

The Synod of Eastern Australia

MINUTES
OF THE 176TH ANNUAL MEETING
RAYMOND TERRACE, NSW, 7TH TO 10TH MAY, 2024

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24.2.1 OPENING

Within the Raymond Terrace Church building of the Hunter Congregation, on Tuesday 7th May 2024, at 4.30pm, the Synod of Eastern Australia met. The Moderator, Rev Andres Miranda, took the chair, and extended a welcome. The Moderator constituted the meeting, leading in prayer.

24.2.2 MODERATOR'S SERMON

The Moderator read from John 4:1-26 and chose as his text verse 24. He took as his first point a description of God as Spirit. He spoke of God without parts, His eternal existence and his invisibility. He noted we relate to God and understand Him through His attributes. The Moderator spoke secondly on the practical application of our understanding of God as Spirit that worship is a serious business of the heart and cannot be mere lip-service.

The Moderator closed with prayer and the Synod sang Psalm 139:1-10 together.

24.2.3 ROLLS OF PRESBYTERY

The Certified Rolls of Presbyteries were tendered. Apologies for non-attendance were received on behalf of those marked † below. Members marked # attend online.

Northern Presbytery	Ministers	Commissioned Elders
Brisbane	JD Klazinga	S Carswell
Hastings River	J Forbes	G Hamilton
Northern Rivers	DJ Kerridge	J Greensill
Central Presbytery		
Manning	[vacant]	TI Leggott
Hunter	R Tso	AH Steel
Sydney West	DK Muldoon	I Miller
St George's	[vacant]	D McIntosh
Southern Presbytery		
Geelong	[vacant]	D Ramsay
Knox	[vacant]	
Narre Warren	AA Miranda	T Buck †
Ulverstone	[vacant]	

Synod Appointment

T Reeve #

GD Ball

Mr Zach Dotson, PCEA Candidate, currently supplying in Ulverstone, was welcomed by the Moderator.

24.2.4 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Rev Robin Tso introduced delegates from other churches: Rev. Kenneth MacDonald from the FCC; Mr J Terpstra, OPC; Revs Matthew Winzer and John Nelson from the AFC; Tom Budgen, SPC; Online [expected at later session]: Rev. Graeme Hart, RPCA. It was moved seconded and carried that these men be associated with the court. The Clerk advised them of the conditions of association. The Moderator welcomed delegates to the Synod.

24.2.5 ELECTION OF MODERATOR

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

Mr Forbes thanked the outgoing Moderator for his sermon on the subject of worship and his labour as Moderator.

24.2.6 ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

The Clerk presented the Administration Committee's report. It was resolved that the report be received.

The Clerk presented the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried:

1. That the above Timetable for Synod 2024 be confirmed.
2. **{Deferred to Session 2 for consideration}** -That the proposed Committee Structure as listed in the report be considered in the final session of Synod].
3. That Synod Standing Orders (Act 1, class 2, 1978, as amended 1984, 1991 and 2008) section 2 be titled "LENGTH OF SPEECHES".
4. That items 1 and 2 of correspondence being fraternal greetings from the RCNZ and RPCI be received and gratefully noted.
5. That the following Examiners of Records be appointed:

Northern Presbytery	Rev. A. Miranda and Mt Druitt Elder
Central Presbytery	Rev. J Klazinga and Geelong Elder
Southern Presbytery	Rev. R Tso and Northern Rivers Elder
6. That Synod incorporate the following Memorial Minute for Rev. Kenneth MacLeod in the permanent record.
7. **[Deferred to Session 2 for consideration]** - Correspondence Item 3. Petition from Southern Presbytery].

Memorial Minute

The Rev. Kenneth MacLeod 15th February, 1933 – 2nd May, 2023

Memorial Minute for Rev. Kenneth MacLeod

Kenneth MacLeod was born in Lemreway, on the Isle of Lewis, on 15th February, 1933. He began schooling there then later boarded at the Nicholson Institute in Stornoway, going home for school holidays. He finished school aged 15 and was apprenticed to a local carpenter. At age 17, Ken joined the Merchant Navy and sailed the world for many years. Unbeknownst to him at the time, his wide experience of people in all walks of life equipped Ken for an earnest witness to people in all spheres and situations. Whilst on shore leave in New Zealand, Ken attended an open-air Gospel meeting where he was converted and brought to saving faith in the Lord. He returned to Barvas and completed his high school education.

It was at this time Ken felt called to the ministry. He engaged in further study at Glasgow and then at University of Aberdeen with this end in mind, thence to the Free Church College where he began theological education, aged 31. He married Catherine McLennan on the 26th July, 1966. At the prompting of Professor Alan Harman, who was teaching at the Free Church College at the time, and nominated for assisted passage by the Synod Church Extension Committee (see *Our Banner*, May 1968), Ken came to Australia as a probationer at the end of 1968 with his wife and first child, Donald, and enthusiastically entered the work in his first charge at Lismore (Richmond-Brunswick). The charge included preaching stations as far north as Brisbane. Two of Ken and Catherine's children were born there: Murdo and Mairi. Having served 5 years in the PCEA, Ken transferred to service in the Free Church at Tain, Ross-shire where he ministered for 15 years. Ken and Catherine's fourth child, Ann, was born to them in Inverness.

In a conversation with Mr Ross Campbell, discovering that Rev. Angus Beaton had moved from Maclean leaving the charge vacant, Ken answered a request for someone to come and help and returned to Australia taking up a call to the charge in Maclean. Ken laboured in Maclean for the Lord for 15 years. Ken's preaching was without notes, evangelistic and comforting. His pastoral care was exemplary and extended beyond the congregation into the community. He was called to return to the Free Church at Barvas, Lewis where he spent 5 years until his retirement. It was during this time that Ken was Moderator of the Free Church General Assembly. After his retirement in 2000 from the Free Church, Ken and Catherine returned to Australia and lived at the Bethesda units in Maclean which Ken had been instrumental in getting built, and formally opened. Ken died on 2nd May, 2023 aged 90.

We thank the Lord for the labour of a beloved and faithful servant in both the Free Church of Scotland and in the Northern Rivers charge of NSW. We extend our sympathy to Catherine, Donald, Murdo, Mairi and Ann.

[NOTE from *Our Banner*, May 1968:

“The third application came from Mr. Kenneth MacLeod, a final year student in the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh. This was favourably received, and both the Victorian and Northern Presbyteries requested that he be invited to come to Australia under the terms of the Commonwealth's and Church's provisions, to labour in the vacant charges of our Church, it being understood that he could be called by and settled in any such charge. When notified of these invitations, Mr. MacLeod replied expressing a desire to labour in the Richmond-Brunswick Charge. He is seeking assisted passages for himself, his wife and child, and plans tentatively to come to Australia about September of this year. Your Committee [Church Extension] has nominated him for assisted passage to the Immigration Department, giving the required assurance of provision of accommodation, etc.”]

CLOSURE OF SESSION

The Synod sang Ps 104. Moderator led in prayer. The session closed at 5:35pm.

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JCA Forbes
Moderator

SESSION 2

TUESDAY 7th MAY 2024

7:00PM

The Session was opened with the singing of Ps 68:17-20 and prayer at 7:04pm by the Moderator.

MINUTES

The Minutes of Session 1 were read and it was moved, seconded and carried that they be confirmed.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE Con't

The Clerk presented proposed deliverance 2. deferred from Session 1. It was moved, seconded and carried that:

2. As amended. the proposed Committee Structure as listed in the report be considered in the final session of Synod but that the assessor appointments to Southern Presbytery be reviewed at this session.

Mr Ramsay spoke of the difficulties in Southern Presbytery and the need for even more assessors to assist. Mr Ramsay moved that the Synod re-appoint the current assessors and at least one more be added. After discussion, the motion was seconded and carried.

It was moved, seconded and carried that Rev. Robin Tso be added as an assessor to Southern Presbytery.

24.2.7 MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

The Moderator delivered his opening address. He took 2 Chronicles 19:5-7 as his subject. He spoke firstly on the importance of formal meetings of courts as the means by which God governs His Church. Secondly, he took up the words "take heed" in two parts: addressing the aspect of deliberate dealing in attending to matters with due process and careful consideration; and rejecting partiality mirroring God's impartial justice. Thirdly, the Moderator spoke of the promise that the Lord would be with those who deliberated in the courts of the Church, as they took heed to their task and avoided impartiality.

The Moderator led in prayer.

The Clerk thanked the Moderator for his address.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE Con't

Mr Ramsay presented the petition from Southern Presbytery (Correspondence Item 7) deferred from Session 1 in the following terms:

PETITION

To the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia appointed to meet in Raymond Terrace on 7th May 2024, the petition of the Southern Presbytery humbly shows that:

SYNOD 2024
WHEREAS

The Southern Presbytery has received a *Concerns Notice*, addressed individually to four of its members, which alleges defamatory content in the Southern Presbytery Report.

WHEREAS

The Law and Advisory committee has advised that it is in the process of obtaining professional advice and, in the meantime, has advised Presbytery to make request to Synod that the presentation and discussion of the Southern Presbytery Report be deferred until this matter is resolved.

NOW THEREFORE

The Southern Presbytery requests that the presentation and discussion of the Southern Presbytery report at Synod be deferred until this matter is resolved.

Or do otherwise as the Synod in its wisdom thinks best.

Dated the seventh day of May 2024.

Donald Ramsay
Clerk of Southern Presbytery

Dr Ramsay moved a motion in terms of the crave of the Petition. It was moved, seconded and carried that Synod grant the crave of the petition.

CLOSURE OF SESSION

The Session was closed with the singing of Ps 1 and prayer at 8:27pm.

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JCA Forbes
Moderator

The session was opened with the singing of Ps 16:1-5. Mr Leggott led the court in prayer. The Moderator read Proverbs 2. Mr Steel led the court in prayer. The court sang again from Ps 16:7-11.

The Moderator opened the session with prayer.

Rev. Ian Hall was welcomed and associated with the Synod.

MINUTES

The Minutes of Session 2 were read and confirmed.

24.2.8 LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Forbes, vacated the chair to present the report. Mr Miranda assumed the chair. It was resolved that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

1. National Redress Scheme. Synod notes the advice of the Law and Advisory committee and agrees not to rejoin the National Redress Scheme at this time.

2. Panel on Divorce and Remarriage. The remit of the Panel on Divorce and Remarriage is continued, with a report to be brought to Synod 2025.

3. Handbook changes. Synod approve the Handbook changes listed in Appendix A and for a new edition to be produced incorporating all authorised changes up to and including Synod 2024. [Appendix following]

APPENDIX A LAW & ADVISORY REPORT 2024

Ref.	Proposed Handbook alteration
1.11	Delete “regulate” and replace with “guide the conduct of”
2.6	Add reference “(Note also 4.55d)”
2.9	Add additional wording (being a simplified version of the previously unauthorised wording in the 2019 Handbook), “ <i>Disturbance in a church service. From time to time there may be serious incidents of disturbance in a church service. A caring Christian approach is usually able to resolve the issue without recourse to legal measures. The legal position is understood to be that there is an implied licence to enter a church for the purpose of public worship. If a person acts in a manner that is contrary to this purpose the licence can be revoked by words spoken to him, and he can be asked to leave or the police will be called. One must not use physical restraint to remove a person unless the physical safety of congregants is at risk. If needed one can seek a court order.</i> ”
2.10	Add bold heading “ Relationship to minister ”
2.11	Add bold heading “ Jurisdiction ”
2.19	Add sample disjunction certificate (as found in 2019 Handbook but previously unauthorised)
2.38	Amend incorrect reference from “chapter 7.26” to “chapter 7”
3.15	ACNC has changed its classification of charity size. Update Handbook accordingly to Small, up to \$500k, Medium \$500k-\$3m, and Large over \$3m.

3.16a	Add " <i>Non-Cash Benefits are to be limited to 40% of minimum stipend (Synod 2017)</i> "
3.16b	Add "plus an extra week (which must be taken) or in lieu one week of LSL to age 70 (Synod 2003)."
3.16	Add " <i>Deacons Courts are to keep a close eye on the minister's leave entitlement to ensure he does not suffer burnout through failure to take it. Recording of entitlement in the minutes should occur once a year to avoid misunderstanding and facilitate Presbytery's role when examining records.</i> "
3.17a	Delete the words " <i>and Long Service Leave</i> ". Amend " <i>half-yearly</i> " to read " <i>quarterly</i> ".
3.21 title	Replace " <i>3.21b-c is Act of Synod 1991</i> " with " <i>See Act 16, 1991, and Act 3, 2016</i> "
3.21 a & b	Delete insurance renewal dates as this is unnecessary information and may change.
3.22	Insert actual wording of Act 10, 1988 to clarify the conditions upon which Presbytery can approve the sale of property, " <i>where a) the Congregation has been informed of the reasons for the proposed sale, and the purpose for which the funds realized will be used, and has given its consent, certified to the Presbytery by extract minute; b) in the case of the sale of a manse the Presbytery has been satisfied that the provision of a suitable manse is assured upon the sale of the old; c) the sale and related purchases are handled in their legal aspects by a competent firm of solicitors; and d) in all respects the provisions of the applicable Act of Parliament, and legislation of Synod are adhered to.</i>]"
3.22	Add paragraph, " <i>Should it be impracticable to wait until the annual Synod, a congregation desiring to mortgage property (other than church buildings) may submit a Presbytery-approved proposal to the Finance Committee in terms of the existing Capital Assistance Fund procedure and the Administration Committee is authorised to make a decision after receiving recommendation or otherwise from the Finance Committee. (Act 9, 2008)</i> "
3.26a	Add " <i>and amended by The Synod of Eastern Australia Property Amendment Act 2004 No. 6/2004.</i> "
3.26b	Add " <i>and amended by the Free Presbyterian Church Property Amendment Act 2012, No. 67/2012.</i> "
4.3	Add Act 18, 1986, Seats of Presbyteries for Ministers not Inducted
4.26c	Add " <i>including student training and allowances and licensing procedure 4.46-4.50</i> " Previously <i>Licensing of students</i> was item d). Reletter subsequent headings accordingly.
4.26i	Add " <i>i) Minister without charge and resigned/retired ministers 4.88</i> "
4.41d	Add " <i>d) Ensures a record of the minister's outstanding leave entitlement is entered in the deacons' court or session minutes at least annually</i> "
4.41e	Add " <i>e) sees to it that congregations under their care include a fair value of their assets in their annual financial statement as well as detail of any liabilities</i> "
4.49g	Add wording of Act 6, 2018 (minutes 18.24.2) " <i>In meeting not less than annually...</i> "
4.49A	Add full wording of Act 16, 1983 as amended 1991 and 2013 - Student Training & Allowances.
4.50	Replace original wording " <i>The current (1991) regulations as last amended in 1983 are as follows</i> " REPLACED with " <i>The current regulations are as follows</i> "
4.51	Insert heading " <i>4.51 ADMISSION OF MINISTERS FROM CHURCHES WITH WHOM THERE IS MUTUAL ELGIBILITY</i> " followed by relevant wording of current Synod Acts for mutual eligibility.
4.52	Re-number so that original 4.51 & 4.52 are now all under 4.52
4.55a	Update reference to read <i>Handbook 4.3</i>
4.65	Delete "ORDAINED" so that heading reads " <i>4.65 CALL TO MINISTER IN A CHARGE IN ANOTHER PRESBYTERY</i> "
4.76-4.83	Heading - add reference " <i>4.76-4.83 PRESBYTERY IN RELATION TO SYNOD, &c.</i> "
4.76	Update reference to " <i>(see 5.3)</i> " due to changed numbering

4.79	Replace “ <i>See Act of Synod 1990</i> ” with “ <i>See Act 11, 1990 as amended 2008</i> ”. Necessary editorial addition per Synod minutes 2008.17.2, which is not listed as an Act.
4.88	Add “4.88 <i>MINISTERS WITHOUT CHARGE AND RESIGNED/RETIRED MINISTERS [Act 4 Class 2, Synod 2012]</i> ” and full wording of Act.
5	Numbering updated throughout chapter 5. All references update to match new numbering.
5.19	Replace “ <i>Since Synod 2013 standing committees have been arranged as follows:</i> ” with “ <i>Standing committees are arranged as follows:</i> ” and update current committee names
5.24	Include reference to Act 5, class 2, 1984 at beginning of paragraph rather than end.
5.24	Add “ <i>Synod 2008 (minute 17.1) requested any who frame proposals for Synod’s consideration to take care to make provision for specifying previous enactments that are varied or rescinded by such proposals.</i> ”
5.24	Add “ <i>Synod 2008 (Act 2, Class 2): To ensure careful consideration and wise decision making, copies of correspondence for transmission to Synod shall be supplied with the Reports. Any non-procedural proposal that arises from late correspondence or on the floor of the Synod that is not already anticipated in the prayer of an overture or petition regularly before the Synod, or the subject of a notice of motion in terms of clause 6 of this Act, shall be held over until the next session and, if contentious or of complexity, referred to a representative ad hoc committee for report to the next or later session, before being debated.</i> ”
5.25	Add reference “5.25” to heading.
5.25	Delete sentence from original wording “ <i>Synod committees are generally composed on a regional basis with up to 5 members who are to serve for at least three years.</i> ” and add “ <i>to reach the Finance Committee at least 60 days before the Synod.</i> ”
5.32	After “ <i>records of presbyteries,</i> ” Delete “ <i>and to compare the scroll minutes of Synod with the permanent record</i> ” as out-of-date
5.37	Remove “ <i>that is laws</i> ” incorporated into text of the Barrier Act in 2015. Also in chapter on Principal Enactments.
5.38	Add historical detail “ <i>Act 8, Assembly 1736</i> ”
5.39 - 5.40	Wording was replaced with Act 5, 2016. This has proved to be unclear and confusing. Rescind the act, delete from Handbook, and revert to original.
5.42	Delete “ <i>Copies of the Decision Book are made available at a suitable charge to members and other interested persons.</i> ” Now out-of-date.
5.48	Replace “ <i>(as amended 1979, 1984, 1991)</i> ” with “ <i>(amended from time to time)</i> ”
7.26	After “ <i>other like matters</i> ” insert “ <i>such as homosexual behaviour, child abuse and serious marriage breakdowns.</i> ” This is a version of wording proposed in 2008 (see minutes 08.17.4) but some of that wording was inappropriate.
7.50	Insert “7.50 <i>INTERVIEWING WOMEN, CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS [Act 1, Class 1, Synod 2012]</i> ” followed by full wording of the act.
9	Designate this as Chapter 9 “ PRINCIPAL ENACTMENTS BEARING ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTERN AUSTRALIA ”
	1697 - Add “ COMMONLY CALLED THE BARRIER ACT ”
9	1736 - Add to Principal Enactments - 1736 ACT CONCERNING RESCINDING ACTS PASSED UNDER THE BARRIER ACT (Act 8, Assembly 1736)
9	1954 - Add additional note “ <i>and remains in force for both Free Church and Free Church (Continuing). The PCEA Act was rescinded in 2004, and a new mutual relationship was formalised with the Free Church in 2005 and with the Free Church (Continuing) in 2019.]</i> ”
Appendix	Add new Appendix - DEVELOPMENT OF THE HANDBOOK - wording below

4. Revision of Handbook Chapters 4 and 7. Synod instruct the Law and Advisory committee to undertake a revision of Handbook Chapter 7 on *Church Discipline* and, in conjunction with the Training of Ministry Committee, to revise Chapter 4 section entitled *Reception, Status & Oversight of Students and Home Missionaries*, and to report progress to the 2025 Synod.

Mr Graeme Hart, RPCA joined the meeting online at 10:30. He was welcomed by the Convener, Inter-Church Relations Committee and it was resolved that he be associated with the court.

The court adjourned for refreshments at 10:32am and reconvened at 11:01am

5. Rescind Act 5, 2008. Synod rescind Act 5, Class 2, 2008 entitled *Act allowing optional alternative Questions and Formula while not reducing commitments in terms of Act of Synod 1952*.

Mr Tso moved a motion to amend with the wording provided. The motion was seconded. Upon being put to the vote the motion did not carry and the deliverance, seconded and carried.

6. Rescind Act 4, 2008. Synod rescind Act 4, Class 2, 2008 entitled *Handbook of Practice and Procedure Barrier Act Compliance*.

7. Rescind Act 2, 2015. Synod rescind Act 2, Class 2, 2015 entitled *Act inserting footnote re Barrier Act: Constitutions: "that is laws"*.

8. Reclassify Act 1, 2011. Synod note that Act 1, Class 1, 2011 never passed Barrier Act or received approval of Presbyteries. It is hereby reclassified as Act 8, Class 2, 2011 entitled *Act concerning Conflict of Interest*.

9. Rescind Act 2, 2013. Synod rescind Act 2, Class 2, 2013 concerning *Revision of Section 4.55 in the Handbook* and revert to the original wording of Handbook 4.55.

Dr Muldoon moved a motion under notice re Handbook 3.16a that the word 'minimum' be deleted, and point a. read

a. 'the stipend and benefits set by Synod from time to time'.

The motion was not seconded and fell.

24.2.9 OPC DELEGATE'S ADDRESS

Mr John Terpstra brought greetings from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He reminded us that in the face of the encroachment of the world on the Church Militant, God is supreme. He encouraged the brethren to find encouragement in Christ Triumphant and Sovereign. He spoke on the extent of the work of the OPC and challenges in distance and needs for workers in the Harvest-field. Mr Terpstra conveyed the prayers of his church for the work of the PCEA.

CLOSURE OF SESSION

Mr Klazinga prayed for the work of the OPC and closed the session with prayer at 12:30pm.

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JCA Forbes
Moderator

The Session was opened with the singing of Psalm 72:1-8 and prayer, led by the Moderator at 2:00pm

MINUTES

The Minutes of Session 3 were read and confirmed.

24.2.10 TRAINING OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Kerridge, presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received. It was moved, seconded and carried that:

1. That Synod call on ministers and sessions to exhort men in our congregations to consider the high calling of Christian ministry and serving the Lord in office-bearer roles. That they would be equipped with the gifts necessary and recognised by their congregations.

24.2.11 YOUTH AND FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Carswell, presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried to receive the report. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

1. Synod encourages the Youth and Fellowship committee to proceed with the organisation of a family camp and youth camp in 2024 and encourages the church to pray for the practical planning and organisation of all activities that must be monitored during these camps. Pray that these anticipated events will be an experience of deep spiritual growth under the ministry of the Word, with enrichment of Christian relationships, and a refreshing time of body and mind surrounded by God's creation.
2. Synod instructs the Youth and Fellowship committee to continue to produce Essay Questions and Prescribed Youth Work and encourages the church to pray that this will continue to be a source of theological discovery, personal strength, and spiritual direction in the lives of all children, and adolescents who participate in this activity.
3. The Synod prayerfully thanks God for the contributions of members and volunteers who have provided leadership during the camps. Synod also prays for the guest speakers who are thinking about the talks for the July and October camps. Pray for their messages to increase the joy of learning new things from Scripture.
4. Synod gives thanks and pray for those who are involved in the work of teaching Sunday-school and youth classes.
5. 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.
6. Synod thank John and Judy Greensill for the preparation and use of their property, and the Northern Rivers congregation for their generosity for the youth camps over the last several years.

7. 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.

24.2.12 AFC DELEGATE'S ADDRESSES

Rev. Matthew Winzer from the Australian Free Church was introduced to and welcomed by the Moderator. Mr Winzer read from Colossians 2:5 and brought greetings from their church. Taking an illustration from military discipline, he spoke on the shared recognition we have for order in the church and the need for close co-operation. He spoke of their readiness and desire for union.

Dr Ramsay prayed for the work of the AFC.

24.2.13 SUPERANNUATION and INSURANCE COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Tso, presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

1. Synod approves the following changes regarding ANNUAL LEAVE/LONG SERVICE LEAVE for ministers:
 - a) Annual Leave
Five weeks fully paid annual leave be provided.
Refer to Appendix "A" for details to be included in "Classified Decisions of Synod principal decisions of on-going significance" – "Superannuation & Insurance Committee"
Handbook Page 14 (3.16.b) be amended accordingly.
 - b) Long Service Leave
Long Service Leave be provided to ministers for periods of continuous service within the PCEA.
Refer to Appendix "A" for details to be included in "Classified Decisions of Synod principal decisions of on-going significance" – "Superannuation & Insurance Committee".
To be added to Handbook Page 14 (3.16)
2. 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.
3. Synod approves the committee's intention to provide a template of minister's Annual Leave/Long Service Leave register, to be sent to all Deacons' Court.

CLASSIFIED DECISIONS OF SYNOD

Principal decisions of on-going significance

SUPERANNUATION & INSURANCE COMMITTEE

Annual Leave

Annual leave is provided for all serving ministers within the PCEA.

- Five weeks fully paid annual leave shall be available each year on a pro-rata basis.
- Annual leave may be taken in any manner as may be mutually agreed by the minister and session.
- Relief pulpit supply is to be provided in this period.
- Annual leave is accumulative but should not exceed 10 weeks accrued leave.

Long Service Leave

Long service leave only applies to ministers for periods of continuous service within the PCEA.

Accruing LSL:

- Long service leave accrues at a rate of 0.866 weeks per year (i.e., 2 months after 10 years).
- Where there is a break in continuous service, a minister must make application to Presbytery, with assistance from Superannuation and Insurance Committee if necessary, regarding their ongoing accumulation of long service leave.

Taking LSL:

- Long service leave may be taken after 10 years of continuous service, and after each subsequent 5 years of continuous service.
- A minister is required to give 3 months' notice to his congregation and must obtain approval from Presbytery prior to the taking of any long service leave.

LSL Termination Payments:

- Unused long service leave is payable as a termination payment based on the cash stipend plus exempt fringe benefits at the date of termination.
- Pro-rata payments are available after 7 years' service have been completed.

The Synod adjourned for refreshments at 3:25pm and re-convened at 3:55pm

24.2.14 FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Steel, presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances, and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

1. We record our thanks to God for the sufficiency in temporal blessings the church as a whole has enjoyed since last Synod.
2. Adjustment of the Minimum Stipend, Cash and Non-cash components (Excluding Manse, Car and Telephone) for 2024/2025 be made on 1st January annually in line with the movement in the *Wage Price Index* as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. In the event of a negative movement in any review period, no adjustment be made.
3. Financial Assistance of up to \$ 6,000 for 2024/2025 Synodical year be granted to the Hawkesbury-Nepean Deacons' Courts as follows:
 - Be strictly on a quarterly needs basis.
 - Applications be submitted to the General Treasurer on a calendar quarter basis ie commencing 1st January/April/July/October and be accompanied with a Budget for the quarter being applied for.
 - Be subject to the availability of funds.
4. Financial Assistance of up to \$ 22,600 for 2024/2025 Synodical year be granted to the Narre Warren Deacons' Courts as follows:
 - Be strictly on a quarterly needs basis.
 - Applications be submitted to the General Treasurer on a calendar quarter basis ie commencing 1st January/April/July/October and be accompanied with a Budget for the quarter being applied for.
 - Be subject to the availability of funds.

24.2.15 GENERAL TREASURER

The General Treasurer presented his report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

Mr Klazinga moved a vote of thanks to Mr Alex Steel, General Treasurer, and Dr Donald Ramsay, Assistant Treasurer. It was seconded and carried.

24.2.16 NSW TRUST CORPORATION

The Clerk presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

24.2.17 QUEENSLAND TRUST CORPORATION

The Clerk presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

24.2.18 VICTORIAN TRUST CORPORATION

The Secretary, Mr I Hall, presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

24.2.19 FCC DELEGATE'S ADDRESS

Rev. Kenneth MacDonald from the FCC was introduced to the Moderator. The Moderator welcomed him and invited him to address the Synod. Mr MacDonald brought greetings and encouragement from the FCC. He spoke on the history and current situation of the FCC in Scotland, as well as extension of the church in Europe. Mr MacDonald spoke warmly of the FCC mission work in Sri Lanka and commended it to the PCEA as a work worthy of prayerful support.

Mr Donald McIntosh led in prayer for Mr MacDonald and the FCC.

24.2.20 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

The Convener presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

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 2024 be approved and funds provided for the work of this Committee.

24.2.21 PRESBYTERY REPORTS

NORTHERN PRESBYTERY

The Clerk presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERY

The Clerk presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERY

In accordance with the petition of the Southern Presbytery, the Southern Presbytery report is deferred.

24.2.22 INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Tso, presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

1. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia gives thanks to God for the churches with whom we have formal fraternal relations and for those churches with whom we have contact, and resolve to pray for the Lord's blessing upon their work and witness.

SYNOD 2024

2. Synod approves Rev John Forbes, or a suitable alternate delegate, to represent the PCEA at the RCNZ 2024 Synod at the Reformed Church of Christchurch, and agrees to pay the return economy airfare and the other associated travel expenses. The meeting to take place on 7th-13th September, 2024

3. Synod approves Rev Andres Miranda, to represent the PCEA at the RPCA 2024 Presbytery meeting. The meeting to take place on 11th May, 2024 in McKInnon.

4. Synod approves Rev Jim Klazinga to represent the PCEA at the CRCA 2024 Synod. The meeting to take place 20-25th May, 2024 at the Oasis Church in Brisbane

The Moderator led the court in prayer to close the session at 6:06pm

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JCA Forbes
Moderator

SESSION 5

WEDNESDAY 3rd MAY 2023

7:00PM

The session opened with the singing of Psalm 34:1-10 and prayer, led by the Moderator at 7:15pm.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous session was read and confirmed.

INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE Con't

The Convener presented the remaining proposed deliverances deferred from last session. It was moved, seconded and carried that:

5. Synod commits to the Lord the Committee's ongoing discussions with the Australian Free Church regarding their application to be received into the PCEA.

6. [Supplementary Deliverance] Synod appoints Rev. Robin Tso as a commissioner in terms of the Federal Relations Act of the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) to attend the 2024 General Assemblies in Scotland and agrees to pay the return economy airfare and other associated expenses.

24.2.23 CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Ball, presented the report. It was moved seconded and carried that the report be received.

Mr Miranda closed the session with prayer at 8:28pm.

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JCA Forbes
Moderator

SESSION 6 THURSDAY 9th MAY 2024 9:00AM

The session was opened with the singing of Psalm 63 and with prayer led by Rev. Dr Dennis Muldoon and a devotion by the Moderator on Psalm 110:3. He spoke on the principle of consent; that God's people are willing volunteers in the service of the King. The church has power and authority given to it by the Lord and commands repentance but does not compel. The outcome of seeking consent and consensus provides lasting reform, blessed by the Lord. The court sang Ps 62 together.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous session was read and confirmed.

CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE Con't

The Moderator presented the proposed deliverances, and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

1. That Synod recognises and opposes the constant undermining by both Federal and State governments of traditional, moral, Biblical values and freedoms, as evidenced for example, in the introduction of the so-called Conversion Practices Bills; and in curtailing the freedom of Christian schools to teach and practice what they believe.
2. Synod expresses its doctrinal and conscientious objections to the monotonous repetition of the 'Welcome to Country' and 'Acknowledgement of Country' ceremonies at civic and religious occasions.

We commend the wording of a suitable alternative to the traditional wording of Acknowledgement of Country as endorsed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in 2023: -

'We acknowledge the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), the Creator of heaven and earth and His ownership of all things (Psalm 24:1).

We recognise that He gave stewardship of these lands upon which we meet to the indigenous occupants of the land (Acts 17:26).

We recognise that in His sovereignty, He has allowed other people groups to migrate to these shores. We pray for civil peace for all people groups in order that the gospel of peace would be freely proclaimed (1 Tim. 2:1-2)'.
'

Synod also affirms its positive desire to build bridges through the gospel with Aboriginal people in order to seek complete reconciliation.

Mr Klazinga moved that the deliverance be divided into three parts. The motion was seconded. Upon being put to the vote the motion was not carried.

The deliverance, to be taken as a whole, was seconded. Upon being put to the vote, the deliverance carried.

3. Synod affirms its belief that Christian burial honours the biblical examples, including that of Christ; illustrates the biblical imagery, and promotes the biblical hope of the resurrection of the body, in a way that cremation does not.

The Synod adjourned for refreshments at 10:33am and re-convened at 11:07am

24.2.24 RPCA DELEGATE'S ADDRESS

Rev. Graeme Hart from the RPCA was introduced and welcomed by the Moderator. Mr Hart was invited to speak and brought greetings from the RPCA. He spoke of the interchange and warm fellowship with the PCEA and the RPCA. He spoke of their re-evaluation of church extension work. He mentioned members of the church going to South Sudan and on mission to a sister church in Japan. Mr Hart was encouraged by the RPCA's discussions with the SPC. He conveyed the prayers of the church for the labour of the PCEA, particularly that there would be blessing in the midst of difficult times.

Mr Tso prayed for Mr Hart and the work of the RPCA.

CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE Con't

4. Synod approves the helpful counsel of Kevin de Young in his booklet 'The Case Against Christians Attending a Gay Wedding' as summarised in the reports.

The Moderator vacated the chair so that he might be able to speak to the following deliverance. Mr Miranda assumed the chair.

5. Synod acknowledges the work of Mr. John Audet as PCEA archivist and confirms his continuance in that role.

The deliverance was seconded.

Mr Tso presented a motion under notice that Synod appoints Rev. David Kerridge as the Archivist and approves payments for the relocation of the archive. The motion was seconded.

The motion was put against the deliverance. The motion was preferred and being put to the vote, carried.

6. Synod acknowledges that we have no good apart from God, that we can do nothing of any lasting value apart from Christ (John 15:5), and that unless the Lord builds the house the labourers build in vain (Ps. 127:1). Synod acknowledges its need of reform, refreshment, and spiritual revival. Synod therefore appoints a day of prayer and humiliation on Saturday 3rd August 2024, God-willing in order to seek God's mercy and favour on our church and nation.

The Session closed with prayer led by the Moderator at 12:40pm

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JCA Forbes
Moderator

SESSION 7 THURSDAY 9th MAY 2024 2:00PM

The session resumed with the singing of Psalm 79:9-13, and prayer, led by Mr Hamilton.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous session were read and confirmed.

CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE Con't

The Convener presented the remaining deliverances of the Committee and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

7. Synod affirms that the Lord has called us to serve Him directly in worship; to serve the saints in nurture; and to serve the world in witness. Synod encourages sessions and congregations to examine their congregational life in light of this statement.
8. Synod expresses its appreciation to Rev. Jim Klazinga, for his excellent work as editor of the Presbyterian Banner.

Mr Miller moved, and it was seconded, that a letter of thanks be sent to Mr John Audet for his work as Archivist.

24.2.25 SPC DELEGATE'S ADDRESS

The Moderator welcomed and invited Rev. Tom Budgen of the Southern Presbyterian Church to address the court. Mr Budgen brought greetings from the SPC and spoke on the encouragement of being among PCEA brethren. He brought an exhortation to endure in the face of hardship. Mr Budgen further spoke about the work of the SPC in Hobart and Launceston and its encouragements and challenges. He coveted the prayers of the PCEA as they, in turn pray for us.

Mr Hall led the court in prayer for Mr Budgen and the SPC.

24.2.26 PRESBYTERIAN BANNER REPORT

The Editor, Mr Klazinga presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received. The Editor presented the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

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 the magazine, along with distributing pdf copies by email and making it available on the PCEA website.
4. Synod again encourages 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.

24.2.27 PSALMODY COMMITTEE

The Convener presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried to receive the report. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

1. That Synod commend the usefulness of Presbytery Psalmody Days to encourage Psalm singing, learning tunes and parts to enrich our singing, and foster inter-congregational fellowship.
2. That Synod encourages congregations to memorise and sing the prescribed Psalms alongside the children as an exercise in familiarisation and to build a common repertoire throughout the denomination.
3. That Synod adopt *Sing Psalms* as a Synod-approved Psalter.

Mr Steel presented a motion on notice that the adoption by Synod of *Sing Psalms* as a Synod-approved Psalter be deferred pending investigation by the Committee, with the assistance of others if necessary, to determine the faithfulness (accuracy) to the original Hebrew text and report to a subsequent Synod. The motion was seconded.

The court adjourned for refreshments at 3:40pm and re-convened at 4:10pm

After discussion, the Committee agreed to fall from their deliverance. Upon being put to the vote Mr Steel's motion carried.

Mr Hamilton presented a motion on notice that the Psalmody Committee create and compile a new PCEA Psalter beginning with Psalms 1-25, utilising and seeking the necessary rights from the Free Church of Scotland (Sing Psalms) and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (The Psalms for Singing) as applicable for reproduction of words and tunes, along with any other resources they deem appropriate. The motion was moved, seconded. Upon being put to the vote the motion carried.

24.2.28 MISSIONS COMMITTEE

The Convener, Dr Muldoon, presented the report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

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 notes with appreciation the visit of Dennis and Elizabeth Muldoon to a number of centres of the PFC-CI following the first synod of the PFC-CI

- 3.** Synod approve the gift of \$2000 towards the costs of the first synod of the PFC-CI
- 4.** Synod approve the diaconal aid of \$2000 to the church in Manipur, India
- 5.** Synod approve a gift of \$1500 towards the diaconal ministry of Women for Mission within the PFC-CI
- 6.** [Deferred to Committee Structure – Synod agree to Mark Hamilton joining the Missions Committee.]
- 7.** Synod thanks the congregations that held mission events during the year and urges all congregations to consider inviting mission workers in person, or online, to give an update of their ministry, and field questions from church folk. Presbyteries could assist or coordinate.
- 8.** Synod adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2024/25 and expresses its general agreement with the estimates for this period.

Missions Relief Fund										
2024										
MRF Working Account	Budget 2023		Actual 2023		Budget 2024		Estimate 2025			
Balance 1 Jan		8749		8749		5577			3177	
Income Investments	5000			5049		5000			5000	
Other (Donation congs)				1259						
Transfer from Equities Ac	5000			0						
Income	10000	18749		6308	15057	5000	10577		5000	8177
Expenditure										
Lakhnadon Christian Hospital	2000			2000		2000			2000	
Lakhnadon Mission School	800			800		800			800	
Chhapara Mission School	1000			1000		1000			1000	
Annie Soper Scholarships	1200			1200		1200			1200	
Dr Dickson Delhi	1300			1300		1300			1300	
Mukti child sponsorships*3	1000			1000		1000			1000	
Manipur relief				2000						
Fees and Charges	100			180		100			100	
Total Expenditure	7400	7400		9480	9480	7400	7400		7400	7400
Closing Balance		11349			5577		3177			777

Equities Account	Budget 2023		Actual 2023		Budget 2024		Estimate 2025			
Balance 1 Jan		127240		127240		130087			135087	
Income Revaluation of shares & Managed Funds	0	0		1673		5000	5000		5000	5000
Income (Gain on sale M/Fund)	0			1174		0	0		0	0
Total	0	127240		2847	130087	5000	135087		5000	140087
		254480					270174			
Expenditure										
Transfer to McSwan Working Account	0			0		0			0	
Revaluation	0			0		0			0	
Total	0	0		0	0	0	0		0	0
Closing Balance 31 Dec		127240			130087		135087			140087
Total Funds Held McSwan Missions Relief Fund										
		138589			135664		135087			140864
Net Movement from previous year		0			-2985					

Missions Budget 2024									
General Funds	Budget 2023		Actual	2023	Budget 2024		Estimate 2025		
Balance 1 Jan		25962		25962		28736			33736
Income:									
Investments	1300		14295		13000		10000		
Giving Miss General	2700		2732		2700		2700		
reimburse airfares			3684						
Income	15700	41622	20711	46673	15700	44436	12700		46436
Expenditure									
IMJP	1000		1000		1000		1000		
AIM (Peter Smith)	3000		3000						
Visiting Miss expenses	2500		6734		2000		2000		
Dumisani Theo, Institute & Bible School	3000		3000		3000		3000		
Admin: Postage, bank fee	200		120		200		200		
Gift Synod of PFC-CI			2000						
Women for Mission PFCCI					1500				
Interserve-Shekinah	2083		2083						
Total Expenditure	11783	11783		17937	7700	7700	6200		6200
Closing Balance		29879		28736		36736			43236

24.2.29 REPORTS OF EXAMINERS OF RECORDS

The Examiners of records presented their reports.

Mr Miller reported on the Northern Presbytery records, noting some matters, and found them to be in order.

Dr Ramsay reported on the Central Presbytery records, noting some minor inconsistencies, and found them to be in order.

Mr Greensill reported on the Southern Presbytery records and found them to be correct.

It was moved, seconded and carried that the records be attested.

24.2.30 MODERATOR-ELECT

The Rev. James Klazinga was nominated and voted as Moderator-Elect for 2025.

The session was closed with prayer, led by the Moderator at 5:55pm

The Session opened with the singing of Ps 65:1-10 and prayer. led by Dr Muldoon, at 7:15pm

MINUTES

It was resolved to defer the confirmation of Minutes of the previous sessions to the next session.

24.2.31 MISSIONS EVENING SPEAKERS

The Convener, Dr Muldoon, introduced Mrs Elizabeth Muldoon and Dr Amin Sukri (MERF, Indonesia). The Moderator welcomed them to the Synod and invited them to speak.

Mrs Muldoon quizzed everyone on their knowledge of India, the meaning of the word “Reformed” and the mission work established by the Free Church. She spoke about meeting three men at the first Synod of the PFCCI Mr Brij Lal, Mr Samuel Christian and Heeralal Solanki. She then spoke on the three main aspects of the PFCCI work in Madhya Pradesh: the Church, the School and the medical work.

Mr Greensill prayed for the work of the PFCCI in India

Dr Amin Sukri spoke a little bit about the background of his own people and South Sulawesi. He presented a video on the work of MERF in general and then in particular on the work of MERF in South Sulawesi – the YPRI. He highlighted the four areas of their work: Media, Children’s Ministry, Biblical Training and Diaconal Aid through micro economic projects.

Mr Klazinga prayed for Dr Amin and the YPRI (MERF Indonesia).

The Session closed with the singing of Psalm 100 and prayer at 8:50pm

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JCA Forbes
Moderator

SESSION 9

FRIDAY 10th MAY 2024

9:00AM

The session was opened with the singing of Psalm 80:14-19. Mr Reeve led the court in prayer. The Moderator delivered a devotion on the subject of brotherly fellowship. The court sang Psalm 117 together.

The Moderator opened the morning session with prayer.

Mr Ian Miller sent his apologies for his inability to attend due to a medical appointment.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous sessions were read and confirmed.

24.2.32 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Mr Ian Miller rejoined the meeting online.

The following Committee Structure was approved:

Committee Structure:

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

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

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

Church and Nation and Publication: GD Ball (Convener), I Miller, JD Klazinga (Banner), D. Kerridge (Archive). I. Hall.

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

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

Missions: DK Muldoon (Convener), JD Klazinga, J Greensill, I. Hamilton, Mark Hamilton, Zach Dotson

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

Psalmody: D Kerridge (Convener), DA McIntosh, GD Ball, Julie Schmidt, AK Steel, G. King, G. Hamilton

Other Appointments

PCEA Trustees for Victoria: D. Ramsay (Secretary), R. Tso, I. Hall, Synod Clerk, Synod Treasurer.

24.2.33 TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT SYNOD

It was agreed that the next Annual Synod take place in the Hastings Congregation at 4:30pm Tuesday 6th to 9th May, 2025 at 4:30pm.

24.2.34 THANKS

Thanks were expressed to the Moderator for his conducting of this Synod.

Thanks was expressed to the Clerk for his work.

A vote of thanks was expressed to Rev. Tso and the Hunter Congregation for their kind hospitality and carried by acclamation.

The Synod Precentor, Mr Donald McIntosh was thanked or his labours.

MINUTES

The Minutes of this final session were read and confirmed.

24.2.35 CLOSURE OF SYNOD

The 176th meeting of Synod closed with the singing of Ps 22:27-31 and a benediction at 10:45am.

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JCA Forbes
Moderator