

The Synod of Eastern Australia

MINUTES
OF THE 177TH ANNUAL MEETING
WAUCHOPE, NSW, 6TH TO 9TH MAY, 2025

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SESSION 1**TUESDAY 6th MAY 2025****4:30PM****25.1 OPENING**

Within the Wauchope Church building of the Hastings River Congregation, on Tuesday 6th May 2025, at 4.30pm, the Synod of Eastern Australia met. The Moderator, Rev John Forbes, took the chair, and extended a welcome. Those gathered joined in praise, singing Psalm 103:1-5 and reading from Philippians 3.

25.2 MODERATOR'S SERMON

The Moderator preached on Philippians 3:15-16 under four headings: First, under the heading of right-mindedness, essentials are maintained with humility. Second, other-mindedness, or differences exist in the church on non-essentials, this is a reality though not the ideal. Third, we are urged that there be a striving for progress in unity. This takes work, but there is a promise of God granting help. Fourth, that which has been attained should not be given up and ground that is gained, held.

The gathering sang from Psalm 115:1-11. The Moderator constituted the meeting, leading in prayer.

25.3 ROLLS OF PRESBYTERY

The Certified Rolls of Presbyteries were tendered. 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	[vacant]	I Miller
Sydney West	DK Muldoon	D McIntosh #
St George's	R Tso	A Steel
Southern Presbytery		
Geelong	[vacant]	D Ramsay
Knox	[vacant]	
Narre Warren	[vacant]	
Ulverstone	Z Dotson	M Pilgrim

Synod Appointments

GD Ball (Southern Presbytery assessor and Residential Supply)

The Moderator welcomed Rev. Zachary Dotson to his first Synod as an ordained Minister and Mr Martin Pilgrim to his first Synod as Representative Elder.

25.4 ASSOCIATION OF DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

Rev Robin Tso introduced delegates from other churches: Rev. Bruce Bakensto from RPCNA; Rev. Sjik Bajema, RCNZ; Rev. Graeme Hart, RPCA; Rev. David Lachman, SPC; Rev. Samit Kumar, PFCCI, India; Rev. John Nelson, AFC. It was moved seconded and carried that these men be associated with the court. The Moderator advised them of the conditions of association. The Moderator welcomed the delegates to the Synod.

Rev. George Ball and Rev. Trevor Leggott notified their inability to attend on Thursday due to the funeral of Mrs Val Cromarty, wife of Rev. James Cromarty.

25.5 ELECTION OF MODERATOR

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

Motions on notice were called for and provided.

CLOSURE OF SESSION

The session was closed with prayer by the Moderator at 5:59pm

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JCA Forbes
Moderator

SESSION 2

TUESDAY 6th MAY 2025

7:00PM

The Session was opened with the singing of Ps 73:24-28 and prayer, led by Mr T. Leggott at 7:05pm.

MINUTES

The Minutes of Session 1 were read and confirmed.

Mr Ian Miller joined the Synod. Mr Donald McIntosh and Mr Tom Reeve joined by video conference. The Moderator welcomed the members to the Synod.

25.6 MODERATOR'S ADDRESS

The Moderator delivered his opening address on Micah 6, with a focus on verse 8: The Lord brings a charge against His people that cannot be answered. The basis for the charge is found in verse 8, that the Lord requires his people to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly, and they do not do it, or regard themselves as already complying. Christ Jesus is the only one that is innocent of the charge of Micah 6 against God's people and fulfils the requirements of verse 8 perfectly. He mediates on our behalf and takes the punishment due to us upon Himself.

25.7 ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

The Clerk presented the Administration Committee's report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Moderator asked Mr Ball to lead the court in prayer for those ministers listed in the ministerial movements section of the report and also for those bereaved.

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

1. That the above Timetable for Synod 2025 be confirmed.

2. That a new section be added to Synod Standing Orders (Act 1, class 2, 1978, as amended 1984, 1991, 2008 and 2024) as follows, by amending and incorporating the wording of Act 1, 1983 “Reports and Correspondence to Synod” (as amended 1985, 1986, 1995, 2000, 2008, 2011, 2022). Synod now repeal Act 1, 1983.

“VI – SYNOD ARRANGEMENTS

1. The Synod Treasurer forwards his report and annual accounts to Synod members at least 50 days prior to the scheduled opening of Synod.
2. All documents and Committee Reports for transmission to Synod are to be lodged with the Clerk of Synod at least 45 days prior to Synod. Any document or report presented after that date must be accompanied by a letter showing cause why it could not be presented by the due date. The Administration Committee shall judge whether the reasons advanced are sufficient, and if there are extenuating circumstances shall transmit the same to Synod, reporting accordingly. If the Committee refuse to transmit any document it states reasons to those concerned, who, if aggrieved with the decision, may petition Synod in the usual way without conforming to the above mentioned deadline.
3. Requests for finance from Synod funds are to be forwarded by presbyteries direct to the Finance Committee to reach the Convener at least 60 days prior to Synod.
4. The Clerk of Synod shall arrange for Committee Reports and Recommendations together with Correspondence to be circulated so that they are in the hands of members not later than 21 days before the opening of Synod. Correspondence with the potential to impugn the character or reputation of any person is not to be circulated to persons other than Synod members prior to Synod considering the same.

It was resolved that item 5. of the proposed deliverances be considered separately. It was moved, seconded and carried that item 5 be amended as follows:

5. At the annual meeting of Synod participation by phone or video conference will not normally be allowed. In exceptional circumstances request should be made to the Administration Committee in reasonable time before Synod, which may approve the request if it sees fit.”

And that the words “At the annual Synod participation by video conference or phone will not normally be permitted” be added to section 5.4 of the Handbook; “Live-streaming of open-court proceedings may be allowed at the discretion of the court” be added to section 5.15.

3. That the Southern Presbytery Report 2023, deferred by Synod 2024, be presented along with the Southern Presbytery Report 2025.
4. That the proposed Committee Structure, along with other appointments, as listed in the report be considered in the final session of Synod.
5. That Correspondence item 1. be considered with Finance Committee business.
6. That Correspondence item 2. be considered with Psalmody Committee business.
7. That Correspondence item 3. be considered with Southern Presbytery Reports.
8. That Correspondence item 4. be noted (mentioned in the Inter-Church Relations Committee report).
9. That the following Examiners of Records be appointed:

Northern Presbytery Rev. D. Muldoon and Hunter Elder
Central Presbytery Rev. Z Dotson and Geelong Elder
Southern Presbytery Rev. D. Kerridge and Northern Rivers Elder

The Moderator made a ruling that the Training of Ministry Supplementary report be taken with the Training of Ministry business as it had been mentioned in the main report from the Committee.

CLOSURE OF SESSION

The Moderator called on Mr Kerridge to lead in prayer. The session closed at 9:10pm.

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JD Klazinga
Moderator

SESSION 3 WEDNESDAY 7th MAY 2025 9:00AM

The session was opened at 9:05am with prayer and a devotion by the Moderator continuing on Micah 6. The court sang Ps 15.

MINUTES

The Minutes of Session 2 were read and confirmed.

25.8 LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

- 1. Panel on Divorce, Separation and Remarriage.** Synod clarifies the remit of the panel such that proposed changes to the Handbook should be concise and procedural in nature. Extended guidance will be produced as well for church members and office bearers, and made available separately. A report of progress to be brought to Synod 2026.
- 2. Handbook Revisions.** The remit for revision of Handbook Chapter 7, and part of Chapter 4, is continued. A report to be brought to Synod 2026.
- 3. Uniformity of subscription and retention of records.** Synod instructs sessions to ensure that every serving office bearer of their congregation has answered the 1952 Questions in presence of session and signed the Formula. Sessions are to retain records to be able to certify this to higher courts upon request. Presbyteries may not sustain the commission of a representative elder who has not subscribed the 1952 Questions and Formula.
- 4. Requirement for Questions when signing Formula.** When a person is called upon to sign the Formula he must first, on that same occasion, have the Questions put to him and answer appropriately. This requirement is evident from the Formula itself which refers to "*the questions already put to me*".

It was moved, seconded and agreed that item 5. be amended to read:

- 5. Concerns Notice.** Synod notes that the statutory time limit for court action by Dr Ward for alleged defamation has passed with no action raised. Synod commends the members of Southern Presbytery

who have patiently endured the trouble brought against them in recent years, and especially in the past year, when they, along with the Synod Clerk, were personally threatened with legal action.

The meeting adjourned for morning tea at 10:34 and resumed at 10:55am

6. Review of Sustentation. The Committee moved an amended deliverance as follows:

Synod instructs the Law and Advisory Committee to examine the theological principles for the sustentation of the ministry including the proposed introduction of “PayDay Super” from 1 July, 2026 and to consider the legal and practical implications of any change from our current system, and to bring a report to the 2026 Synod.

7. Church insurance – clarification of remit. The initiation of claims under the Church’s group policy is the responsibility of the relevant church court or Synod committee that has resolved to make a claim. Advice may be sought from the committee responsible for church insurances, but its remit does not extend to initiating claims itself.

Dr Muldoon moved a motion on notice concerning Westminster Confession of Faith , Chapter IV.1 states: “It pleased God the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.”

The Presbyterian Church of eastern Australia understands that the six days referred to by the Westminster divines in 1643 were six, twenty-four hour days.

The Moderator ruled that the motion be passed to the Law and Advisory Committee under section 5.24 of the Handbook for consideration.

25.9 RPCNA DELEGATE’S ADDRESS

Rev. Bruce Backensto brought greetings from the RPCNA. The RPCNA is hosting the NAPARC conference this year. The speaker, Chad van Dixhoorn is highlighting the unity that is possible through the Westminster Confession of Faith. Expansion has seen an RPC church established in Canada and there is great vitality in the work in East Asia.

Rev. Backensto answered questions from the members. Mr Ball led the court in prayer for the work of the RPCNA.

25.10 TRAINING OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE

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

The Convener moved, and it was seconded, that:

1. That Synod now approve the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) Seminary as a Synod-approved College for the training of PCEA candidates.

Mr Ball moved a motion, which was seconded, that the matter be deferred, pending the supply of further information about the FCC Seminary. Mr Ball’s motion carried.

Notices of motion were called for.

CLOSURE OF SESSION

The meeting was adjourned for lunch at 12:40pm, with Mr Ramsay leading in prayer.

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JD Klazinga
Moderator

SESSION 4 WEDNESDAY 7th MAY 2025 2:00PM

The court resumed at 2:00pm

The session was opened with prayer by Mr Zach Dotson, and the singing of Psalm 116:1-8

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous Session were read and confirmed.

TRAINING OF MINISTRY Cont.

The Convener of the Training of Ministry Committee continued to deliver the proposed deliverances, and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

2. That we would fervently pray for the provision of candidates for the ministry, help from sister churches, and men ready for office-bearing in our congregations.

The Convener presented the supplementary report of the Committee, reproduced below:

Reformed Theological College, Melbourne rtc.edu.au

The Reformed Theological College, Melbourne (RTC) is an accredited College with the Australian College of Theology (ACT), the accreditation body for internationally recognised degree courses, which has become the Australian University of Theology (AUT) in 2025. RTC offers degree, diploma and graduate courses, including the BTh. and MDiv.

The Committee was able to meet with Dr Phillip Scheepers (Principal, Reformed Theological College, Melbourne) and Mr Ken Dean (Board Chairman, RTC) after the submission of reports, on 8th April.. The intent of the meeting was to re-establish ties with the RTC that had begun to break down in 1975 and were severed in the early part of the 1980s with the completion of Rev. Peter

Bloomfield's studies there. As mentioned in previous reports in 2022 and 2023, the Synod has considered that the relationship should be restored at various times in the intervening period and the Committee was given the task of investigating this.

The discussion with RTC in April centred on the Memorandum of Understanding that the RTC has with denominations that partner with the College (a pro forma has been circulated to Synod members). It is expected that such a Memorandum will be used to establish and delineate our own relationship, if approved by Synod.

We found both men to be very willing to accommodate our distinctives, as they already do with the RPCA. They would even offer course units for our students from the ACT Handbook that are in line with our doctrines as part of requirements we would set. One other very positive element is that the College would also offer regular oversight and reporting to the Committee on a candidate's progress.

The Committee was very encouraged by what we have seen in the welcoming attitude of Dr Scheepers and Mr Dean, as well as the important matter of interacting with an Australian College that is sympathetic to our position.

A time of discussion and questions followed. The Convener presented the proposed deliverance, and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

That the Synod include the Reformed Theological College, Melbourne in our Synod-approved list of Colleges for candidate training and that the Committee be authorised to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the RTC in the terms of the pro forma.

Mr Backensto was invited to address the court and spoke on the courses available at RPTS.

25.11 YOUTH AND FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

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

1. Synod encourages the Youth and Fellowship committee to continue with the organisation of family and youth camps and encourages the church to pray for the practical planning and organisation of all activities. Pray that the events will bring deep spiritual growth under the ministry of the Word, with enrichment of Christian relationships, and a refreshing time of body and mind.
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 bring theological discovery, personal strength, and spiritual direction in the lives of 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 preparing the talks for the Youth and Family camps. Pray for their messages to increase the joy of learning new things from Scripture.
4. Synod gives thanks and pray for those 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 continued 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.

25.12 RCNZ DELEGATE'S ADDRESS

Rev. Sjirk Bajema brought greetings from the RCNZ. He spoke of the history of the RCNZ from its foundation in Dutch immigration in 1953, integrating with roots in New Zealand Presbyterianism dating back to Dunedin and early Presbyterian churches. Liberal influence in New Zealand led to an exodus to the RCNZ along with immigration from the Continent. In recent years there has been a new influx of South African and Korean folk. The Federation has struggled for 72 years but continues in the strength of the Lord. Mr Bajema asked for prayer for their vacant charges.

Mr Bajema answered questions from the members. Mr Carswell led the court in prayer for the RCNZ.

25.13 SUPERANNUATION and INSURANCE COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Tso, presented the report. It was resolved to receive the report. Considerable discussion followed.

The meeting adjourned for refreshments at 3:30pm The court resumed at 3:50pm

The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and items 1 to 7 were moved, seconded and carried together:

1. **Synod approves** the establishment of a centralised Long Service Leave (LSL) fund for ministers to ensure financial stability and predictability for congregations.
2. **Synod agrees** to set aside an initial amount of \$90,000 in a LSL fund to cover current LSL liabilities, and thus **authorises** the drawing of \$45,000 from the Superannuation Support Fund (SSF) working account, current balance of \$50,414, and \$40,000 from the SSF capital account.
3. **Synod agrees** to impose an LSL levy on congregations with an ordained minister eligible for LSL, ensuring fair contribution to the fund.
4. **Synod approves** setting the LSL levy at 0.9 times the weekly minimum stipend to cover LSL entitlements, assuming a 4% annual increase in the stipend.
5. **Synod agrees** to review the LSL levy annually on January 1st to adjust for changes in stipend rates and ensure the fund remains adequately funded.
6. **Synod approves** the requirement that applications for LSL leave be approved by the Session and Presbytery, with these approvals reported to the Superannuation and Insurance Committee for monitoring and record-keeping.
7. **Synod approves the refund of LSL levy payments to the contributing congregation(s) on a pro rata basis when long service leave is taken.**

The Convener moved Item 8, it was seconded and carried that:

8. **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.

A motion on notice from Mr Alex Steel was seconded and carried that:

Bank account signing authority be updated as follows:

The Treasurer be authorised to open accounts with banks included in the Australian Government Banking Act 1959. Authorised signatories to operate on accounts/give instructions to banks including Electronic Funds Transfers (EFT) via Internet Banking, be any two of the Clerk, Treasurer, Mr Alex Steel and subsequent appointments.

25.14 FINANCE COMMITTEE

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

1. We record our thanks to God for the continual temporal blessings the Synod and the church overall has enjoyed during 2024.
2. Adjustment of the Minimum Stipend, Cash and Non-cash components (Excluding Manse, Car and Telephone) for 2025/2026 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. Pulpit Supply Fees be at least 12.00% of the weekly minimum stipend and where travel is by private motor vehicle, reimbursement at the same rate as Synod Commissioners.
4. Synod Commissioners' Expenses where travel is involved by motor vehicle be reimbursed at 66% (two thirds) of the Australian Taxation Office's tax deduction rate for use of private vehicles for work related purposes - the rate to be reviewed annually and adjusted, when necessary, in line with the ATO's current rate. (58c per kilometre in 2024).
Delete point 3 of Act 1 Class 2, 1984 (as amended) "Synod Delegates' Expenses"
5. Financial Assistance of up to \$6,000 for 2025/2026 be granted to Hawkesbury-Nepean Court as follows:
 - Strictly on a quarterly needs basis.
 - Applications be submitted to the General Treasurer on a calendar quarter basis i.e. commencing 1st January/April/July/October and be accompanied with a Budget for the quarter being applied for.
 - Be subject to the availability of funds.
6. The prayer of the Petition of Ulverstone Deacons' Court for financial assistance of \$470,000 be granted in the following terms:

Amount: \$470,000

Funding:

\$200,000 - Capital Assistance Fund

\$270,000 – Synod General Funds

\$470,000

Drawdowns:

The Deacons' Court's contribution of \$315,000 to be fully applied in the purchase of the dwelling with the balance thereafter drawn as required for renovations from the remaining Synod funds provided. The Synod Finance Committee Convener to oversee drawdown(s) for the renovations.

25.15 GENERAL TREASURER

The General Treasurer presented his report. It was resolved to receive the report. The General Treasurer moved the proposed deliverances and it was moved, seconded and carried that:

1. That Synod confirm the decision to have the review of the books of account for the year ended 31/12/24 conducted by Lester Barkley & Associates of Highton VIC in lieu of GPA Accountants of Kingsgrove NSW.
2. The Clerk send a letter of thanks to Mr George Azzi, Accountant, of GPA Accountants for his long association with the auditing of Synod accounts, being formerly with Partlett, Chave & Rowland and of recent years in his own practice. The Synod has appreciated his advice from time to time and efficient service over the years.

The Moderator proposed a vote of thanks be conveyed to the General Treasurer for his long service and labour to be carried by acclamation.

The Clerk of Northern Presbytery presented the Overture regarding Financial Review for Small Charities. It was moved, seconded and carried that the overture be received. It was moved and seconded that the prayer of the overture be sustained in the terms stated.

Mr Steel moved a counter-motion that the prayer of the overture not be sustained as:

1. Synod has made provision for financial assistance to be granted to congregations who are experiencing significant financial burdens including the cost of their annual financial review or audit by a qualified person as detailed in Handbook 2019, pg.101, 2024 3.15
2. The Australian Government's (Australian Accounting Standards Board) has strict controls in place for parties authorised to review and audit financial statements. The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) lists these in their legislation which congregations are to use to obtain a review or audit of their annual financial statements by an independent professional individual.

The motions were put against each other and the motion of the overturists was preferred. Upon being put to the vote, the Synod granted the prayer of the Overture in the terms stated, viz:

That the wording of Handbook 3.15 and the related Act of 2017 be amended as follows:

DELETE "While the ACNC does not require Small Charities to submit a Review or Audit report with their Annual Information Statement, SYNOD requires either a Review or Audit report to form part of the congregation's Annual Financial Report when presenting it to the Presbytery of the bounds for attestation (see 2.33)."

REPLACE WITH "Congregations classified as Small Charities are required by Synod to have their annual Financial Statement examined. They may obtain a professional Review or Audit or they may appoint as examiner a competent independent person who is not a member of the court."

25.16 NSW TRUST CORPORATION

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

1. That the Deed Box of the Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia be uplifted from safe deposit with Daniel Butt and Co. and deposited in the PCEA Archive.

25.17 QUEENSLAND TRUST CORPORATION

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

1. That the Trustees seek advice to clarify the current situation regarding eConveyancing in Queensland and report to Synod 2026.

25.18 VICTORIAN TRUST CORPORATION

The Secretary presented the report. It was resolved to receive the report.

Notices of motion were called for and provided.

CLOSURE OF SESSION

The Session was closed with prayer by Mr Ian Miller at 6:04pm

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JD Klazinga
Moderator

SESSION 5 WEDNESDAY 7th MAY 2025 7:00PM

The session opened at 7:08pm with prayer and the singing of Psalm 40:11-16.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous session were read and confirmed.

25.19 AFC DELEGATE'S ADDRESS

Rev. John Nelson brought greetings from the AFC. He rejoiced in the good order and zeal he saw in the PCEA and looked forward to union. He reported that the two congregations of the AFC have seen tokens of the Lord's kindness and blessing in recent times, with interest from further afield in Canberra. He was thankful for ecumenical contact with fellow churches and the strong interest and support that the AFC was able to give to mission endeavours. Mr Nelson was hopeful of changes in the political and social fabric of our society in recent times, relying on the promises of the Lord to never leave nor forsake His people. He encouraged the PCEA to be lights in a dark place, waking by faith and not ashamed of the Gospel.

25.20 CHURCH AND NATION COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Ball, presented the report. The Convener moved that the report be received, the motion was seconded.

Mr Forbes presented a motion on notice, which was seconded, that:

Reception

Synod receives the report without section 4 of the report as it is not in accord with our received principles of doctrine and worship.

The motions were put against each other and Mr Forbes' was preferred. Upon being put to the vote, Mr Forbes' motion was carried.

Mr Leggott moved that the order of the day be suspended until the end of the Church and Nation business, it was seconded and carried.

The Convener moved the proposed deliverances. It was seconded and carried that:

- 1.** Synod urges members to pray for the reformation and revival of the church and seek the Lord's mercy on our nation. It appoints a day of prayer on 28th June and encourages its members to also make this matter a regular part of personal and corporate prayer. The Lord's words to Solomon in 2 Chron. 7: 14 are still relevant, 'If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land'.
- 2.** Synod commends the article 'Pray till you pray' by Rev. Paul Levy (Ely IPC) with the hope it may encourage us all to continue in the ministry of prayer and intercession.
- 3.** Synod approves the statement to the Prime Minister, Mr Anthony Albanese.
- 4.** Synod recognises the obligation upon us to maintain and exercise Christian liberty in light of the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 20.
- 5.** Synod urges parents (and grandparents) to regularly discuss with their children (and grandchildren) the nature of their studies and seek to equip them with a Christian worldview.
- 6.** Synod gives thanks for the faithful work of the editor of the Presbyterian Banner, Rev. Jim Klazinga, and for his endeavour to keep us connected and informed through its pages.

Notices of motion were called for and provided.

CLOSURE OF SESSION

The Session closed with the singing of Psalm 65:1-8 and prayer, led by Mr J. Greensill.

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JD Klazinga
Moderator

SESSION 6

THURSDAY 8th MAY 2025

9:00AM

The session was opened at with prayer and a devotion by the Moderator focusing on the mercy of God in Micah 6. The court sang Ps 37:23-30 together.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous session were read and confirmed.

25.21 THE PRESBYTERIAN BANNER REPORT

The Editor, Mr Klazinga presented the report. It was resolved to receive the report. The Editor presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved that:

1. Synod continues to endorse The Presbyterian Banner as the official magazine of the PCEA.
2. 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.
 2. Synod expresses thankfulness for the assistance of the Presbyterian Banner liaisons from the congregations.

Dr Muldoon moved a motion on notice that:

That *Purity of Worship* by Rev. M.C. Ramsay be republished.

After some considerable and positive discussion, the motion was seconded and carried.

25.22 ARCHIVIST'S REPORT

The Archivist presented the report. It was resolved to receive the report. The Archivist presented the proposed deliverance:

That Presbyteries, Congregations and individuals consider donations to the PCEA Archive.

25.23 RPCA DELEGATE'S ADDRESSES

Rev. Graeme Hart from the RPCA was introduced to and welcomed by the Moderator. Mr Hart brought greetings from the RPCA and gave details of current membership in their three congregations. Mr Hart reported that the RPCA Presbytery AGM is upcoming. Fraternal relations with the SPC have been established. In the RPCA there is a renewed emphasis on prayer and revival. Elders are needed in their congregations. The prayers of the RPCA were with the PCEA through its recent struggles, especially in the Southern Presbytery. We have enemies within and without: Satan, the world and ourselves, yet Christ reigns supreme. We stand in the power and continuity of election and the Gospel. He exhorted the PCEA not to lose heart, the kingdom of Christ advances.

Questions were put to Mr Hart. Mr Dotson prayed for the work of the RPCA.

The meeting adjourned for morning tea at 10:50am and resumed at 11:06am

25.24 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

The Convener presented the report. It was resolved to receive the report. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved 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.

25.25 INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Tso, presented the report and invited Mr Forbes to speak on matters concerning the AFC. It was resolved 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.

The Convener moved, and it was seconded, that:

2. Union with Australian Free Church:
 - a. Synod agrees in principle to the incorporation of the Australian Free Church into the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia on the basis of the Clarifying Statement in the report and invites the Australian Free Church likewise to confirm their in-principle agreement to union on this basis.
 - b. Following acceptance by the Australian Free Church the Southern Presbytery is instructed to enter into discussions with them about the practicalities of union, with particular reference to property and finance, and to bring proposals to Synod 2026 for agreement.

Mr Dotson moved a motion on notice and it was seconded, as an amendment of 2a., that:

Synod agrees in principle to the incorporation of the Australian Free Church into the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia on the basis of our shared and invites the Australian Free Church likewise to confirm their in-principle agreement to union on this basis.

CLOSURE OF SESSION

The Synod adjourned for lunch. The session was closed with prayer, led by Tom Reeve at 12:35pm

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JD Klazinga
Moderator

SESSION 7

THURSDAY 8th MAY 2025

1:30PM

The session resumed at 2:08pm, with the singing of Ps 89:1-5, and was opened with prayer by Mr Pilgrim.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous sessions were read and confirmed.

Mr Leggott and Mr Ball were welcomed back to the meeting, after their attendance at the funeral of Mrs Val Cromarty.

INTER-CHURCH Cont.

Inter-Church Relations Committee business continued.

Notices of motion were presented.

Mr Tso requested that he be allowed to withdraw the Committee proposal. Upon being put to the vote, the house acceded to the request.

Mr Forbes moved an amended proposed deliverance as follows:

Synod agrees to send the following clarifying statement to the Australian Free Church to aid with further discussion:

CLARIFYING STATEMENT

It is recognised and acknowledged that:

1. Translators “may err” - It is not compatible with our received standards to teach that a particular translation of Scripture has been made that is without mistake or error. It is acknowledged that even the best translations, being the work of fallible men, may err (per WCF 1.8 and 31.4).
2. No Bible version has constitutional status in this Church – The constitution of this Church does not bind it to the ongoing use of a particular Bible version. Ministers and members are free to question the accuracy or appropriateness of the wording of even the best allowed translation.
3. Constructive criticism of Scripture translations is legitimate but requires care – It is appropriate that allowed translations be reviewed and, where necessary, critiqued, but special care should be exercised so as not to disturb the peace of the Church and destabilise the confidence of the Lord’s people in God’s word.
4. Individual conviction or preference is not inviolable – There are legitimate circumstances where a minister may be expected to read publicly from an allowed translation that he does not personally consider to be the best. This may happen when preaching at another congregation, or at a meeting of Presbytery or Synod. There is a practical necessity for a minister to accommodate himself to these circumstances. It does not imply that he personally endorses that translation.

Mr Dotson’s motion from the previous session and this motion were put against each other and the amended proposed deliverance was preferred. Upon being put to the vote, the amended proposed deliverance carried.

Dr Muldoon moved a motion on notice that:

The Synod of the PCEA agrees to send Rev. David Kerridge as our delegate to the Synod of the Presbyterian Free Church of Central India in November 2025 and meet all his travel costs.

The motion was seconded and carried.

25.26 PSALMODY COMMITTEE

The Convener presented the report. It was resolved to receive the report.

The Synod adjourned for afternoon tea at 3:45pm and resumed at 4:05pm

Mr Reeve notified the Moderator that he had to attend to medical appointments and was excused from the meeting.

25.27 PRESBYTERY REPORTS

Northern Presbytery Report

The Clerk of Presbytery, Mr John Forbes, presented the Northern Presbytery report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

Central Presbytery Report

The Clerk of Presbytery, Mr Ian Miller, presented the Central Presbytery Report. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

Southern Presbytery Report 2023-2024

The Clerk of Presbytery, Mr Donald Ramsay, presented the Southern Presbytery report of 2023, deferred by Synod 2024. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

Mr Ramsay presented the Southern Presbytery report for 2024. It was moved, seconded and carried that the report be received.

Mr Tso moved a vote of thanks to Dr Ramsay for his work.

CORRESPONDENCE ITEM

The petition from the Southern Presbytery concerning the sale of Wantirna church building was presented on behalf of the petitioners by Dr Ramsay. It was moved, seconded and carried that the petition be received. Questions were put to the Petitioners.

Mr Steel presented a motion, which was seconded, that the prayer of the petition be granted in the following terms:

1. Permission be granted to Knox (renamed Melbourne) Deacon's Court to sell the Wantirna church situated at 358 Mountain Highway, Wantirna Vic.
2. That proceeds from the sale to be held by Melbourne Deacons' Court until the restructuring of the existing centres of worship is completed.
3. Melbourne Deacons' Court is then to decide on the application of the proceeds and seek permission for such from Synod in terms of Handbook 3.22

Upon being put against each other, Mr Steel's motion was preferred. Upon being put to the vote the prayer of the petition was granted in the terms of the motion. The petitioners were advised of the decision and acquiesced in it.

25.28 MISSIONS COMMITTEE

The Convener, Dr Muldoon, presented the report. It was resolved to receive the report. Questions were put to the Convener regarding the report.

The session closed with the singing of Psalm 70 and prayer led by Mr Kerridge at 6:05pm

SESSION 8 THURSDAY 8th MAY 2025 7:00PM

The Session opened with prayer, led by the Moderator, at 7:15pm

MINUTES

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

25.29 MISSIONS EVENING SPEAKERS - PFCCI

The Convener, Dr Muldoon, introduced Rev. Samit Kumar and Mr Pradeep Kumar to the Moderator who welcomed them to the Synod and invited them to speak.

Rev. Kumar sent greetings from the PFCCI and introduced the presentation. He spoke on the ongoing work of the PFCCI despite challenges. He spoke of the providential way on which they had come to our Synod, due to being hampered from going to a previous engagement in the Netherlands due to Visa delays. Relationships are important and they value the long-standing relationship they have with the PCEA.

Mr Pradeep Kumar then spoke on the work of the school in Chhapara and the wonderful progress made in developing infrastructure, being able to run new programs including computers and robotics labs, and the outstanding results of some students, which heightens the school's reputation and in turn draws enrolment.

Rev. Kumar spoke of the SERVE program being implemented. Strategic approaches are bearing fruit, by God's blessing, in church planting work, in building infrastructure, in community involvement and in some income generating activities. The PFCCI hopes to conduct its second Synod in November, 2025. There have been some challenges and direct opposition, but the work continues to grow by the Lord's providence and blessing.

The Session closed with prayer at 9:10pm

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JD Klazinga
Moderator

SESSION 9

FRIDAY 9th MAY 2023

9:00AM

The session was opened at 9:00am with prayer and a devotion by the Moderator continuing in Micah 6 on the subject of humility. The court sang Ps 25:11-16 together.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous sessions were read and confirmed.

MISSIONS REPORT cont.

The Convener asked permission to bring deliverance 4 at the end. Permission was granted by the Moderator. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances and it was resolved 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 approve the gift of \$1000 towards the cost of a laptop for PFC-CI student at PTS, Vipin John.
3. 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.

The Convener provided further proposed deliverances of the Committee:

It was seconded and carried that:

Proposed Deliverance 5

That Synod approve the Mission Committee decision to send the Convener, Dr Dennis Muldoon, to the Republic of South Africa to assess and encourage the ministry of the Dumisani Theological Institute and Bible School in King William's Town, with a travel subsidy of \$750 from mission funds.

The Convener moved, and it was seconded that:

Proposed Deliverance 6

That Synod approve the Mission Committee decision to send Rev. David Kerridge to Sri Lanka as an extension of his visit to India in Nov. 2025 to visit the mission work of the Free Church Continuing if the Free Church Continuing Mission secretary extends an invitation, and that a representative of the PFCCI accompany him. Extra costs to be met by the Mission Committee.

Mr Steel moved a counter-motion on notice, that:

Motion 4

To assist in determining whether the Reformed Protestant Mission – Sri Lanka be included in the current churches/missions and medical work regularly supported by Synod, it liaise with Rev Shanmugan NV Partheepan with a view to visiting him to learn more of the work and their needs.

If Rev. Partheepan agrees, Rev David Kerridge be appointed to visit him for this purpose at a mutually agreeable time and report back to Synod 2026 via the Missions Committee.

Return economy air fare and associated costs be paid for from Missions General funds.

The deliverance and Mr Steel's motion were put against each other and Mr Steel's motion was preferred. Upon being put to the vote, the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned for morning tea at 10:33am and resumed at 10:50am

4. Synod adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2025/26 and expresses its general agreement with the estimates for this period.

Mr Steel moved a motion on notice as follows:

Motion 1

That Proposed Deliverance 4. be amended to read:

“Synod adopt the Missions Committee Budget 2025/26 as amended to include the *Reformed Protestant Mission, Sri Lanka*, and expresses its general agreement with the estimates otherwise for this period.”

Delete :

“In view of our limited resources, the budget reflects a rationalisation of projects supported, with a focus on the work of PFC-CI with whom we have a long-standing and close relationship.”

The Committee's proposed deliverance was put against the motion and the deliverance was preferred. Upon being put to the vote the deliverance carried.

Mr Steel moved a motion on notice, that was seconded and carried that:

Motion.3

The needs of the *Reformed Protestant Mission – Sri Lanka* be included in the bi-monthly *PCEA Missions Prayer Notes*.

Mr Leggott moved a motion on notice that the corresponding and reporting of PFCCI be dealt with under the Inter-Church relations Committee. Hospital, School work and Diaconal aid to remain with Missions.

The motion was seconded and carried.

Missions Budget 2025									
General Funds	Budget 2024		Actual	2024	Budget 2025		Estimate	2026	
Balance 1 Jan		28736		28752		38534			44834
Income: Investments	13000		17714		13000		10000		
Giving Miss General	2700		2110		2500		2500		
reimburse airfares									
Income	15700	44436	19824	48576	15500	54034	12500		57334
Expenditure									
IMJP	1000		1000		2000		2000		
Visiting Miss. expenses	2000		4078		2000		2000		
Dumisani Theo, Institute & Bible School	3000		3000		3000		3000		
Admin: Postage, bank fee	200		330		200		200		
PFCCI-presbytery	1500		1500		2000		2000		
Total Expenditure	7700	7700	9908	9908	9200	9200	9200		9200
Closing Balance		36736		38668		44834			48134

Missions Relief Fund 2025										
2025										
MRF Working Account	Budget 2024		Actual 2024		Budget 2025		Estimate 2026			
Balance 1 Jan		5577		3177		10917			9817	
Income Investments	5000			2884		5000			5000	
Other (Donation congs)										
Transfer from Equities Ac				13336						
Income	5000	10577		16220	19397	5000	15917		5000	14817
Expenditure										
Lakhnadon Christian Hospital	2000			2000		2000			2000	
Lakhnadon Mission School	800			800						
Chhapara Mission School	1000			1000						
Laptop for Vipin John				1000						
Education, diaconal aid PFCCI						4000			4000	
Annie Soper Scholarships	1200			1200						
Dr Dickson Delhi	1300			1300						
Mukti child sponsorships*3	1000			1000						
Fees and Charges	100			180		100			100	
Total Expenditure	7400	7400		8480	8480	6100	6100		6100	6100
Closing Balance		3177			10917		9817			8717

Equities Account	Budget 2024		Actual 2024		Budget 2025		Estimate 2026			
Balance 1 Jan		130087		127240		134963			139963	
Income Revaluation of shares & Managed Funds	5000			1673		5000			5000	
Income (Gain on sale M/Fund)	0			1174		0			0	
Total	5000	135087		2847	130087	5000	139963		5000	144963
		265174				274926				
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		135087			134963		139963			144963
Total Funds Held McSwan Missions Relief Fund										
		135087			134963		139963			144963
Net Movement from previous year										
		0								

25.30 SPC DELEGATES ADDRESS

Rev. David Lachman brought greetings from the SPC. He reported that they have been observing the work of the PCEA with affection. They have been in prayer for the PCEA in its recent struggles. He has great hope for our mutual blessing because the Lord keeps the church. The Launceston congregation have been affected by tragic events in the EPC and have had to face huge change. SPC's Hobart congregation has been stable, with their own blessings and challenges.

Five challenges to closer ties than we already have: History, concern for adherence to the Confession, commitment to purity of worship in PCEA, disunity and constitutional matters. They have seen these matters addressed somewhat as the smaller sister looking to their elder, but hesitancy needs to be overcome by close interaction and diligent deliberation.

Mr Forbes prayed for the work of the SPC.

25.31 REPORTS OF EXAMINERS OF RECORDS

The Examiners of records presented their reports.

Dr Muldoon and Mr Miller reported on the Northern Presbytery records and found them to be correct.

Dr Ramsay and Mr Dotson reported on the Central Presbytery records, noting some recording of times and dates that needed amendment, and found them to be correct.

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

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

25.32 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The following Committee Structure was approved:

Committee Structure:

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, Z. Dotson.

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

(Mr Hall to be contacted by Clerk regarding his continued participation)

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

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

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

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

Mr Leggott moved, and it was seconded, that the Missions Committee place Z. Dotson as Convener, the rest of the Committee to remain as stated. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was defeated.

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

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

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

Mr Forbes moved, and it was seconded, that the Committee be discharged.

Mr G. Hamilton moved a counter-motion on notice, and it was seconded, that:

Psalmody Committee be restructured with John Forbes (Convener), Stewart Carswell, Martin Pilgrim, Trevor Leggott, Glen Hamilton as members.

The Committee proposal was put against Mr Hamilton's and Mr Hamilton's was preferred. Upon being put to the vote, Mr Hamilton's motion was carried.

Mr Hamilton's motion was put against Mr Forbes' and Mr Forbes' proposal was preferred and became the finding of the court.

Other Appointments

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

Treasurer: Alex Steel has (again) submitted his resignation as General Treasurer. Having fulfilled the role of Assistant Treasurer, Donald Ramsay is expected and nominated to take on the role of General Treasurer.

Mr Steel's resignation was accepted by the Synod with thanks and Dr Ramsay was appointed as General Treasurer.

Southern Presbytery Assessors: Synod to appoint or reappoint men to be assessors.

Mr Carswell moved:

That synod thank the assessors to Southern Presbytery who have worked diligently within that presbytery over the last several years- Rev John Forbes, Rev Dennis Muldoon, and Tom Reeve. And that synod review the assessors and appoint Rev Jim Klazinga and Rev Robin Tso and Rev George Ball as assessors.

The motion was seconded and carried

25.33 MODERATOR-ELECT

The Rev. Dennis Muldoon was nominated as Moderator-Elect for Synod 2026.

The Moderator ruled that the order of the day be suspended until business was concluded.

Dr Muldoon declined the nomination. Rev. Robin Tso, the next nomination, accepted the nomination.

Mr Leggott moved that Mr Tso be the Moderator-Elect for 2026. The motion was seconded and carried.

25.34 TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT SYNOD

It was agreed that the next Annual Synod take place in the Wauchope Church of the Hastings River Congregation from Tuesday 5th to 8th May, 2026.

25.35 THANKS

A vote of thanks was expressed to the Hastings River Congregation for their kind hospitality and carried by acclamation.

Mr Ball expressed the thanks of the court for the Moderator's labours and talks during the Synod, and it was carried by acclamation.

A vote of thanks was expressed to the Clerk for his work.

MINUTES

The Minutes of this final session were read and confirmed.

25.36 CLOSURE OF SYNOD

The 177th meeting of Synod closed with prayer, a benediction, and the singing of Ps 145:1-7 at 1:03pm.

DJ Kerridge
Clerk

JD Klazinga
Moderator