout for individual reflection and group discussion. The workshop booklet is available free for download. Workshop duration is about 3 hours and there is no cost (although the website expresses gratitude for any donations).

Note: The PCNSW 2020 programme “Breaking the Silence” was recently used by Central Presbytery (February 2023). It was modified in places to cover our PCEA Safe Church procedures. A video of this three-hour training session is available for use by PCEA members. It works best in groups and is suitable for congregations and individuals (who can download the PCA booklets and also have our PCEA Policy to work from).

4. Panel on Divorce, Separation and Remarriage. This is a two-year study (at least) to prepare guidelines on a weighty pastoral subject which affects so many in our churches and families. It was approved as follows by two resolutions of the 2022 Synod:

22.2.13.7. 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.

22.2.37. Synod, having appointed a panel to formulate guidelines on Divorce, Separation and Remarriage for the PCEA, approves Tom Reeve and John Forbes to oversee the work of the panel, with Jim Klazinga and Ian Miller assisting.

Various resources have been gathered and work has commenced on a first draft by two members. It is the intention of the panel to circulate drafts firstly for presbyteries and others to have their input, before Synod considers the statement. We need prayer for wisdom and help to carry out our task faithfully.

5. Financial Assistance or Stipend Relief ? - terminology in the Handbook.

‘Stipend Relief’ is a familiar term to presbytery and synod members who handle applications from various congregations which need ‘financial assistance.’ Both terms are used interchangeably in Handbook **3.17d** which has the heading ‘**Requests for financial assistance.**’ The Committee has responded to a request, that for the sake of consistency and strict accuracy, only the term financial assistance should be used.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Safe Church Training. The committee reminds all presbyteries to carry out their responsibilities in safe church basic training for office-bearers and children’s workers. It recommends the PCNSW ‘Breaking the Silence’ 2020 programme to be undertaken in presbytery or congregational groups once every three years, with local refresher sessions in other years. New teachers, once appointed by sessions, are required to undertake the training (and WWCC check) before commencing their ministries.

2. Financial Assistance legislation. It is recommended that a minor update is proposed to approve an update of **Handbook 3.17d** (and elsewhere) be made and to use the term ‘Financial Assistance’ consistently elsewhere in place of ‘Stipend Relief.’ - changes are underlined in 3.17d below.

d. ‘**Requests for Financial Assistance** of Deacons’ Courts are to be submitted to the Presbytery and supported by a budget for the ensuing year. A copy of the request and budget are to be sent to other Deacons’ Courts

within the charge by the Clerk of Presbytery in sufficient time for them to consider it prior to the next meeting of Presbytery. If Deacons' Courts are able to contribute to the Financial Assistance being sought, Presbytery is to take such into account and forward their recommendation to the Synod Finance Committee. (See 4.79)'

TRAINING OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE

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

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

The Committee gives thanks to the Lord that we are now occupied with one new application for candidacy from Mr Zachary Dotson. Dr John Lee was received as a provisional candidate but withdrew and will leave the PCEA in May, 2023. In the last quarter of 2022, we received a request from Southern Presbytery to interview the candidates and forward our recommendations to the Presbytery, following the procedure of Handbook 4.49 e) and f). Due to circumstances, the Committee was unable to interview the candidates until March this year. Following the interviews, we were able to concur with Southern Presbytery's decision to receive both men as candidates. We expect that Mr Dotson and his family will be in attendance at this Synod, and that delegates will have opportunity to meet them.

Mr Dotson has completed academic and theological studies. Our recommendation for his continuing candidacy is that he undertake placement under the Candidate Placement Scheme (CPS) in order to assess pastoral matters and to give him experience in the PCEA outside of Southern Presbytery. It is envisaged that Mr Dotson will undertake placement in the Northern Rivers. Mr Dotson will be granted the book allowance for the year.

He has been advised that allowances paid to them from Training of Ministry funds are made available under the Student Bond. Mr Dotson was made aware of the conditions of the Bond at his interview, and we expect that he will be able to sign this at Synod.

Mr Dotson will be asked to present papers on the required subjects of PCEA history and distinctives (Handbook 4.49.a).

The Clerk of Central Presbytery informed the Committee as this report was being compiled that Mr Duncan Hickey is no longer a licentiate in our denomination. We pray that Mr Hickey will find an appropriate avenue of service in the Lord's kingdom.

Approaches are being made to the Reformed Theological College (Melbourne) with a view to re-establish that institution in our list of Synod-approved colleges. RTC's status was rescinded in 1979 and has not been reviewed since that time.

The average age of Elders within our denomination continues to rise. We are concerned that there is a dearth of men coming through the ranks.

Our prayer is that the Lord will continue to send forth labourers to our corner of the vineyard for the glory of His name and the growth of our denomination.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. That Committee arrangements for the CPS placement of Mr Zachary Dotson, and the usual associated costs of candidature, be approved.

YOUTH AND FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Members: Stewart Carswell (Convenor), Andres Miranda, Mandy Kerridge, John Forbes and Matthew Schmidt

Youth Camp 2022

Due to illness and uncertainty about the weather the youth camp was not held at the usual Easter weekend, however, we are thankful that the camp could be held on the Labour Day weekend 1-3 October at John and Judy Greensill's farm at Palmers Channel in the Northern Rivers Congregation. The camp for 15- to 30-year-olds had over 22 campers from Brisbane, Northern Rivers, Hastings and Hunter congregations who were able to enjoy a weekend of teaching and fellowship. Andres Miranda presented talks on "The so called problem of evil" from Rom 9:19-23.

We are thankful of the willingness of John and Judy to prepare their property, and further thanks to the other cooks and helpers, Keith and Barbara Schmidt (Brisbane) and Beth Sonter (Maclean).

Family Camp

After several years of being unable to hold the Family Camp due to government restrictions, it was noted that Uniting Venues had sold their properties at Elanora and Naamaroo (Lane Cove) which we had used for previous family camps. There has been discussion about finding a site that allows self-catering, to reduce costs, however, it has proven difficult to secure a venue particularly over the busy summer holidays and other school holiday times. It was also noted the site the Brisbane Congregation hold their camp no longer allows self-catering.

The committee believes that the Family and Youth Camps are important events in the life of the church, and provide opportunities for strengthening fellowship and deepening our love for God and His Word and will continue to endeavour to find a suitable venue.

Essays

In 2022 the essay topic set by John Forbes focused on the contemporary issue of how as Christians we should view climate change claims in light of scripture and how as God's people we should respond.

The essays are submitted in three age groups; up to 9 year, 10-13 years and 14+ years.

Each essay receives a gift card to a Christian bookstore and John comments on each essay showing interest and pastoral care of the young people over the content of their work. 20 essays were submitted from Brisbane (4), Hastings (13), Hunter (1) and Ulverstone (2) across the 3 categories – junior (5), intermediate (8) and senior (7).

Those that completed the essay and were awarded certificates were:

Junior - Micah Grigg (Hunter), Katie Hornsey (Hastings), Harriet Soden (Hastings), Kenneth Forbes (Hastings), Micah Freebairn (Brisbane)

Intermediate - Anna Bosveld (Ulverstone), Taleatha Freebairn (Brisbane), Alexander Godden (Hastings), Lucas Godden (Hastings), Julian Soden (Hastings), Daniel Hornsey (Hastings), Donald Forbes (Hastings), Elsa Forbes (Hastings).

Senior - Tahnee Carswell (Brisbane), Christopher Buckingham (Brisbane), Grieta Bosveld (Ulverstone), Amelia Hornsey (Hastings), Mitchell Hornsey (Hastings), Katherine Forbes (Hastings), James Forbes (Hastings).

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 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. Currently there are 80 names but only 65 on the roll as some addresses are missing. I would encourage you to update any additions to your lists of children under 12 years to yfc@pcea.org.au

Search Work

The Committee is thankful to Irene Steel for her continued commitment to the Search Work. Irene reported that only 4 children completed the full year of search work, though she was aware of some who attempted the questions but because they didn't complete the full year, they didn't submit any answers (possibly a proportionate award could be given to encourage them in their efforts). The committee would encourage Sunday schools and teachers and parents to utilise this ministry.

If you missed the Banner issues and would like to encourage the young people in your congregations, please contact Irene at 18/1-55 West Parade, West Ryde NSW 2114 or Email: iesteel@gmail.com
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.

Future Proposed use of Margaret Hockett Bequest

Margaret Hockett bequeathed approx. \$700,000 to the synod with no stipulations on how it was to be spent. The committee would like to consider establishing, or purchasing, a central venue for camps and synods.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

- 1.** Synod continues to pray for the children and youth in the Church and the work of the committee in building relationships between congregations as members of Christ's body.
- 2.** Synod gives thanks and pray for those are involved in the work of teaching Sunday-school and youth classes.
- 3.** Synod thank Irene Steel for her dedication to the scripture search work and Nic and Amelia O'Dell for birthday card greeting and uphold them in prayer.
- 4.** Synod set aside the Margaret Hockett bequest while the viability of a central venue for camps and Synods be investigated and returned to Synod 2024 for consideration.

MISSIONS COMMITTEE

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

The MC met in person after Synod 2022. Zoom meetings were held on 5 July 2022 and 22 November 2022. Members of the MC gave updates on the various fields. It was agreed, among other things, to send diaconal aid of \$1000 to the Reformed Protestant Mission in Sri Lanka, and to invite a representative from the PFCCI to our next Synod. Dr. Dickson from India visited a number of our churches while visiting family in Brisbane.

An online meeting with Rev Victor Attalla and his wife, arranged by MERF Australia in October, was well attended by folk from the PCEA. We continue to encourage Presbyteries to arrange online meetings with local and overseas mission contacts.

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

MISSION FIELD REPORTS

Contents:

1. Australian Indigenous Ministries
2. Dumisani Theological Institute
3. Taleem centre, India
4. Dr Dickson, India
5. Central India
6. Annie Soper School
7. International Mission to Jewish people
8. Shekinah, Project Video, Thailand

1. Australian Indigenous Ministries (from Peter Smith)

The AIM Council found it very difficult to find anyone suitable to take up the position of General Director. Two people worked in the role at different times, but both ended up resigning relatively quickly, saying “the job was not for them.” The Field Director position hasn’t been manned for over three years. After discussions with a consultancy firm, it was determined to look for a leader within AIM. Consequently, at the Annual General Meeting held in June 2022, it was resolved that the two head positions be withdrawn and replaced with a single entity, namely, Mission Coordinator. Mrs Yane Damanik, previously serving AIM at Humpty Doo, NT, felt that the Lord was calling her to the new role and put her name forward.

Yane has been visiting various churches to promote the work of AIM amongst indigenous people with some success. A new family have indicated they would like to join AIM at the end of 2023. Please pray that this will be realized, as recruiting new staff has been notoriously difficult over many past years.

Our long term auditor, Mr David Shedden, of Shedden and Green, retired at the end of 2020. Our new auditors have made some major changes, mainly concerning how missionaries receive their gifted support. This impacts on how the accounts are managed. A relatively new ‘treasurer’ also came onto the AIM Council two years ago. The combined effect has made me, the Office Manager, busier.

Those who receive the AIM prayer points will know that one of our missionaries, Martin Ebel, passed away late last year from brain cancer. He and his wife, Rose, served the community of Woorabinda,

Queensland, over a long period. Martin helped in the little hospital as well as bringing the Good News of Jesus to folk in the church there. Martin will be sorely missed.

Pastor Henry Louie, who some will know, continues ministering to a group in Pilliga, Western NSW. Pilliga is a town approximately 200km north of Gilgandra, where Henry lives. Henry is still ministering regularly to 12 adults, most of whom now know Christ. In God's marvellous providence, the work of the gospel has spread further to Baradine and Gulargambone! The Sydney Koreans now run Kid's Clubs in school holidays in all three places, while Henry and Maria engage the parents over a cup of coffee, speaking about spiritual matters. Subsequently, there were 40 to 45 people attended Christmas services led by Henry, at both Baradine and Gulargambone – praise the Lord! Please pray that the Lord will reap a wonderful harvest amongst the mobs in these towns. Pray too, that God will grant Henry and Maria good health to enable them to continue pointing folk to Jesus.

In a similar way, Young Lee engages children through SRE in three Taree Public Schools. One school has approximately 67% indigenous kids! Young has a wonderful rapport with the children as a Korean man. Pray that many children will respond to the good news in Jesus. Young and Eunice spent quite a number of years ministering in a Korean church in Blacktown, NSW, before answering God's call to minister to indigenous people. Young and Eunice are members of the PCEA Manning River Congregation.

Pastor Ike Gordon and his wife, Eileen, ministering in Brewarrina commence the yearly NSW River Convention in April once more. The convention covers seven towns over 16 days starting in Brewarrina and finishes at Dubbo. Ike's son, Doug, with the help of three others, runs a youth group in Brewarrina that is regularly and amazingly attended by around 70 young people! Consequently, the crime rate in this town is minimal compared to other similar places in Western NSW. Pray that these young ones will ultimately be saved and be the next generation of the church there.

Finally, the rising cost of fuel has had an adverse impact on travel, especially for the indigenous pastors in Western NSW. Please pray that the Lord will move in the hearts and minds of people to support AIM regularly with donations for fuel. Thank you so much for the Synod and various congregations' donations to me, as I manage the office. Pray that the Lord will abundantly bless and further the ministry of AIM to his glory and praise.

2. Dumisani Theological Institute and Bible School (Ian Hamilton)

We received a summary report from Principal Wilbert Chipenyu on the 6th March. Synod 2022 may recall Wilbert spoke to us via videoconference on the missions evening.

Wilbert writes:

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praying that the PCEA remain under the grace of God. May I take this opportunity to highlight you on Dumisani. We are grateful to God that Dumisani got first accreditation since 1979. We are really excited. accreditation is administered by Christian Council

working with the South African Qualification Assessment. It seeks to produce ministers who would not fall prey to the current wave of prosperity gospel.

Dumisani is currently the only college in the Eastern Cape province that is accredited to offer the Christian Religious Professional qualification. Many students wish to enrol but most of them could not afford to pay the required fees. We are working flat out to seek for bursary assistance to enable the prospective students have access to Theological education.

Dumisani had its 44th Graduation and Award Ceremony. A total of 32 students graduated on 4 March 2023 (This compares with 25 graduates in 2022).

Dumisani has only two full-time lecturers including the principal. It also has 3 ministers who teach part-time and some visiting lecturers who come from abroad and locally.



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3. Taleem Centre, India (from Mariam)

The Taleem Centre was started in 2013 by Mariam's father in a village near Dehradun. Following his death in the same year, Mariam made the commitment to continue this ministry, and the PCEA committed to support this work. Despite the death of Mr. Mijin, a helper in 2017, and opposition from some in the Muslim community, she continued this ministry until 2022.

Mariam wanted to do further studies in education and was accepted into a university in Thunder Bay, Canada. In a remarkable way, the Lord provided for this faithful young lady whom we know so well, to pay the fees and fly to Canada in September 2022. She arranged for the Taleem Centre to continue until November, at which time PCEA ceased funding this project. We continue to keep contact with Mariam and receive prayer requests from her. She was given guidance regarding churches in Thunder Bay and is now worshipping in a Reformed church; Jim Klazinga recently met her pastor.

4. Dr Dickson, India

Thank you for your consistent prayers for the great land of India. Our ministry slowly resumed as the number of Covid cases began to decline.

Ministry to Urban Slum: Computer Centre- Goyla Dairy. We were able to reach out to the community by providing basic computer skills including typing and Microsoft word. They learned about the love of Christ along with learning skills that can supplement or sustain their livelihood. We distributed completion certificates to graduates who finished the programme. Skill Development Centre- Goyla Dairy. Ten women from Goyla village registered and completed the sewing training. Some completed the entire 6month programme and got a certificate. Most of them use their newly developed skills by stitching their own clothes and reducing the home expenses. Some of the attendees have started a shop and are making some income by helping others. Paul's pet Clinic clients began to come gradually post-Covid, and are using the facilities for treating their animals. Thankfully, Dr. Rashia took over this responsibility when I was visiting our daughter in Australia. She had a blessed experience by helping the deserving people living in the suburbs of Delhi. She had a meaningful time with the staff by reading the scripture every day. World Rabies Day-Goyla Dairy. On the 28th of September, 2022 we gave free rabies vaccines to the stray dogs who were roaming the streets of the community. Rabies still remains a threat to many slum dwellers as they can be bitten by stray dogs during their return from their work. Dr Rashia did an awareness programme for the community, which many young people attended with full enthusiasm. There were many interactive sessions and questions clarified.

Ministry to the rural parts of India: God enabled me and a team to visit several interior regions of India where the veterinary services were not available.

Amoni, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh 6- 11th April. Amoni is a village located in the jungle, 40 km away from Bhopal. This village has many buffaloes, goats, and poultry but does not have any access to veterinary care. We visited the village and while staying there did a survey about the need for a Veterinarian. We found that the government veterinary hospital was located about 50 km away from the village. Villagers often lose their sick animals before the doctor arrives as they don't have a proper road in the forest. During our stay, we were able to teach the farmers how to conduct deworming and the vaccination for their livestock, which are their livelihood. They learned the skills it quickly and practiced with us. We returned back to Delhi, trusting God to send more labourers into the harvest. Armanipenta, Andhra Pradesh 27 to 29th April 2022. Armanipenta is a tribal village located in the interior regions of Andhra Pradesh. The people group Kurubhas, Dalits, and Sugali live here in a remote location. Their main livelihood is dairy farming and goat keeping, but they are deprived of any Veterinary care. Our team of three doctors visited the village and facilitated a caregiver training for the farmers. We had an interactive session as the farmers had a lot of questions. Everyone felt the importance of taking care of their animals in a scientifically informed manner so they can improve their livelihood. On the second and third day, we completed two free Veterinary camps at Peddur village and Ramakuppam where we treated hundreds of animals. We did the deworming and the

vaccination for all the animals. We also taught them how to inoculate RDV k vaccine for the poultry as they lost hundreds of fowl to Ranikhet disease. One of the beneficiaries mentioned that after the camp, his sheep is doing well. The pastor in that village commented that the veterinary intervention brought more people to church and reduced the public hostility towards the missionaries in a significant way.

Sherpur Village, Uttarakhand 5-7 June 2022. Sherpur is a village located near Dehradun where Mariam ministers with the help of PCEA. It is largely occupied by a Muslim community. Vetnet had the privilege of going to the on 6th June to conduct caregivers training programme and treat a few sick animals. The rural men and women gave Vetnet a warm welcome, and brought their doubts and questions about animal health to the training programme. Three videos on animal health were also shown to them as part of the training and following the training, they brought the sick animals for treatment. They requested that we come again at the earliest so that they can inform the nearby villages about this care as well. It reminded us of what Jesus prayed when he saw a great need. "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" Matt. 9:38. Let us pray for more labourers to build the Kingdom of God.

Other Vetnet training camps conducted include

-**Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh** 23-28 June 2022

By God's grace, 6 veterinarians (volunteers) attended and treated hundreds of animals- horse, buffaloes, and goats.

-Caregiver training and free Veterinary Camps, Goyla Dairy Nov 14-17. Dr. Larry (USA) taught everyone the importance and implications of proper feeding to the calves, which was well received by the farmers.

-Caregiver training and free Veterinary camps in **Haridwar**, 14 -17 December 2022. The youth secretary and the village presidents were very supportive in organising these camps. They requested us to come again. Before leaving, we had a prayer walk at the banks of the river while local people were doing their rituals. With great satisfaction, we left Haridwar, one of the important pilgrimages for Hindus where the river Ganges is worshipped by the millions.

-Free Veterinary Camps, Saranhangi 5-7 January 2023. We worked with CCM (Christ Community works) at **Saranhangi (Tamilnadu)** and treated thousands of livestock including cattle, goats, poultry, and dogs. People expressed their gratitude, and the host organisation was much impressed by seeing the work done among the communities – The love of Christ was shown in action.

-Ministry to Tribal India Caregivers Training and Free Veterinary camps, Tamenglong, **Manipur** 13-17 February 2023. We had two guests from the USA on the trip, and they facilitated a few training sessions and did a lot of the treatment. That added blessings to the tribal people. The road travel on the hills was a frightening but memorable one.

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

We are very much thankful to the Lord for His faithfulness in our lives and ministry. The things have been really getting tight for past many years as the hostility towards Christian work is all around. The graph of hostility is raising so high that even doing the good work and serving the community is taken otherwise. Yet, in amidst of all these, the Lord has helped us do things that are beyond our potential. Hence, though we struggle, we are not survivors but conquerors of the faith. Here are the things that we praise God for:

1. The work of the church is being sustained well. In fact, we are at the edge of having our first synod in November 2023. Four churches in Maharashtra and other four in Madhya Pradesh will soon be recognized as a presbytery. The elders of these churches have been having regional counsels for past two years and are trained to follow the rules and procedures of a formal meeting. This was an intentional attempt from our end because, as we observed, despite being leaders in the community and having enough reasoning and capacity, they would often keep quiet in our presbytery meetings due to respect and other reasons. Having them meet separately allowed them to express their opinion openly and mainly to develop the sense of ownership over their regional work.

Alongside, the synod of PFC-CI will be joined by a Presbyterian Reformed church of India in Maharashtra. This is a new church plant network, working independently in terms of finance but under the supervision of the presbytery of PFC-CI for past many years.

2. The third batch of diploma in theology completed this year with 14 students. We are now prepared to start the fourth batch in Gondia, Maharashtra, with 30 students. Many of the students of last batch are connected with us and some of them are looking to join us as church planters. This may require some additional fund support from our partners.
3. Women Ministry: Using the principles of discipleship, a core group of women (Mrs. Aileen Kumar, Mrs. Varsha Mishar, Mrs. Ruma and Mrs. Sandhya) was authorized by the presbytery to provide leadership in women discipleship and community service. To our amazement, in a very short span of time, these women were able to strengthen many women and become a missional community called “Women for Mission”. In past two years they together were able to conduct four friendship camps with disabled people, helped them get benefits of government schemes, provided medical treatments and equipment’s such as wheel chairs, walkers etc. They further plan to organize a course on bakery items and production of FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) to help the wives of rural pastors and leaders to get self-employed and earn extra income as in rural church plants financial suitability (in terms of supporting a pastor financially) is still a far destination.
4. Mission School, Chhapara : In last academic year, one of the girls succeeded to be in top ten of State merit list. With all the infrastructure developments, this boosted up the reputation of the school in the district. The staff enthusiastically worked on the admission. Consequently, they were able to increase the strength of the students by 25%. Having many private schools around, this was quite an achievement. Specially in Hindi section, where we were expecting a rapid fall due to change in Education culture where every parent now wish to have their children in English Medium school, the numbers of the students increased. With the sponsorship scheme of PCEA, it is helpful for many poor students to continue their studies in post-Covid season where rate of unemployment and inflation has increased a lot.
5. Lakhnadon Mission School : As mentioned above, due a cultural shift, Hindi schools are experiencing lack of students. The story is same in Lakhnadon School as well. Due to lack of finance, many senior staff resigned, yet there are few left with much dedication to continue the missional service in the community. Lakhnadon Mission School has become a challenge for us. With new staff and leadership, now we are developing it to be an English Medium school. We are journeying through a valley, knowing that the Lord will take us through and soon we will have a greener pasture.

Lakhnadon Christian Hospital (LCH): this rural hospital was opened in 1936 after many years of medical mission work at nearby Chhapara. Dr Helen Ramsey, Sis Flora Neil and Heather Beaton, among others, served here. LCH was handed over to the Emmanuel Hospital Association in 1974; Dr McDonald and Sis Barbara Stone left in 1988. As this rural town grew, private hospitals opened nearby, and EHA found it difficult to find doctors. LCH closed in 2018. In 2021 EHA placed two doctors, Sumit a surgeon and his wife a psychiatrist, at LCH to reopen the centre, for which we in PCEA give praise; Neeti Raj is administrator. Outpatient numbers are increasing; LCH currently has 16 beds. Community health work has also resumed. The old hospital buildings are prone to fire. With help from Barnabas Aid, the wiring is being made safe and two old generators are being replaced.

6. Annie Soper School, Peru (Robin Tso)

As many of us know, the students could not meet physically for nearly the first half of the year. The school has been facing various challenges:

1. Helping the students to reintegrate back into physical learning.

2. The financial needs for the various projects around the school. From J. David Sanchez-Medina, “(A) Living Plant Fence to protect the back and all round of our building. It has "caña brava" (like old wood that we need to renew) that has been there for almost 6 years and it has really deteriorated (it costs US \$3,500). (B) The metallic infrastructure of our sports field in Annie Soper (columns, benches, and the roof). When it's sunny it is really hot and we cannot develop the P.E. class and other activities there (it costs US \$50,000)”
3. The need to recruit new teaching staff.

Also, please remember the new Principal of the school, Fulton Ramirez, as David has moved to work for the Church of the Nazarene in Moyobamba. Please pray for the new staff and a smooth transitioning period.

Some background history about **Miss Annie Georgina Soper (1888-1979)**



Black and white lantern slide showing Miss Annie Georgina Soper (1883-1979), founder of the Peruvian Inland Mission, on horseback in Peru. She wears a white pith helmet, skirt and shirt, and long boots. A male Peruvian helper stands to the side of the horse, and carries a cloth bundle over his shoulder and a hat in his hand. Annie Georgina Soper was a trained nurse who first went to Peru in 1916 to the Nurses' Training School in Lima. Accompanied by another nurse, Frances Rhoda Gould, she set off across the Andes to Moyobamba in 1922, where a hospital was set up. In 1930 (after a disagreement with a Free Church of Scotland

missionary), she left Moyobamba in the hands of the Free Church of Scotland and set out for Lamas, where she set up a hospital and school. This slide comes from a collection created by the Peruvian Inland Mission, an evangelical mission started in 1930 by Miss Annie G Soper in northeast Peru, which was administered by the evangelical interdenominational mission, Regions Beyond Missionary Union from 1948. *University of Edinburgh*

San Andres (Lima, Peru)

Dr César Morales Campos, the Principal, wrote:

“As you may know, Peru is in the middle of a great political crisis.

Several demonstrations along the whole country are looking for the resignation of our president as well as the whole congress. This situation promotes not only uncertainty about the future but also fear, economic troubles and lack of some resources in some areas of the country. As a Christian school we are called to promote peace and trust in God in the middle of these times of distress.

There are some prayer points that I would like to be considered:

- New teachers. We need English native speaker teachers who can teach topics according to our international curriculum. Mainly we need secondary (lower and upper) school teachers but we may accept primary teachers as well. We pray God may call some Christian teachers that can see our school as a short term mission field.
- Technology. We need to buy new computers for our laboratories. We need around US\$ 40,000 in order to buy 30 new computers. Several of them are more than 8 years old. Please help us, praying God may provide for this project.”

Please continue to keep the school and the political situation in Peru in prayer, that the Lord will bestow His mercy.

7. International Mission to Jewish People (Robin Tso from Mark Landrum)

We are thankful for the faithful labour of both Rahel and Mark Landrum in witnessing to the Jewish people in Sydney. Despite covid restrictions in place throughout part of last year, they continued to meet up with several people for Bible Study. For a few months of last year, Mark and Rahel had

Tomer, a new missionary trainee, to work with them in Sydney. Regrettably, Tomer had to resign due to family circumstances.

However, we are delighted to report that the Landrums have been actively engaged in outreach both on the streets and at a recent convention, with a booth called: 'Sar Shalom (Prince of Peace) Pathway'. (Photos below)



Thankfully, they had many conversations with unsaved people, both Jewish and Gentiles and prayed for some of them. They got the details of 17 Jewish people. Please also continue to pray for them as they continue to follow up these contacts.

Furthermore, we rejoice in the Lord for answering our prayers regarding the work in Melbourne. Late last year, IMJP (Australia) welcomed a new colleague, Daniel Zeunert. Daniel has recently completed a Masters of Divinity at Ridley College, and also works part time as a physiotherapist. He is married to Anna and together they have two precious children, Elijah and Delcie. Please remember Daniel and his family in prayer, that the Lord would be pleased to prosper the work and ministry in Melbourne among the Jewish people.

8. Shekinah, Project Video, Thailand

It took a long time for me to come to the field here in Thailand, and work with Project Video. With Covid hitting and the Delhi Immigration department of Thailand being closed for a year, it was unclear if I would be able to make it. However, God opened the doors and I was able to come and work with PV for the past year. Even though my trip was cut short due to covid, I was able to be a part of PV expanding more in South Asia. And, I have also been trained to manage the South Asia Mentorships. My time here has been such a learning experience with managing communications, editing, admin and many more areas.

Furthermore, Jasmine (Asia Director), Becky (Communication Head) and I had a meeting a month back and I was offered to continue working with Project Video and managing our South Asia teams. This is an opportunity for me to work full-time till I am in India. When I relocate to the Netherlands, I can continue to work as a part-time staff member. As we are in a growing phase, it is a learning time for me. Jasmine has trained me very well, how to interview, how to manage and continue to overlook the teams.

I still have to see how I can be a part of Interserve Netherlands after getting married in August. There is a slight chance I can still continue to be part of Interserve Netherland. I will pray and see where God leads me. Thank you to PCEA for this opportunity that I was provided to work in Thailand as a missionary. This has been a very great experience, growing and sharing the gospel.

Mukti (Tut Yoa)

Mukti Australia has supported the work of Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission in India for 120 years, while in early 2016 support extended to a separate ministry called Wings of Hope in Sri Lanka. The object is to care for and create opportunities for disadvantaged women and children in a

distinctively Christian church-related setting. Typically there are 400 residents in the main centre near Pune in India and over 2000 village children are provided educational opportunities as well. In Sri Lanka significant work is done among poor tea pickers in particular, with hundreds positively impacted.

Glenda de Jager, the National Director of Mukti Australia, has provided the following Report for 2022:

As Covid continued on in 2022 it was still difficult to reach out to Churches, friends and make new friends for Mukti. Groups were still not meeting and only commenced in the later part of the year. In June we invited our first post-Covid visitor to come to Australia. Rebecca Alexander, Chief Operations Officer of Wings of Hope in Sri Lanka, came to Melbourne and was able to be guest speaker at a wonderful dinner at Gaylord Restaurant. Rebecca also shared at Knox PCEA at Wantirna where she was gifted lots of knitted goods and educational supplies for Wings. It was great to catch up with friends there. Quilts for Orphans Inc. also present Rebecca with beautiful handmade quilts for families in the Wings project. Later in the year I was able to visit South Australia to share with some groups there.

At the start of 2022 Wings was able to open the new educational resource centre at Hatton. What a wonderful resource this is as the children come to learn. Programmes for Mums and Dads can use this too to build happy and healthy families. There are many new plans for 2023 when we hope Covid is gone and life can get back to something more normal.

I greatly appreciate the prayer and financial support of the PCEA Synod, congregations and individuals. Sadly I will be finishing my role at Mukti at the end of December 2022 after nearly 15 years as National Director. During this time the support for Mukti India and Wings of Hope has multiplied many times over and we thank God and his people who have made it possible. My love and support of the ministry will continue in retirement.

Mukti Australia Inc. is currently looking for a new National Director and your prayers for Peter Warren in Western Australia, who is filling in meantime, would be appreciated. More information about Mukti's important work can be found at <www.mukti.org.au>, and there are opportunities to receive regular face to face reports through on-line meetings with key local and overseas people.

Mission awareness tour to India.

A tour is planned for the end of 2023- from 16 to 30 December 2023. A schedule has been drawn up in which the first week will be spent in Delhi, Dehradun and Mussoorie, and the second week with the PFC-CI folk in central India.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. The Synod gives thanks to the Lord for the opportunity and privilege to be involved in the work of missions at home and abroad, both in giving, in praying, and being directly involved during this past year.

2. Synod gives thanks to the Lord for the faithful ministry of Mariam to a Muslim community in a village near Dehradun in North India. We continue to pray for those who heard the good news of Jesus Christ through her ministry, and for Mariam herself as she furthers her studies.

3. The Synod thanks Rev Robin Tso for serving on the MC and providing contacts in Sri Lanka and Ukraine, as well as Peru.

4. Synod approve a memorial minute to Miss Heather Beaton as follows:

Heather Ann Beaton was born in Raymond Terrace on 22 January 1928, one of three sisters in the family. Heather went on to study nursing at Royal Newcastle Hospital and to work as a nurse at the Mayo, a private hospital in Taree. Rumour has it that she and her sister ran the hospital! Heather attended the 'Free Presbyterian' or PCEA Church in Taree from her youth and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ at a young age. Her minister, Rev. M.C. Ramsay was very mission minded and his daughter, Dr Helen Ramsay, went to serve the Lord in India in 1955. While on furlough (home leave),

Helen shared about the needs of the poor villagers in India, their need for medical help and their need to hear the gospel. Her sharing touched the hearts of many in the church; some gave financially to the work, while others, like Heather, felt the call to go in person and serve the Lord.

Heather left for India in 1963 to work at the mission hospital in Lakhnadon, central India. She later assisted Dr Ramsay in the clinic and the village health project at Chhapara. Living and working in India was quite a shock. Heather had to learn a new language, a new way to dress, and a new diet, but she was not discouraged because she knew this was the place the Lord wanted her to be. A colleague writes, 'Her enthusiasm for good work, her cheerfulness and her deep loyalty to the patients and colleagues for Christ's sake were infectious'. Heather demonstrated Christ's love towards orphan children, some of whom she 'adopted'.

One of the children she taught at Chhapara wrote the following tribute to Heather: 'She is well remembered for her kindness towards the orphans, the sick and many needy people in the Christian community in Chhapara and Lakhnadon. Her desire was that every orphan raised in the mission orphanage should stay back and serve in either the hospital or school; many of the children are now staying in Chhapara and contributing towards the work of the Lord through the ministry of local church. Her labour in the Lord is bearing much fruit now and we praise God for her great Christian testimony in the community'.

Heather returned to Australia in 1976 to care for her elderly parents. In 1982 she went back to India. In the following year she went to help at another EHA hospital in Kachhwa. In 1985 the political situation in India changed radically, and all foreign nationals had to register with the government. Heather, along with many missionaries, left India at this time. She returned to nursing, before retiring to Raymond Terrace and then a nursing home near Maitland. She went to be with her Lord and Saviour on 28 December 2022.

5. When mission donations are to missions supported by the Synod, congregational treasurers are urged to send funds through the Synod treasurer.
6. 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. This would be undertaken on a Presbytery basis.
7. Synod adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2023/24 and expresses its general agreement with the estimates for this period.

INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

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

In this past year, the committee has been communicated by emails and met 3 times through Google Meet.

We are thankful to Almighty God for the relaxation of restrictions and the reopening of the international border, we look forward to renewing our inter-church relations with the various churches in person.

1. The International Conference of Reformed Churches

Though the committee sent a letter, on behalf of our Synod, asking for postponement and change of location for the ICRC meeting. The Executive Committee decided that they would continue to proceed with the planned conference in Windhoek, Namibia, which took place from 12 to 19 October. Regrettably, no electronic means was provided to us.

One of the significant items during the conference was the membership of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated).

Please note “The Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) made the following motion:

To terminate the membership of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated) (RCN(I) or GKv), as its decision on women in office no longer qualifies it for membership in the ICRC as per Constitution Art. IV.4 which states:

“.. [T]ermination of membership in the Conference shall be by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations of the Member Churches, each Member Church having one vote, whenever the Conference concludes that the Member Church, in its doctrine and/or practice (which includes the ordination of persons to the offices of minister or ruling elder contrary to the rule prescribed in Scripture, cf., Belgic Confession, Article 30), is no longer in agreement with the Basis...”

The final tally indicated 29 votes in favour, 0 votes against, and 1 abstention. The motion was declared adopted and, with a heavy heart, the ICRC noted that the membership of the RCN(I), one of its founding members, had been terminated.”

Furthermore, with great delight, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Africa (Uganda) was received as a member church of the ICRC. The Diaconal Committee of the ICRC has sent out press releases concerning help towards the situation in Ukraine, as well as the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

The 11th General Meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches will be held, the Lord willing, in Korea, in October 2026.

2. CHURCHES WITH WHOM WE HAVE FRATERNAL RELATIONS.

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

We received an invitation to their 2023 General Assembly, from the 22nd to 25th May in Edinburgh. However, we were not able to send a delegate but hope to send a delegate for the 2024 General Assembly.

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

We received an invitation to their 2023 General Assembly, from the 22nd to 25th May in Partick, Glasgow. However, we were not able to send a delegate but hope to send a delegate for the 2024 General Assembly.

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

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

Regrettably, due to personal circumstances, Rev Jim Klazinga was unable to attend their 88th General Assembly. An apology and a letter of greetings were sent to them as a result.

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

We are delighted to welcome Rev Andrew Stewart, of the Geelong RPCA, to our Synod.

An invitation was sent to us, concerning their upcoming Annual Presbytery meeting on the 13th of May, at the McKinnon RPCA church. The Lord willing, Rev Andres Miranda hope to represent us at their meeting.

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

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

We are delighted to welcome Rev Bruce Backensto (accompanied by Mrs Kim Backensto) to our Synod.

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

We are delighted to welcome Rev Samit Mishra and Elder Pradeep Kumar to our Synod, and we look forward to them visiting our various congregations during their stay.

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

We are delighted to welcome Elder Stuart Coles to our Synod.

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

We are delighted to welcome Rev Lorens Nel to our Synod.

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

Rev Jim Klazinga represented us at their October 2022 Synod meeting in Buffalo, NY, USA, their first meeting in four years. Synod decided to move into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with us, their equivalent of what we call Fraternal Relations. For this to become official, a majority of the URCNA consistories will need to agree to this step. For more information, see the article in the December 2022 issue of The Presbyterian Banner, pages 4-5.

3. CHURCHES WITH WHOM WE HAVE CONTACT.

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

We note with sadness that the denomination is to be dissolved effective as of the 31st of December. It is our understanding that currently they do not have a clerk for their presbytery, hence we do not have any official response to our invitation.

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

3.3 Presbyterian Church of Australia

3.4 Associated Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. 2018

We are delighted to welcome Rev John Ferguson, from the Inverness APC congregation. Their denomination has expressed the desire to discuss further on the possibility of having mutual eligibility with our denomination. The committee hopes to discuss this matter further with Mr Ferguson.

4. The World Reformed Fellowship (WRF).

The General Assembly in Florida, USA, from the 27th to the 30th of October 2022. The recordings of the conference can be found on their website <wrfnet.org>.

5. Australian Free Church

We note that the Australian Free Church in 2021 sought to be incorporated in the Free Church (Continuing). We learned that after numerous occasions of discussions, the FCC General Assembly 2022. The FCC's Ecumenical Relations Committee, finds that, "it was felt that such a move on the part of the FC(C) would only hinder, rather than help, the realignment of the PCEA with the various smaller Presbyterian bodies in Australia and that such a realignment should be encouraged rather than hindered. Further, there was a concern regarding the practical implications of such a development on the mutual eligibility arrangement with the PCEA."

The FCC General Assembly has the following recommendation, "Whilst valuing highly their relationship with the Australian Free Church, they encourage them to seek a closer relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and express their desire to do all in their power to seek the realignment of the reformed confessional Churches in Australia and that the Lord would bless his cause in that land;"

Revs John Nelson and Matthew Winzer contacted the committee to discuss ways in which to foster a closer relationship between our two denominations. The Committee met with them and discussed the various matters and hopes to continue our discussions on this matter. We hope to bring forth some recommendations at the next ordinary Synod.

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 approves a delegate, to be appointed by the committee, be sent to attend the 2024 General Assemblies in Scotland and agrees to contribute appropriately to the economy airfare and travel insurance.
- 3.** Synod approves the Committee's ongoing discussions with the Australian Free Church in seeking a closer relationship between our denominations.

PRESBYTERY REPORTS

NORTHERN PRESBYTERY REPORT

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

Congregation	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
		2021	+	-	2022	2021	2022	>4	4-11	12-18	19-30	31-45	46-64	65+	Total			
Brisbane	2/3	45	6	2	49	30-50		2	2	5	16	3	9	12	49	4	6	Varies
Northern Rivers	3/2	36	0	4	32	35	40	3	8	2	1	5	4	24	47	1	11	0
Hastings	2/1	29	10	4	35	65	70	6	20	8	5	16	10	26	91	1	3/30	N/A

Brisbane

We give thanks to God for His continuing purposes being worked out in the life of our congregation during 2022.

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 senior members needing to join in worship via their phones, including three people living in the Rockhampton area, and two from the Redcliffe section of Brisbane. The Lord's Supper was celebrated regularly, on average about once every other month. We were blessed to have preach for us several serving and retired pastors from a variety of Presbyterian denominations, including during the pastor and his wife's 5-week trip to Canada in October and November. The congregation has been blessed by the consistent presence of visitors at our worship services, a number of whom have been attending regularly.

Membership: Taylor and Bonnie-Anne Richards were blessed with the birth of their eighth child, Abigail, born 15 February. She was baptized, along with her sister Liberty and brother Gideon, on 20 March. Later in the year, the Richards suffered the loss of an unborn child due to an ectopic pregnancy. We rejoiced with Stephen and Jessie Smith, who were married on 16 April. Hainian Yu and Naomi Klazinga announced their engagement in late December, as did Weylin Morrison and Irene Klazinga. Tahnee Carswell was welcomed as communicant member on 24 April. Weylin Morrison became a member that same day by being baptized.

In April, we welcomed Chris and Joanne Freebairn, with their children Taleatha, Micah, and Hadassah, from the Hastings congregation. Late in the year they expressed their intent to move to Canada in March 2023.

Joe and Gail Henderson were welcomed as members on 10 July. Disjunction certificates were issued to Ian and Fiona Lenane. No members of the congregation died during 2022.

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 again stands ready to serve as an assessor elder, but we did not need to call on him in 2022.

Deacons' Court: The Deacons' Court is made up of the pastor, the two other elders, and the three deacons. Keith Schmidt serves as clerk, while Stewart Carswell serves as treasurer, with Micah Klazinga being the assistant treasurer. Thanks to the generous giving of our members, our contributions continue to be more than our expenses. 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 met during the school year, as did the Sunday School. A six-week new members class was held early in the year. 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. One fortnightly mid-week Bible Study met on zoom, making use of online study courses offered by Ligonier Ministries.

The minister led the 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 held in December at Lennox Head in NSW. It was well attended, with a significant number of participants being from other PCEA congregations and other denominations. The talks and services were led by Rev. Ian Hall, who spoke on the theme: "Walking with God."

Northern Rivers

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)

Services were held in 2022 on the Lord's Day, both morning and evening, in Maclean. There are currently no services in the Grafton church building. Various means of livestreaming (Internet audio, video and telephone) are available to those unable to attend, especially the housebound. We are thankful for these technologies and expect that an increasing number of elderly members and adherents will use these as they are gradually unable to attend in person any longer.

We were extremely grateful for the help in pulpit supply from Rev. Tim Attwood and Daniel Gilbert from Clarence Valley Community Church. Particularly, at the birth of Lucy Elizabeth Kerridge in June, and then again for an extended leave at the end of 2022 into 2023 due to the death of Mandy Kerridge's mother.

The Wednesday meeting continues with fellowship for morning tea at 10, and a Bible Study following. We have worked through the books of Colossians and Isaiah during the year. We finished 2022 with a video series from Ligonier Ministries on Assurance of Faith, by Dr Joel Beeke, which has continued over into 2023.

We rejoice that there has been an increase in attendance by two new families in 2022. By God's grace, one couple have become members at a Communion season at the end of the year. This growth has been a wonderful answer to prayer and a great encouragement to the ministry here. It has enabled us to restart formal Sunday School lessons with an attendance of 11 children, utilising material digitised by Tom Reeve. We have also started an evening Westminster Confession Class to refresh us all on our confessional understanding and to help new members and adherents (average attendance 8 people).

The Annual PCEA Youth Camp took place in October, 2022 and was well attended. The Camp Speaker was the Rev. Andres Miranda who delivered insightful and stimulating, interactive talks. We are thankful to the Lord for this opportunity to have fellowship with the young people in the church and grateful to John and Judy Greensill for their gracious hospitality. The next Camp is due in April, 2023.

Following the Camp, we held an impromptu “Mini Camp” for those too young for the Youth Camp. We had a great roll up of about 32 campers with parents, with devotions given by Revs John Forbes and David Kerridge. It was a great time of fellowship and learning about the Word.

Mr John Law died in April, 2022. He was the brother of deacon Gordon Law and past elder in Grafton, Robert Law (who died soon afterwards). Mr Gordon Law was bereaved of his wife, Ann, late in 2022. Rev. Raymond Murray died in July, 2022 after a long illness. A Memorial Minute detailing his long and faithful service has been placed in the Session records. Mr John Gillies died after battling with extensive ill health in August.

Renovations were undertaken in the front room of the church Hall by a number of volunteers from the congregation and friends from other churches. This is now the meeting room for Bible Studies, and the Sunday School and will in time, God-willing, become an outreach as a Christian library and resource centre.

We continue to rejoice that the Maclean Manse Op-Shop raises substantial funds to support the work of the Lower Clarence Christian Education Association (LCCEA). In turn the LCCEA makes a donation to Northern Rivers Congregation. We again remind PCEA congregations that part of this money (approx. \$5,000) is available for assistance to other congregations or worthy causes by agreement with our Deacons’ Court.

The 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.

Hastings

Public worship on the Lord's Day remains the focus of congregational life in the Hastings with services in Wauchope each Sunday at 10am and 4pm and a monthly evening service in Kindee. The congregation has grown numerically in the past year with a number of new families and individuals now regularly attending worship. This has been a great encouragement to the congregation and we thank the Lord for his goodness. Most have not come from a Presbyterian background and have had little or no previous experience of worshipping in a psalm-singing church or familiarity with some of the distinctives of doctrine and practice that we hold. There have been fruitful times of questions and discussion and it has been encouraging to see their enthusiasm to hear the word preached and for them and their families to grow as disciples of Christ. There have been 10 new communicant members in the year and one infant baptism of Zali Hamilton. The Sunday School currently has around 30 young people in three classes.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERY REPORT

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

The Central Presbytery held two regular meetings during the year (on 14/9/22 when it conducted a visitation of St. George’s congregation), and on 14/3/23 (when, *inter alia*, congregational reports were presented). It also held a pro-re-nata meeting on 20/12/22 for the purpose of dealing with the matters arising from the notice of the retirement of Rev. John McCallum. A Safe Training Day for elders and deacons was held on 11/2/23. Following are the congregational reports submitted on 14/3/23.

Trevor Leggott (Clerk of Session) presented the **Manning report**.

At our recent Annual Congregational Meeting our Pastor, George Ball, noted that he had been an ordained minister for 42 years, and had been preaching regularly for 45 years. He indicated that he anticipated this year - 2023 - to be his final year of ministry. This came as a bit of a shock to some in the congregation, though George had previously shared his plans with the elders. George was thanked for his years of ministry on the Manning since 2008. With Pastor George, the elders are Clive Alley, Peter Smith, and Trevor Leggott. The congregation will soon face the difficulty of finding a

replacement, a difficult task given the scarcity of suitable men. Thankfully we do have men prepared to provide pulpit ministry during the anticipated vacancy.

George's pulpit ministry is very well received, and we continue with services by telephone, as well as on-line, and recorded video services. We have held our regular communion services four times during the year on the months with a 5th Sunday.

A Wednesday morning fortnightly study is led by Trevor Leggott, and a Thursday evening weekly Bible study is led by the pastor. Our weekly prayer meeting 45 minutes before the morning service is led by Peter Smith. We plan to resume a prayer morning on the Saturday before our regular Communion Services.

The elders meet bi-monthly and seek to maintain contact with members as regularly as possible. We have a weekly average attendance of about 48 persons for both services on the Lord's Day. The telephone link and live stream services are especially helpful for our elderly members, as well as for others who might listen in.

Overall, there is a good spirit of fellowship amongst the congregation, exemplified by a well-attended get together on Australia Day. Other similar events are being planned. We recognize the need to bring others into our fellowship and seek the Lord's help as we plan for the future.

The Deacons are the elders, plus Paul Dyson, Marshall Reed, Alistair Weber, and David Wilson. The Deacons meet every second month, on the last Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. Property is maintained in good condition. Financial matters of the church are good and well controlled.

One member, Young Lee, continues the good work Scripture Teaching in local primary schools, speaking to 145 children, as well as having opportunity to speak to some of the parents. Our congregation continues a strong interest in mission with the Ladies Mission Society raising funds and praying for and supporting sixteen different mission works. We continue in good heart and look to the Lord to provide for our needs into the future.

Our membership as of 21st February 2023: 37 members, 10 adherents, and 1 child.

Ian Miller (Clerk of Session) presented **the Hunter** report.

The weekly worship services were conducted regularly at Raymond Terrace (am) and Cardiff (am & pm). Rev. Tso preached through the Book of Daniel in the mornings, and Ephesians in the evenings. Our sick, aged, and other interested persons were able to access the services. A combined count of audio and video listeners/viewers during the Covid lockdown in 2021 was about 4,000. During 2022 some 3,800 accessed services online from various local, national, and international locations. We are thankful for Rev Tso's faithful, challenging ministry. The ministry of the visiting preachers, Rev. George Ball, and Rev. Don Burgess was much appreciated.

Combined Raymond Terrace and Newcastle area Bible study/Prayer meetings were conducted mid-week at Cardiff, and simultaneously via interactive video link. Rev. Tso led helpful studies in Exodus and Romans. Mr. Miller organised the prayer section of each meeting. A 'concentric circles' approach to the order of prayer topics was generally employed. Initial praise and thanksgiving were followed by supplication for the persecuted Church; then world mission, mission nationally, our sister PCEA congregations; and finally local spiritual and temporal needs.

The Cardiff All Age Sunday School was well attended given the influx of parents and their children. Mrs. Amy Oringo and Mrs. Vanessa Tso (relieved occasionally by Mrs. Anna Fluit) taught the younger classes. Mr. Barnes and Rev. Tso taught the adult Church History course, introducing the Scottish Reformation, including John Knox and the 'Scots Confession of 1560'.

The young adults fellowship was conducted by the Minister and his wife in their home. We are grateful to the Lord for their generous hospitality. The congregation in Cardiff hold monthly fellowship lunches, as well as fellowship dinners.

We have been blessed by welcoming 3 married couples into communicant membership. An additional 11 adults (including 1 married couple with young children) have become valued adherents.

Miss Heather Beaton, a senior valued member, and former medical missionary to India, entered the glory on 28/12/22.

Some 103 Samaritan's Purse boxes of donated gifts were collected at Raymond Terrace, which operated as an area collection centre. Mission presentations included speakers from the Annie Soper School; Wilbert Chippenyu from Dumisani Theological Institute; Mr. Rowan Butler, and Victor Atallah (MERF) which was an online presentation in Sept.

Session enjoyed continued harmony in faithfully serving as Christ's under shepherds. The valuable contribution of Mr. Alex Steel (Assessor Elder) to the work of Session and Deacons' Court is gratefully acknowledged.

Presently the communicant membership is **52 adults, 17 adherents and 23 children**. Typical Lord's Day attendance has increased from an average of 65 (2021) to 85 persons this year.

With humble gratitude we ascribe all glory to our Sovereign God who has graciously blessed and kept us throughout 2022. We are assured that the LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy (Ps 103:8).

Donald McIntosh (elder) presented the **St. George's** report.

On the 9th of February 2022 we were able again to provide three worship services every week in the church building. The steeple and scaffolding had been made safe. The scaffolding was finally dismantled by the 14th of May, making access to church normal.

Attendance at the public services on the Lord's Day morning built up during the year (from 25 to over 40), and the evening services (from 15 to 20), and the Wednesday evening (from 10-15). All three services were able to be heard online, and via telephone link.

We were able to celebrate the Lord's Supper in 2022 in October with 40 participants.

The house at 3A Beaconsfield Parade was sold, and a two-year settlement arrangement entered on the sale of the Retirement Units at 3 Beaconsfield Parade via a *Put and Call Option Deed*, which was exchanged during May. The proceeds from these sales will aid in the cost of repairs to the church building.

Restoration work on the church continues which will include steeple restoration, a new roof and guttering.

Our Minister, Rev. John McCallum, after attaining the age of eighty years, and after a sudden illness, tendered his resignation, which took place on the 31st of January 2023. Mr. McCallum was the minister of St. George's congregation for thirty-seven and a half years, faithfully preaching the word of God. The congregation continues generally in good spirits. We are thankful to God for His graciousness to us, who has provided for us ministry of the Word and the public means of grace.

Our current membership:28. Adherents:17. Children: 6.

Tom Reeve (Clerk of Session) presented the **Hawkesbury Nepean** report.

2022 was an eventful year for our congregation. Our senior elder, Mr. Alex Neil was hospitalised in April. We are thankful that since June he has been well cared for in an Anglican Home at Kingswood. He has now stepped down from all congregational duties. We are pleased to have Mr. Ian Miller as an assessor elder. Our minister was also hospitalised in November, just as he reached the milestone of 20 years since being inducted to the charge. We are thankful he has returned to full health.

We also give thanks that two of the Tongan members were ordained as deacons – Mr. Lopeti Latu and Mr. Tevita Fihaki. After 12 years as deacon and treasurer, Mr. Allan Stewart, retired from both positions. Mr. Lee Wells has taken over as treasurer.

Regular morning and evening services continue at 11 am and 5 pm. Sunday School and Bible classes, and a Tongan language fellowship meeting, are held before the morning service. We continue to pray for our young people that they would be converted and serve the Lord in years to come. The Bible study and prayer meeting is held on-line at 12 noon on Fridays. We commence each year with a day of prayer – whilst the Tongan brethren have a week of special prayer in early January. The Presbytery online prayer days have been a blessing over the past two years.

Our minister has been covering the books of 1 Samuel, Psalms, James, and currently Mark. He also conducts weekly services at an aged care home in Chester Hill, whilst others assist in visitation to members and others in various nursing homes.

The grounds have been diligently maintained. Two working bees were held during the year. The manse is rented and is very well maintained. Many help in various ways. A special collection was taken for the people in Tonga who were affected by the tsunami, with other congregations contributing. A total of \$10,000 was collected and sent in the form of food, and necessities, as well as money gifts.

We are thankful for the unity in the congregation. Please pray with us (as co-labourers) that the faithful proclamation of God's Word applied by the Holy Spirit would bring everlasting fruit to His glory.

Our current membership: 36. Adherents: 6. Children and young people: 24.

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY REPORT

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

Congregation	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.
			2021	+	-	2022	Deaths	2021	2022	<4	4-11	12-18	19-30	31-45	45-64	65+	Total				
All Nations	3	0	68	8	8	68	0	-	137	3	15	22	32	42	17	6	137	0	2	32	18
Carrum Downs	2	0	9	8	2	15	0	23	25	1	3	4	7	3	7	7	32	2	0	0	0
Geelong	1	0	9	0	0	9	0	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	3	11	14	0	0	0	0
Knox	1	0	29	0	10	19	0	43	27	0	0	1	2	5	6	9	23	0	0	0	0
Narre Warren	2	0	23	0	5	18	2	35	32	3	0	0	6	4	14	8	35	0	0	0	0
Ulverstone	1	1	21	5	3	23	1	35	37	4	2	3	8	5	7	8	37	4	2	6	15
Southern Pres	10	1	159	21	28	152	3	146	268	11	20	30	55	59	54	49	278	6	4	38	33

The Southern Presbytery met on eight occasions during the past year, with five being ordinary meetings and three being special meetings. Presbytery is particularly appreciative of the Synod appointed assessors, who attended three meetings in person and the others via video conference. Considerable time and effort have been consumed in dealing with the defiance of court discissions and the consequences of a failure to follow church procedures. The actions of the Synod PRN in February this year should allow Presbytery to focus more on the spiritual well-being of the congregations. Progress is being made to implement all the decisions of Synod, including a recent meeting with the Knox congregation and plans to meet with the All Nations congregation. Despite these difficulties, Southern Presbytery was delighted to interview and recommend two candidates for the ministry, Mr Zach Dotson and Dr John Lee. Both these men come with considerable theological training and they are currently involved in preaching and pastoral work in Ulverstone and Knox respectively. Please keep them in prayer as they continue to progress in their studies and training for the ministry.

All Nations: The All Nations Congregation had a difficult year with constant Covid lockdowns and outbreaks in the south-east. About a dozen church families were badly affected, mainly through their children. In addition, we had to vacate our premises in April 2021 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. We were grateful for this although it was not so suitable for our people. Mr Yoa was active in pastoral care and livestreaming which continues on until now. On the 22nd October 2022 the All Nations building was re-opened where a large number of about 170 plus attended as reported in *The Presbyterian Banner*. Elders helped in preaching from time to time and an additional elder (Kuich Jioka) was ordained and inducted on 23 October 2022 bringing our elders to three. The Lord's Supper is observed quarterly every first Lord's Day of March, June, September, and December. The Women Bible Study and prayers is running every Wednesday of the week. Youth activities always on Fridays or Saturday evening, while Sunday School Catechism lesson runs fortnightly on Saturday mid-day and every Lord's Day. January and February 2023 attendance is 90-103, sometime less. Following out the agreed succession plan, in November William Thok Kim was appointed Assistant Treasurer and on 3 January 2023 the inaugural meeting of the Deacons' Court was held. Offerings in the first two months of 2023 averaged \$1,546 pw, and we trust will continue to build up.

Carrum Downs: The Carrum Downs congregation met for public worship each Lord's Day at 10.30am & 3pm. The congregation observed the Lord's supper on four occasions. During the year the members enjoyed the preaching ministry which covered in a systematic expository fashion Matthew's gospel, the books of 1&2 Samuel, and a ten part topical series on the subject of Walking with God.

During the year eight people came into the membership of the church and one infant & two adults were baptised. There are 30 people who are attendees, twenty seven of which are regular attenders. The Sunday school continued through the year with five children attending, drawn from two families. Regular outreach to the local community continued throughout the year and some visitors came in as a direct consequence.

The work was further developed with the addition of a weekly prayer meeting, a young adults bible class, and a church cleaning roster.”

Geelong: The congregation has continued to receive sound preaching throughout the year from our Interim Moderator, and regular supply from local ministers and lay preachers. This has provided a continuity in teaching, including series from Revelation, the Sermon on the Mount, the Letters of Paul, and the Psalms. We have also had the privilege of Rev. John Forbes’ preaching in March, and again in September, with his family, when attending Southern Presbytery meetings. This reminds us that we are part of the wider PCEA church, and of the support that we have received from the members of Presbytery and Synod in watching over God’s people.

In addition to our regular members and adherents, we have also been blessed by the frequent attendance of Bryan and Maria, and Greg, in addition to other visitors. It is our prayer that by maintaining a strong commitment to the faithful preaching of God’s Word, and by holy living and loving fellowship, we can build the Geelong congregation in both godliness and numbers, to the glory of God.

By God’s providence, we have been able to continue to meet the financial needs of the church as well as to support various mission work through our giving to Compassion and to other ministries. The rent of the manse to a Christian family has provided steady income for the church and has also helped with the security of the property and the maintenance of the grounds.

Our times of fellowship after the worship service have continued to build up the congregation by helpful discussions of the sermon and its practical applications for daily living. This helps to reinforce the relevance of the Bible to modern life and the importance of meditating on God’s Word. We give thanks to our Lord and Saviour for His blessings and provision throughout the past year, and we pray that He will continue to direct our paths in the year ahead. Let us conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).

Knox: Although the year 2022 brought some challenges, we have good reasons to recount it as a blessing for the Knox congregation. We had the opportunity to delve into expositional series in Matthew, Ezra, and Nehemiah during the morning services, while Esther, Ecclesiastes, and Galatians were covered in the evening services, with a few topical series in between. Most of the services were conducted by John Lee, and guest preachers were invited occasionally to encourage the congregation. The regular mid-week activities continued without any notable disruptions.

On average, about 20 people attended the morning services (23 during November–December), and around 11 people attended the evening ones. We also had about 50 visitors throughout the year (about 27 November–December), although many of them were John Lee’s family and friends. Unfortunately, we had to say goodbye to some members, including Chris White and Rahul Raniga, who once served as Elders at Knox. It was not easy for us to see them leave, along with others who moved on to different communities, and their departures moved us to trust God’s gracious hand even more as we needed his grace to sustain our life together.

Our ordinary offerings in 2022 were slightly below budget. We had to install an air-conditioner in the main hall and remove termites that affected the church and the manse especially from October through December, and these incurred some unexpected expenses. Thankfully, however, we received approximately \$1,000 designated for our missionary project. Half of the funds were contributed to Dumisani Theological Institute in South Africa, while the other half was allocated for Bibles and Blankets for Ukraine via European Mission Fellowship. It was good for us to contribute to these valuable causes and pray for God’s effective use of them.

Overall, we are grateful for the Lord’s blessing and guidance in 2022, despite the challenges and departures we had to experience. We give thanks to God for his mercy on our congregation.

Narre Warren: Although negotiations for the construction of the telecommunications tower have been slow and uncertain at times, the Optus Company continues to show interest in the project. The

Development Application sign was displayed on church premises from 25 January to 13 February. These signs are an important part of the consultation requirement. We hope that once all legal requirements are met, a specific date for the commencement of construction will be given. On January 9th the church held a memorial service for Patricia Cochrane who was a member of Narre Warren for several years. We miss her fellowship in the faith, but we thank God for her firm convictions about the hope of resurrection and immortality in the presence of the Lord. This year we have received several visitors and three of them participate in worship services regularly. The pastor has met with them privately to get to know them better and provide pastoral help in different areas of their lives. After several attempts to obtain a permanent treasurer for the church, a member of the congregation volunteered to assume this role. We are sure that our brother Vivian will do an excellent job as he adjusts to this role under Stewart Loudens' supervision. Over the past few months, several of our senior members have been diagnosed with conditions that limit their social and spiritual participation in church. Despite their struggles, they remain strong in faith and confident that God will help them endure these challenges with perfect peace. In short, Narre Warren Church is grateful to God for his help in creating favourable conditions for our spiritual development and unity in the Spirit.

Ulverstone: A major event in the life of the congregation occurred on the 19th May 2022 when Zach and Wilma Dotson, together with children Archie and Jayne arrived in Tasmania from the USA. The Session had engaged Zach to perform residential supply and had been assisting with the processing of the immigration requirements. Zach commenced his Lord's Day services on the subjects of Hosea 10:12b – Break up your fallow ground, and 1 Corinthians 2:2 – Nothing known but Christ and Him crucified.

Since then, Zach has been preaching through the book of Philippians in the morning services and Shorter Catechism texts in the afternoon services. The adult midday study has been going through the JC Ryle book on Holiness. The midweek meeting, after completing a study in the ten commandments has commenced on the Parables of Christ. We are much in prayer as Zach progresses with his application for the ministry.

On the 3rd May 2022 Rev John Forbes commenced as Interim Moderator and was able to visit with his family in July, participating in the winter car rally.

A special missions event occurred on the 2nd September when Dr Dickson Paul visited and spoke on his work with VETNET (animal husbandry) in India.

The year has seen some membership and attendance changes as some have passed away, others moved away, some tried for a while and others commenced with us. A number who cannot attend in person continue to benefit from the electronic connections to the services via Zoom. There are other meetings and fellowship events that are reported in the Banner each month.

As reported last year we are blessed with a range of ages and experiences, and this creates a rich fellowship. We are also conscious that it is the Lord who builds the church and thus look to Him continually to revive us and supply all our needs.

CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

Members: G.D. Ball (Convener), J. Klazinga (Banner), I. Miller.

This report is being written as the Sydney ‘World Pride’ concludes three weeks of celebration (17th Feb – 5th Mar). The Sydney Morning Herald reported, ‘Around 50,000 people marched across the Sydney Harbour Bridge (on Sunday 5th March) in a colourful display of solidarity with the LGBT community on the final day of ‘World Pride’. Emotions ran high, with a mid-bridge marriage proposal a highlight of the event . . . Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong were greeted by cheers as they joined the crowd at an opening ceremony, where organisers asked walkers to consider those in countries where LGBTQI+ communities are persecuted’. The ABC did a first-class job in promoting and celebrating such ‘beautiful diversity’. Now you know what your tax dollars do.

Many of us are shocked and confused at the moral decline we’ve witnessed in our lifetime. We find it hard to understand how it has happened so quickly, and equally hard to know how we should respond to this ‘sexular age’. Until around 20 years ago, the Biblical (and traditional) view of marriage was between one man and one woman. Heterosexuality was the norm, and there were only two genders. Anything outside that was condemned and seen as abnormal. But today, homosexuality and gender fluidity aren’t merely tolerated: they are actively celebrated and promoted as good. The traditional Biblical understanding of marriage and gender is now considered oppressive and harmful. Teaching traditional values to children in school is increasingly considered suspect, as the recent Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) report alleges.

1. Threat to Christian Schools.

The Federal Government through the office of Attorney-General, Mark Dreyfus, asked the *Australian Law Reform Commission* (ALRC) to examine the way commonwealth anti-discrimination law applied to Religious Schools to ensure students and teachers could not be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The ALRC produced a draft report late January 2023. (A final report is expected by April 21). It’s quite a depressing read. The report is heavily weighted against the religious freedom of Christian schools.

Neil Foster, Associate Professor of Law in Newcastle, summarises the recommendations: - Religious schools and colleges can no longer apply conduct rules relating to **student and staff** behaviour in the area of sexual activity or gender identity (except for theological colleges training clergy for formal ordination).

Religious schools and colleges can require **staff** to share the **religious outlook** of the body, or preference such staff in appointments **only where participation in teaching religion is a ‘genuine requirement’** of the position. In all other subjects, teachers would not have to share the school’s religious beliefs and culture. In making these decisions, however, no consideration may be given to staff behaviour, views or identity relating to sexual activity, or orientation, or gender identity. Indeed, schools will also be required to allow the promotion of LGBTQ+ ideology.

Foster concludes, ‘[The Report] effectively recommends the removal of protections enjoyed by religious educational institutions which have been designed to safeguard the ability of these organisations to operate in accordance with their religious beliefs . . . If the ALRC had its way, religious schools will no longer be allowed to be . . . religious. At least not when sexuality and gender are concerned’.

If these proposals were to become law, Christian schools may face legal action from activists who are opposed to Christian beliefs about marriage, sexuality, and gender identity.

Stephen McAlpine writes in his blog, ‘this is the make-or-break time for Christian schooling . . . By Christian I mean those schools that seek to offer an alternate vision to the sexular [sic] age’s vision of what life is about. If Christian schools don’t take a stand on what is the single-most hostile assault on biblical distinctives then why bother’.

Many individuals, organisations, and churches have submitted submissions, including a letter signed by over 30 leaders from the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic faiths, warning that the reform proposals represent a ‘major blow to authentic faith-based education’.

2. Transgenderism.

The 2010 Macquarie dictionary defines transgender as, ‘relating to a person whose gender identity is different from their physiological gender’. It used to be there were only two genders – male and female – which was determined by your chromosomes. Now, according to at least one website, there are 81 identified genders. The ‘wordie’ Kel Richards informs us that one of the newest of these is ‘unigender’. If you say you are ‘unigender’ you are claiming that your gender is unique to you alone, and no one else is the same gender as you or can feel or understand your gender. There is something similar called ‘nominalgender’ which means your gender is ‘so much just you, that no one else can even experience it.’ But the fastest growing set of genders is, apparently, something called ‘xenogendered’. The prefix ‘xeno’ comes from Greek and means ‘other’ or ‘different in origin.’ It appears that someone who identifies as being ‘xenogendered’ feels more akin to animals or plants or foods than to anything human.

The transgender movement would have us believe that we’re not defined by our bodies - but how we think and feel about ourselves. As a result, someone born with a male body but who later identifies as a woman would be described today as a trans or transgender woman; and someone born with a female body but who later identifies as a man would be described as a trans or transgender man. That’s why it’s now controversial to ask, ‘what is a man’ or ‘what is a woman’. The question cannot be answered without fear of offending someone who may identify as transgender.

I discovered recently that when parents tried to enrol their child in their local soccer club, they were required to specify the child’s gender by answering the following options: ‘Male’, ‘Female’, ‘Prefer not to say’, or ‘Gender fluid’. Just think about it: five or ten years ago, such a question would have been unthinkable, even unintelligible. But now the concept is simply accepted and embraced without batting an eyelid. What do we make of it all?

Rosaria Butterfield helpfully explains, ‘Throughout most of human history, gender meant being male or female. There was no distinction made between one’s biological sex and one’s gender. It wasn’t until 1963 that gender began to refer to social attributes that differed from biological sex. This new definition was used by Second Wave Feminists, such as Kate Millet and Simone de Beauvoir, to miscategorise gender as the cultural manifestation of biology. Second-wave feminists argued that patriarchal society contrived gender roles merely to degrade women, thereby rejecting the biblical understanding that God created man and woman from a godly pattern for a creational purpose. Transgenderism emerged from this feminist political rejection of the creation ordinance that says God made human beings male and female.

Ultimately, that feeling of disconnect between one’s body and one’s sense of gender are a consequence of the fall and its effect on our hearts, minds, and bodies. In some cases, the feeling is driven chiefly by a biological problem related to genetics or hormones. From a biblical perspective, someone with a severe hormonal imbalance or chromosomal abnormality has a physical health problem, not an identity problem. Godly help for the gender dysphoric person includes biblical counselling and potentially medical treatments that restore normative hormonal balance. Godly support for the gender dysphoric individual understands medical problems as part of the fall of man. Such trials can be serious, difficult, and lifelong.

Not all who claim to be transgendered, however, are suffering from a biological defect, and even some who are, cannot reduce their feelings to a biological cause. Personal sin is still a reality . . . Transgenderism, from the perspective of Scripture, is related to the sin of envy. Specifically, transgenderism is at root, sinful envy of the sexual anatomy of another . . . Paul situates the sin of

envy as one consequence of exchanging God for idolatry. ‘And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, etc’ (Romans 1: 28-29). To be full of envy is to be blinded by the desire to have what belongs to someone else. Because our hearts are deceitful, some persons who claim a transgendered identity may not recognize their envy and will need help in seeing the envious root of their feelings that their gender and biological sex are different. If transgenderism is related to the sin of envy, then genuine repentance can produce the virtue of contentment. A person who thinks he is transgendered must learn the same lesson as the rest of us: to be content in God and unsatisfied in the world . . . Even when hormonal or chromosomal imbalance causes gender confusion, hope is found in the gospel. We live in a fallen world, and our bodies groan under sin. Ultimately, we all wait to experience the delight of renewed bodies in the new heavens and new earth’. (Butterfield. *Five Lies of our Anti-Christian Age*, Wheaton, IL, Crossway, 2023).

The goal of transgenderism is to erase the image of God and remove God from His throne. The fingerprints of the evil one and his characteristic graffiti are clear. Transgender folks are duped into believing the lie that they can redefine morality, biology, and truth, and be God! The good news is that Jesus Christ came as a man – with a human body – to destroy the works of the evil one. He is the only One who can offer genuine hope, healing and restoration to fallen, failed, broken and deceived sinners.

3. Same-Sex Attraction.

The Church of England's General Synod meeting earlier this year in February voted to allow priests to bless same-sex marriages and civil partnerships. The statement said, ‘While couples won't be able to marry in the church they can come to church after a civil marriage or civil partnership to give thanks, dedicate their relationship to God and receive God's blessing’. We should feel deeply saddened by this decision of the General Synod.

It has caused enormous repercussions throughout the Anglican communion worldwide, including here in Australia. One commentator suggests it will create the biggest shakeup in the Anglican church since the Reformation. Maybe not a bad thing!

Many evangelical Anglicans are withdrawing from the ‘mother church’ and forming a new alliance under the organisation of GAFCON (The Global Anglican Future Conference).

It illustrates however, that Churches and Christians are under increasing pressure to compromise on biblical sexuality and conform to the ethos of the world. It raises the question how we should respond to individuals who are same-sex attracted, and to same sex couples. While we'd agree that same sex couples could never be in membership in the church – nor could their relationship be ‘blessed’ – nevertheless our church services are open to all, and all are to be made welcome. Jesus warns us ‘beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy’ (Matt. 12:1). We must not behave as ‘holier than thou’. We are all by nature fallen and flawed creatures. We've all been sexual failures. We've all been guilty of having illicit sexual desires. It's part of our history, our experience, and our DNA.

But the gospel makes the difference. The Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit changes lives. Paul writes to the Corinthians, ‘Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, **nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.** And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God’ (1 Cor. 6: 9-11).

A modern-day example of a lesbian conversion is Rosaria Butterfield, a former professor of English and women's studies at Syracuse University. She describes her difficult journey to faith in

Christ as a train wreck in her book, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*. It should be mandatory reading for every church office bearer. It's not only a gripping read, but gives us confidence in the power of the gospel, and the importance of befriending and engaging such people.

We are not suggesting that when a same sex attracted person is converted, they have no more struggles in this area. Listen to the testimony of Tracey, a member of St. Helen's (London). She knew she was gay when she was 12. She had lived an active gay lifestyle in her twenties until she became a Christian a few years ago. She says, 'Now that I'm a Christian it doesn't mean that I have become straight. I've always been attracted to girls. The thing that helped me was understanding that temptation and sin were different things. I have a choice: I can either honour God with my actions or dishonour him.' She continues, 'I find it upsetting when Christians take different bits of the Bible and say, I'll go with this and not that, as it was quite clear to me what the Bible taught on homosexuality. There is a cost, and it is tricky, but holding on to the truths in the Bible, I choose to honour Jesus. I have a wonderful church family who are incredibly supportive.'

Her testimony emphasises the importance of the church providing clear and consistent Biblical teaching when it comes to sexuality – and strong Christian fellowship and support.

What ultimately defines the Christian - is not our gender - but being in Christ Jesus. And if we remember our new identity in Christ, it will help us face our struggles and temptations – sexual or otherwise - with gospel-fuelled hope.

4. Our Father or Mother?

The General Synod of The Church of England also considered using gender-neutral language when addressing God. Thus, in the Lord's Prayer, 'Our Father' would be replaced by 'Our Mother' or 'Our Parent'. The motivation for the change is to make God more 'user-friendly' and to avoid offending members of the LGBTQ+ community. Thankfully one conservative member of the Synod protested, 'The fact that God is called 'Father' can't be substituted by 'Mother' without changing meaning, nor can it be gender-neutralized to 'Parent' without loss of meaning. Fathers and mothers are not interchangeable but relate to their offspring in different ways.'

We agree. Whose instruction should we accept – the bishops of the Church of England or the Lord Jesus Christ? Jesus taught us to pray by saying, 'Our Father'. He encourages us to remember how great and how gracious the Father is. He instructs us that we can only come to the Father through Him (Jn. 14:6). He speaks of His Father as our Father, and the Father of all who believe (Matt. 6:1,4,18). He assures us that no one can pluck us out of the Father's hand (Jn. 10: 27-30). He promises that His people will spend eternity in His Father's house (Jn. 14:2-3).

Throughout the New Testament prayer is normally addressed to the Father – as the first person of the Trinity - through the Son, by (*or with the aid of*) the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, '**For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father**' (Eph. 2:18).

Thankfully gender neuter language is not an issue in our church. But it is a reminder to us that we could be using the Lord's Prayer in our worship services more often than we do. The Directory for Public Worship (1645) states, '***Because the prayer which Christ taught His disciples is not only a pattern of prayer, but itself a most comprehensive prayer, we recommend it also to be used in the prayers of the church***'.

5. God Save The King.

The Coronation of King Charles III is planned for Saturday 6th May 2023. The ceremony will take place at Westminster Abbey, London, and will be conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. With his ascension to the throne King Charles III assumes the title Defender of the Faith, and Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Even though this position is mostly ceremonial and symbolic, yet

even as the titular head of the Church of England, King Charles will appoint high-ranking members of the church.

His relationship to the Church of Scotland is different because of Scotland's complicated history. The Church of Scotland is Presbyterian. Historically and doctrinally Presbyterianism rejects the doctrine that the state is superior to the church in ecclesiastical matters and testifies that Jesus Christ alone is King and Head of the Church. Therefore, King Charles is not the Supreme Governor of the Church of Scotland, and when attending services there he does so only as an ordinary member.

One of the first things King Charles III did, after the death of His mother Queen Elizabeth II, at an Accession Council meeting in St James's Palace, was to make a formal oath to secure the Church of Scotland. This was done in the following words:

'I, Charles the Third, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of My other Realms and Territories, King, Defender of the Faith, do faithfully promise and swear that I shall inviolably maintain and preserve the Settlement of the true Protestant Religion as established by the Laws made in Scotland in prosecution of the Claim of Right and particularly by an Act intituled "An Act for securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government" and by the Acts passed in the Parliament of both Kingdom for Union of the two Kingdoms, together with the Government, Worship, Discipline, Rights and Privileges of the Church of Scotland. So help me God'.

Fine words. But given the current apostate state of the Church of Scotland and the doubt surrounding Charles' commitment to Protestantism, we have no reason to be confident. We ought to pray, 'God save the king'.

6. ACL (Australian Christian Lobby).

Many of us were disappointed when we received the news on 24 Feb from Martyn Iles when he reported, 'After five incredible years as managing director of the Australian Christian Lobby, my employment has been terminated by the Board. The Board has reviewed ACL's strategic direction and decided I am not the right person to lead the revised strategy, which focuses more primarily on political tactics, less on the gospel'.

We express our thanks to Martyn for providing the ACL with clear gospel leadership, something that had been lacking previously. His removal is a great loss.

Jim Wallace, Chairman of the ACL Board, wrote in response, 'Allow me to reiterate, that the objectives of ACL have not changed. As the Australian Christian Lobby, it is the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that drives every aspect of the work that we do – from phone canvassing to our Board decisions. It is the Gospel that compels us as Christians to participate in the political discourse and to petition governments, so that Christian principles find expression in legislation and public policy. Our focus will always be on following and obeying Jesus, which requires that the Gospel message underpins our political engagement'. Despite such an assurance we fear that though the Gospel is still held officially, it may not be as front and centre as it was.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Synod expresses its concern regarding the current threat facing the independency of Christian Schools if the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission are adopted. Synod prays that Christian Schools be permitted to continue to exercise freedom to appoint staff members who are in agreement with its doctrines and beliefs. We also affirm that every child is made in the image of God and should therefore be treated with dignity and respect and be encouraged to discover the full potential of their identity in light of the Bible's teaching.

2. Synod recognises the distress of those families who have a family member who struggles with their sexual identity. We pray that they may receive the appropriate medical and/or spiritual counsel, so that ultimately, they may affirm their God given gender and come to discover fullness of life in Christ.
3. Synod affirms its belief that marriage as God intended is between a man and a woman and pledges to uphold and promote the Biblical teaching on human sexuality. Synod also encourages sessions to ensure that our congregations are welcoming places for all to attend; to be sensitive toward those who are same sex attracted, or who may grapple with other temptations; and to provide the support necessary to encourage such to live a chaste and obedient life.
4. Synod encourage ministers and elders to use the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples – perhaps to conclude or finalise public prayer. The congregation might also be encouraged to ‘seal up’ the praises and prayers with a heartfelt ‘Amen’!
5. As Synod anticipates the coronation of King Charles III on 6th May 2023 in Westminster Abbey, we assure him of our prayers so that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way (1 Tim. 2: 1-2). We pray that he, by God’s grace, will be enabled to maintain the solemn vows made (Eccl. 5: 4-5); and to defend and contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). We pray that he may rule with the same attitude as the King of kings who humbled Himself and became a servant (Phil. 2: 3-8). Long live the King. God save the King.
6. Synod is thankful for the work of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL), Family Voice, and other such organisations, which are committed to upholding and defending Christian values in the ‘marketplace’.
7. Synod encourages members to continue to pray for the Lord’s sovereign mercies that He may yet revive us, that we be given a fresh understanding of His majesty and glory, a profound understanding of our sin, a renewed sense of the wonder of God’s grace, and a high view of the centrality of the Cross.
8. Synod appoint (say) Saturday 29th July 2023 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.
9. 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.

PRESBYTERIAN BANNER REPORT

Editor: Rev. Jim Klazinga

Subscriptions:

For 2023, there are currently 105 paid subscriptions, and 10 complimentary subscriptions, making for a total of 115 subscriptions.

12 out of the 13 congregations have bulk subscriptions. Currently, we have 100 bulk subscriptions. One congregation decreased their 2023 subscriptions by 2, one congregation increased by 4, while the rest remained the same.

At the time of the writing of this report, two of the congregations have not yet paid for their 2022 subscriptions (total subscriptions: 12), and seven have not paid for their 2023 subscriptions (total subscriptions: 47). Five congregations have paid for their 2023 subscriptions (total subscriptions: 53). I have just recently set up an invoice template and will begin sending out invoices with the magazines.

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 173 email addresses, many of whom are not PCEA members. Some email subscribers may be forwarding 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.

In Brisbane, we send copies of the magazine to elderly members who join our services by phone because they are not able to come to church. One member who started receiving the magazine just this year responded, "I found it really uplifting and makes me feel I know more about my brothers and sisters in the Lord. Thank you so much for caring and for thinking of me." Perhaps other Deacons' Courts who are not yet doing this might want to consider purchasing extra subscriptions for this purpose, as well as making some copies of the magazine available for visitors.

Banner Finances:

Balance as of 19 March 2022 - \$4037.79

Income:

- Subscription Payments - \$2800.00
- Bank Interest - \$18.56

Expenses:

- Printing Expenses - \$2260.28
- Postage Expenses - \$986.58
- Bank Fees - \$4.2

Balance as of 18 March 2023 - \$3605.29

Estimated Subscription fees outstanding as of 19 March - \$1862

Estimated Costs for rest of year - \$2600

Estimated Balance at the end of 2023 - \$2867

At this point, it is not anticipated that we will need to increase subscription costs in 2024.

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 the congregations.
3. Synod continues to support the printing and mailing of paper copies of the magazine, along with making pdf copies of the magazine available by email and on the PCEA website.
4. Synod encourages the Deacons' Courts to consider purchasing extra printed subscriptions for the purpose of: (a) giving as gifts to elderly members who are no longer able to come to church; and (b) making the magazine available for visitors.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Members: D Kerridge; R.Tso, N. O'Dell

Website

The Website continues to be well utilised by visitors and a steady stream of enquiries, both official (denominational representatives et al.), and informal (mostly from people seeking congregational information, some historical/genealogical enquires) have been received via the contact form.

The archive of old church magazines is the most accessed part of the site, along with downloads of *The Presbyterian Banner*.

The website CMS operating system is in the process of upgrading. Nic O'Dell is investigating how this can be done without too much interference to the structure of the site, but we are also investigating a wholesale change to the framework and appearance of the website. Comments are always welcome.

Intranet

All Synod members, Committees and Presbyteries (as 'Group' entities), have access to the PCEA Intranet with an individually assigned @pcea.org.au email address. The Committee encourages the use of this resource as it is provided under a not-for-profit licence agreement with Microsoft. Microsoft's rules for this licensing to continue to be granted demand at least an 85% usage. We are currently averaging less than 22% usage. Please make use of the resource.

Microsoft Sharepoint (accessed at <https://pceanorthern.sharepoint.com/>) is 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 being done in Law and Advisory Committee to database Acts and Decisions from past years will be stored here.

Committee work can be done and shared in real time on Microsoft 365 (formerly Office 365) suite online using Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Outlook, etc. Microsoft Teams is available for meetings and integrated with the other parts of Microsoft 365.

DocuSign

DocuSign is available to execute documents for Trustees and any associated matters in Deacons' Courts.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE BUDGET

The costs incurred by the Committee for website and associated fees are in the 2022 Balance Sheet. Total \$1387 (reimbursement is being sought at the time of writing this report by the Hunter Congregation Deacons' Court for phone server costs incurred in 2022 - \$700 – thus 2022 Actual is \$2,087). Our proposed budget for 2023 is:

Proposed IT Budget

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

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. That the Synod commend the PCEA website to delegates and congregations and they be encouraged to participate in the life of the church online by active registration, collaboration and comment.
2. The Information Technology Committee proposed budget for 2023 be approved and funds provided for the work of this Committee.

PSALMODY COMMITTEE

Members: D. Kerridge (Convener), G. Ball, D. McIntosh, Julie Schmidt, Esther Hamilton

The Committee corresponded during the year via email.

In answer to a motion moved at last year's Synod (Minutes 22.2.36), the Convener was able to correspond with Mr Charles Douglas, the Clerk of the Free Church of Scotland Psalmody Committee. The result was that we have been able to secure the licencing rights to reproduce and reprint Sing Psalms in Australia. Mr Douglas' exact response was "We authorise the licensing for reproducing Sing Psalms in Australia and grant permission given on the proviso that the usual acknowledgements are made as per standard copyright procedures. A donation towards the work of the committee would be appreciated." [Email, 6/7/22]

The Committee now must consider how we are to proceed and would value input on this from delegates. If we move towards our own version – most likely a new compilation of existing editions from other denominations - the rights to the words of Sing Psalms versions is an important step.

In the meantime, a wider discussion of the utilisation of Sing Psalms itself is needed. This perhaps could include other Psalm singing denominations in Australia. A bound edition would be ideal for wider distribution, but this is only cost effective if a bulk print run is undertaken. At this stage the licensing allows congregations to print out their own full copies, or use them digitally with appropriate attribution as mentioned above.

We are encouraged to report that a Psalmody conference was held in Northern Presbytery in October, 2022. The day was very well attended by people from Brisbane, Northern Rivers and Wauchope congregations. Mrs Sonja Hamilton and Miss Julie Schmidt led the event. The day was a success and well received by participants, many of whom were not used to Psalm singing, let alone singing in parts. One suggestion that came from feedback for the day was that a basic repertoire of tunes for those new to Psalm singing could be learned between conference days (and camps etc) in each respective congregation and then, when we do come together, to have that base to build on and embellish.

Towards this end, it would be good to work out what congregations want their people to learn and share this with others, in much the same way that Psalms and tunes are given out for Youth and fellowship prescribed work each year.

Again, the training of new precentors is a matter for each Session to note. The Committee would be pleased to help in resourcing this effort through establishing and maintaining contact with local precentors.

Proposed Deliverances

1. That an appropriate donation to the Free Church of Scotland Psalmody Committee for copyright licencing be paid from Synod funds.
2. That congregations and fellow Psalm-singing denominations be made aware of the possible availability of locally produced copies of Sing Psalms. An estimate for a subsequent print run be brought to next Synod.

SUPERANNUATION (and INSURANCE) COMMITTEE

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

A. SUPERANNUATION

1. Church Contributions to Superannuation

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

- Self-supporting congregations: 15%
- Self-supporting congregations (with minister aged 75 and over): Superannuation Guarantee Rate (currently at 10.5%)
- 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 31/12/22 was \$216,957. The decrease of \$9342 was entirely the result of the revaluation of invested funds.

The SSF Working Account balance as at 31/12/22 was \$43,547. The increase of \$6,293 was income generated by the capital account.

b. **The Superannuation Levy Account** balance as at 31/12/22 was \$9,441, which was a decrease of \$16,836. Payments to ministers' nominated funds totalled \$97,148. 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%
- Inducted ministers (from age 75): Superannuation Guarantee Rate (currently at 10.5%)

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 31/01/23 was 1.03%. The historical performance as at 31/01/23 for the past 5 years was 6.52%.

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.

The committee is made aware of the challenges that Presbytery, Sessions and Deacons' Courts have in monitoring ministers' leave entitlements to ensure ministers do not suffer burn out through failure to take it, even though it has been the yearly deliverance from the report.

To ensure that the commitment is met, the committee is intending to provide a template of minister's LSL/Annual Leave register, along with a yearly email reminder for better supervision and reporting.

C. REVIEW ON LONG SERVICE LEAVE/ANNUAL LEAVE

The Committee anticipates a review of some of the LSL/Annual leave policies in the coming year.

D. Church Insurance

The Committee agreed to remove Dr Ward from the Insurance Committee in accordance with the decision of the PRN Synod of 2023, and agreed that Rev Robin Tso be the primary administration contact person with ACS Financial while retaining Dr Ramsay and Mr Steel as enquirers.

The committee intends to provide the relevant calculation for each congregation's premiums for better transparency. Church insurance policies will be sent out to each deacons' court.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Synod instructs 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.
2. Synod approves the committee's intention to provide a template of minister's LSL/Annual Leave register, to be sent to all Deacons' Court.

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 (\$1,178 per week - reviewed annually on 1st January) together with the present basis of review be continued.

2. Stipend Relief

In March 2023, 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 2023/2024. It is proposed that a total of \$4,000 pledged by two Deacons' Courts in the Presbytery pursuant to Handbook 3.17.d be treated as being in addition to the Presbytery approval if necessary.

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.

The committee has been informed that a request for Stipend relief from Hawkesbury-Nepean Deacons' Court is likely to be tabled at the meeting of Central Presbytery on 14 March. The amount is expected to be in the range \$10,000-\$14,000. As the report of the Finance Committee will have been submitted before the meeting of Central Presbytery, any approved request will be presented to Synod by notice of motion.

Designated stipend relief funds were exhausted during 2022, and stipend relief since 1 January has been provided almost entirely from General Funds. It is expected that this will continue to be the case during the synodical year 2023/24.

3. The Capital Assistance Fund

As at 31/12/22 assets totalled \$412,131 which was an increase of \$524 on 2021. There was no expenditure. The increase was net result of income received and the revaluation of investments.

4. Audit Requirements

During the past year, the committee received a request from Northern Presbytery in which clarification was sought of the existing requirements for the review/audit of congregational financial reports.

The Handbook (3.15) sets out the requirement for an audit, preferably by a person with accounting experience. Synod decision 2017.36.5 sought to modify the requirement. That decision permitted a review, being a less rigorous form of examination than an audit, but required that it be performed by a qualified professional. On review of the matter, the Committee found it necessary to refer the matter to the Law & Advisory Committee due to Class I issues, and a response was duly received. The Committee will return to this matter shortly.

5. 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 31/12/23 – 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. Stipend Assistance of up to \$ 30,000 for 2023/2024 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 funded from General Funds to the extent necessary.
 - Be subject to the availability of funds.

GENERAL TREASURER

Report to Synod 2023

1. Financial Needs

All financial needs of the Synod were adequately provided for during 2022. Total funds decreased by \$77,544 to \$2,382,663 after allowing for \$434,775 held on behalf of others (Mission Fields, Congregation Bequests etc.).

The decrease was the result of investment performance, along with some working funds (particularly stipend relief) having expenses well in excess of their income.

Interest rates on term deposits began to improve in the second half of 2022; however the benefit will not be seen in the accounts until 2023 when deposits mature and interest is received.

2. Synod General Working Funds

Synod General Working Funds held, as at 31/12/22 was \$821,298. This was a decrease of \$18,366 on 2021. Investment performance was unfavourable. In 2023, increased income resulting from higher interest rates is likely to more than offset by an increased need to fund Stipend Relief requests from General Funds.

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

Nil

FINANCE COMMITTEE - APPENDIX "A"

BUDGET - SYNOD MAJOR WORKING FUNDS

for twelve months ending 31/12/23

Fund	Balance as at 31/12/22	Estimated Income Int/Divnds to 12/23	Estimated Givings & Other	Estimated Expenditure to 12/23	Estimated Surplus (Deficit)	Estimated Credit Balance 31/12/23	Estimated Deficit Balance 31/12/23
Capital Assistance Fund	412,131	8,000	0	0	8,000	420,131	
Church Extension	2,875	100	100	0	200	3,075	
Stipend Relief	0	3,000	1,000	38,000	-34,000		-34,000
Missions - General)	Refer missions report				
Miss Relief (Equities))					
Miss Rel (Working Fnd))					
Super Support	43,547	7,000	0	7,500	-500	43,047	
Training of Ministry	215,551	8,500	500	0	9,000	224,551	
Youth & Fellowship	18,877	1,000	500	300	1,200	20,077	
General Funds	838,418	25,000	700	20,000	5,700	844,118	

Stipend Relief assumes undrawn 2022/23 approvals will be drawn before the end of April. It is assumed that half of 2023/24 approvals will be drawn before 31 December. The deficit will be funded from General Funds.

Youth & Fellowship excludes camp income & expenditure, which are assumed to be equal.

General Funds reflect the balance before the funding of the Stipend Relief deficit.

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 lodged with Daniel Butt and Co., Solicitors, Suite 4, Level 1, 1 Stanley St, Maclean, NSW as notified to Synod 2021. All NSW conveyancing is now done via eConveyancing. As agreed at Synod 2022, the Solicitor continues to hold the NSW certificates along with Victorian and Queensland deeds for archival safe-keeping (and for back-up).

No physical deeds were lodged or uplifted during 2022.

Common Seal:

DocuSign (a digital signature application) has been used to execute Trustee documents under the Common Seal for the following:

- 10/3/22 – Owners Consent re 41 Campbell St, Wauchope
- 7/4/22 – Document for Section S88B Easement of land at 41 Campbell St, Wauchope
- 8/4/22 – NSW Residential Exclusive Agency Agreement - Savills
- 10/5/22 – Put and Call Option Deed 3 Beaconsfield Pde, Lindfield; Contract for Sale 3A Beaconsfield Pde, Lindfield.
- 11/5/22 – Owners Consent Letter re 3 and 3A Beaconsfield Pde, Lindfield.
- 3/6/22 – PEXA Client Authorisation re 3A Beaconsfield Pde, Lindfield
- 18/8/22 – Contract for the sale of part Lot 12, 41 Campbell St, Wauchope.
- 24/8/22 – Client Authorisation Priest Legal for sale of part Lot 12 at 41 Campbell St, Wauchope.

Review of results as at 31/12/21

Diversification

Actual as at 31/12/22		Asset Class	Investment Strategy	
Amount	Percentage		Benchmark	Range
121,273	35%	Cash / Term Deposits	20%	10%-30%
225,696	65%	Equities	80%	70%-90%
346,969	100%		100%	

The proportion of funds invested in equities has increased (2021 was 59%) as Synod decision 22.2.42.8 began to be implemented towards the end of 2022.

Return:

Growth -

Total Trust Funds (Specified Capital Funds) decreased by \$22,917 (6.2%) during 2021 against a Target of 7.8% (CPI). "Real value" (keeping up with inflation) was therefore not achieved. This was the result of economic uncertainty arising from the combination of higher inflation and higher interest rates. When CPI is taken into account since 1998 total Capital funds lag behind by \$185,386 (c.35%) as at 31/12/22 (2021: c.26%)

Income-

Income of \$10,423 represented a return of 3% on funds against a Target of 2.3% (2022 Average Official Cash Interest Rate of 1.3% + 1.0%). Income returns were lower due to the non-recurrence of a large special dividend paid by Milton Corporation in 2021 prior to the completion of its takeover. Returns on cash improved in the latter part of the year, however the benefit will not be seen until 2023 when term deposits mature.

Investment Strategy Objectives -

Growth - **Not Achieved** for 2022 and therefore **still behind** with CPI added since 1998.

Income - **Achieved** for 2022

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Nil.

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 are lodged with related NSW and Victorian documents with Daniel Butt and Co., Solicitors, Suite 4, Level 1, 1 Stanley St, Maclean, NSW.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCES

1. Nil

THE TRUSTEES FOR VICTORIA OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA

Trustees: WI Hall (Secretary), Synod Clerk, Synod Treasurer, D. Ramsay, R. Tso

1. Investments

Funds held by the corporation for Synod at 31/12/2022 totalled \$428,325, including \$7,982 held in the Superannuation Support Fund. Of this total, \$333,622 is held in shares. Share values decreased by 4.0% during 2022 after rising 15.9% the previous year. The overall income return on funds (shares and cash) was 4.5%, up from 4.0% the previous year. A further increase is likely this year as a result of rising interest rates.

2. Common Seal Applications during 2022

No	Date Executed	By whom	Details	On behalf of
112	29/04/22	WIH/RSW	Optus Tower Lease at 108 Prospect Hill Road, Narre Warren	Narre Warren
113	17/09/22	WIH/DR	Transfer of Optus Tower Lease from Optus to Australia Tower Network	Narre Warren

3. Trustees

Mr Ramsay and Rev. Tso were appointed as trustees by Synod in May 2022 replacing Mr S. Loudon and Dr R Ward whose periods of service came to an end in 2022.

4. Optus Tower Lease (Narre Warren PCEA)

The Development Application to construct a telecommunications tower at Narre Warren is slowly proceeding but not yet approved. The Development Application sign was displayed on church premises from 25 January to 13 February 2022, as part of the consultation process undertaken by City of Casey council.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

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

CORRESPONDENCE

Item 1

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

14 March 2023

Rev. D. Kerridge
The Clerk of Synod

Dear Rev. Kerridge,

Southern Presbytery has considered the recommendations of the Training of Ministry Committee regarding Mr Zachary Dotson's application as a candidate for the ministry. Presbytery resolved that he be received as a candidate for the ministry and that he be granted provisional recognition. To this end, we seek Synod's confirmation of this action. An Extract Minute and Overture to this purpose are attached.

EXTRACT MINUTE

The Southern Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia met for special business on Monday 13 March 2023 via video conference. Having been duly constituted with prayer, the Southern Presbytery resolved *inter alia*:

3. MINISTRY APPLICANTS

3.1. MR ZACHARY DOTSON

DECISION – IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:

Presbytery recommend Mr Zachary Dotson be received as a candidate for the ministry, admit him to provisional recognition, and overture Synod seeking confirmation of this action.

Extracted from the unconfirmed minutes of the Southern Presbytery by the Clerk on 14 March 2023.


OVERTURE

To the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia:

WHEREAS the Southern Presbytery met on 17 September 2022 in Narre Warren to consider Mr Zachary Dotson's application as a candidate for the ministry and, after examination, agreed to recommend his application,

AND WHEREAS the Training of Ministry Committee concurred with the same, and informed Presbytery of their recommendation on 10 March 2023,

NOW THEREFORE the Southern Presbytery respectfully overtures the Synod to take these premises into consideration and confirm Mr Dotson's reception as a candidate for the ministry, or to do otherwise for this object as the Synod in its wisdom may deem best.


Dr Donald Ramsay
Clerk of Southern Presbytery

Item 2

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

14 March 2023

Rev. D. Kerridge
The Clerk of Synod

Dear Rev. Kerridge,

Southern Presbytery has considered the recommendations of the Training of Ministry Committee regarding Dr John Lee's application as a candidate for the ministry. Presbytery resolved that he be received as a candidate for the ministry and that he be granted provisional recognition. To this end, we seek Synod's confirmation of this action. An Extract Minute and Overture to this purpose are attached.

EXTRACT MINUTE

The Southern Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia met for special business on Monday 13 March 2023 via video conference. Having been duly constituted with prayer, the Southern Presbytery resolved *inter alia*:

3. MINISTRY APPLICANTS

3.2. DR JOHN LEE

DECISION – IT WAS RESOLVED THAT:

Presbytery recommend Dr John Lee be received as a candidate for the ministry, admit him to provisional recognition, and overture Synod seeking confirmation of this action.

Extracted from the unconfirmed minutes of the Southern Presbytery by the Clerk on 14 March 2023.


OVERTURE

To the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia:

WHEREAS the Southern Presbytery met on 17 September 2022 in Narre Warren to consider Dr John Lee's application as a candidate for the ministry and, after examination, agreed to recommend his application,

AND WHEREAS the Training of Ministry Committee concurred with the same, and informed Presbytery of their recommendation on 10 March 2023,

NOW THEREFORE the Southern Presbytery respectfully overtures the Synod to take these premises into consideration and confirm Dr Lee's reception as a candidate for the ministry, or to do otherwise for this object as the Synod in its wisdom may deem best.


Dr Donald Ramsay
Clerk of Southern Presbytery