

ACTS OF SYNOD 2018

Class 1 (Barrier Act Procedure)

No	Act	Reference
Interim 1	Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct	18.18

Class 2 (Others)

No	Act	Reference
1	Re Call Procedure (time limits & overseas considerations)	18.16.1
2	Legal Obligations of Deacons' Courts	18.16.2
3	Amendment of Mutual Eligibility requirements	18.16.3
4	Candidate Placement Scheme costs bonded from Synod 2019	18.23.5
5	Student's Minister & Conflict of Interest	18.24.1
6	Annual Examination of Students	18.24.2
7	Appointment of DP Smith as Treasurer of Synod effective 30 June 2018	18.30.2
8	Response to Same-sex Marriage Legislation	18.31.1
9	Youth Rallies	18.35.4
10	Resolution re Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)	18.37.2
11	Addition of Rev DP Smith to list of signatories on Synod bank accounts	18.43.3
12	Extension of terms for Trustees of Victoria (Kerridge & Ward)	18.47.2
13	Lodgement of Deeds with Paton Hooke Lawyers, Taree	18.45.1 18.47.3
14	Amend Guidelines for Church Workers 2013	18.16.b & 18.18
15	Amend Handbook 7.3	18.16.c & 18.18

CLASS 1 – ACTS WHICH HAVE PASSED THE BARRIER ACT

INTERIM ACT 1 - Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct

Wednesday 2nd May 2018

(Minutes 18.18)

Synod transmit the following overture to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act, and meantime pass the Minority Report PCEA Safe Church Policy 2018 and Code of Conduct as an Interim Act.

WHEREAS Christians are required by the Lord of the Church to uphold the Biblical values of love, mercy and justice;

AND WHEREAS unacceptable incidences of child and other abuse in the churches, community and other institutions have been brought to light in recent years;

AND WHEREAS the measures the PCEA have in place already address their responsibilities, particularly the mandatory reporting of abuse and the interviewing of vulnerable children and adults, but do not take full account of recent civil legislation;

AND WHEREAS the need for improved preventative measures has been highlighted, requiring us to further specify standards in this area (as illustrated in the Law & Advisory reports);

AND WHEREAS documented policies and procedures are to be accessible and easy to understand;

NOW THEREFORE Synod enact and ordain, for the PCEA Australia-wide, the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct set out in the Law and Advisory Minority Report 2018.

The approved wording of the L&A Minority Report 2018 as follows:

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

2. A Biblical Perspective

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

In His teaching summarising the Ten Commandments, Jesus said, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Luke 10:27). Jesus pronounced severe punishment upon anyone bringing offence or harm to 'one of these little ones' (Luke 17:2). The church therefore should always be ready to help the poor,

the young and the vulnerable and to defend them from harm and exploitation. This teaching underlies our Safe Church practices.

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. Some Definitions

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

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

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

4.4 Abuse categories

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Positions for Ministry

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

6. Code of Conduct for Church Workers 2018

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

7. Protection Officer

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

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

8. Record-Keeping

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

8.1 Non-Confidential records showing the list of approved workers, dates of appointment to positions, Working With Children Check approval numbers and dates and training programmes attended; also to be recorded here are the training course programmes delivered to the congregation with name of the providers, objectives, content, dates of delivery and attendees. These records are kept by the congregational Protection Officer.

8.2 Confidential records (as a Record Apart) kept by the Session Clerk and controlled under the privacy legislation of the Church. These records are to contain the details of any alleged abuse and the steps taken to process the alleged abuse with the resolution of the process and any conditions placed on the parties involved with all relevant supporting documents (or attested copies) to be attached. Copies are to be kept with the Session records for 50 years and then archived at the direction of Synod. A duplicate certified copy of the above records should be lodged with the Presbytery Clerk.

9. Selection Process for Church Workers

This is a critical aspect in preventing harm and requires care and patience, with prayer. The most important thing is to appoint godly leaders who are well known members of the congregation. When Paul chose Timothy to be his assistant ministry worker he obtained the opinions of the local church members at Lystra/Iconium (Acts 16:2). We also should be encouraging those who have the gifts for service and leadership.

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

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

10. Procedures for Dealing with Alleged Abuse

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

Our church is committed to processes that strive for truth and confidentiality and will treat all allegations seriously and act upon them. A child may disclose, deliberately or inadvertently, that he/she is a victim of abuse. Alternatively there may be reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been or is being abused. 'Reasonable grounds' is a subjective concept, but this does not remove responsibility from a person to act.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

12. False Allegations

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

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

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

13. Working with a Body External to the Church

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

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

14. Training

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

The Clerk of Presbytery will organise approved initial and ongoing training for all leaders and office bearers in the congregations of their jurisdictions. Records will be kept and details provided to Government agencies as required. Records also are to be kept by the congregational Protection Officers (see item 8.1 above).

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

SAFE CHURCH CODE OF CONDUCT

1. As a person in a position of leadership within the church you must always be concerned about the integrity of your position and remember that you are representing the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. You should avoid situations where you will be vulnerable to temptation and where your conduct may be construed to be a breach of God’s holy standards.
3. With regard to young people and children, appropriate conduct includes the following protocols:
 - a. When visiting children in their homes, or transporting children in vehicles, leaders will only do so if a parent or another appropriate adult is present.
 - b. There shall always be at least two approved leaders at any activity (except for crèche where a sole female carer is acceptable). Preferably there should be male and female leaders for mixed groups with male leaders for boys groups and female leaders for girls groups. It is recognised that there may be occasions where there is a sole leader when breaking up into small groups; but in such cases, the small groups will not be out of eyesight or earshot of others.
 - c. A camp or other activity involving overnight accommodation should include “camp parents” (ideally a married couple over the age of 25 years, of known maturity and Christian commitment) approved by the church. In such overnight accommodation there will be a strict segregation by sex, with the exception of married couples and families. Supervision of children and young people must be provided by a person of the same sex.
 - d. A biblical pattern of behaviour is to be observed with respect to modesty and standards of morality. Adults and children are to respect the privacy of others during activities that require undressing and changing clothes. Leaders are to set an example by protecting their own privacy in similar situations.
 - e. Initiations and secret ceremonies are forbidden.
 - f. Any activity involving children or young people is open to observation by parents and other adults with a legitimate reason.

g. Leaders have the right to ask persons who do not have a valid reason to be present at child related activities to leave. Police may be contacted if such persons refuse to comply with any such reasonable request.

h. If any personal counselling is required, it shall be carried out within the sight of other people (preferably another leader).

i. The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on the church grounds or during a church activity is forbidden. Any young person found under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is to be counselled and removed from the activity. Any such drugs found on the church grounds are to be witnessed (by a second person) and removed. Where appropriate, police should be informed. (A small amount of wine for sacramental purposes may be stored on the premises, in a secure location.)

j. In any physical contact with young people or children, leaders will respect the feelings and privacy of those persons. Violence of any kind is forbidden.

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

a. inappropriate conversation, remarks and jokes of a sexual nature, coarse language, suggestive gestures and impure looks

b. pornographic literature or media of any kind (from books, magazines, newspapers, posters, videos, movies, DVDs, internet sites, photographs, etc)

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

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

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

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

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

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

CLASS 2 – ACTS OF SYNOD OF GENERAL INTEREST TO THE CHURCH

ACT 1 - Re Call Procedure (time limits & overseas considerations)

Wednesday 2nd May 2018

(Minutes 18.16.1)

At Handbook 4.63: *add to paragraph 3* ‘If the minister under call desires further time for consideration the answer should be given in the time specified by the Presbytery (up to 30 days is usual).’ *Insert new paragraph* ‘If the call is to a minister in another country who is eligible for call and whose credentials are in order, including a fully completed application form, criminal/sexual abuse checks and referees’ reports, the impact of immigration requirements needs to be considered carefully and acceptance of the call will be conditional upon meeting those requirements in a timely manner. Immigration eligibility should be ascertained first as delays could be lengthy and detrimental to the congregation’s interests. Presbytery should explore the issues with the calling congregation first before forwarding a call to a minister overseas.’

ACT 2 – Legal Obligations of Deacons’ Courts

Wednesday 2nd May 2018

(Minutes 18.16.2)

Delete from the section regarding Legal obligations (Approved by Synod 2017 Minute 17.36.5) beginning with the words “The Deacons’ Court is to see that mandatory Government Legislation is complied with including:” and ending with the words “It is to submit an Annual Information Statement as at 31st December, to the ACNC and advise of any changes to the detail recorded on their register when it occurs.”

Add the following to the Handbook after existing 3.14 to be designated 3.14a:

OBLIGATIONS UNDER AUSTRALIAN LAW

[Note: The Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC) is the independent national regulator of charities which includes the Church who may have specified more detailed requirements.]

A. The Deacons' Court and its members are

- a. to act with reasonable care and diligence
- b. act honestly and fairly in the best interests of the charity and for its charitable purposes
- c. not to misuse their position or information gained as a responsible person
- d. to disclose conflicts of interest [cf. Handbook 6.1]
- e. to ensure that the financial affairs of the charity are managed responsibly, and
- f. not to allow the charity to operate while it is insolvent. [Presbytery must be promptly advised if there is any risk of the congregation being unable to meet its commitments, Handbook 3:17.]
- g. to comply with legal requirements re child abuse and related matters according to applicable State and Commonwealth legislation.

- B. The Deacons' Court is to ensure that
- a. an ABN is secured for the congregation.
 - b. the Congregation is registered with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission [ACNC] as a 'basic religious charity' (or other classification if appropriate) and submits the Annual Information Statement for each calendar year not later than the prescribed cut-off date (currently 30 June following), as well as promptly advising any changes to personnel, contact details or other matters on the ACNC register.
 - c. the Congregation is duly registered with the Australian Taxation Office for GST, FBT Rebate and Income Tax Exemption, and submits the required Business Activity Statement [BAS] in respect of Stipend payments, PAYG tax deductions and GST, preferably quarterly.
 - d. Superannuation Contributions are remitted quarterly per Synod regulations.
 - e. the minister/s and any employees are issued with a PAYG payment summary immediately following 30th June each year and that the PAYG Payment Summary is sent to the Australian Taxation Office.
 - f. financial records are accessible and available for at least seven years, being all the records necessary if a fresh audit was being carried out.
 - g. the annual financial statement discloses all assets and liabilities of the congregation and its controlled entities, and meets not less than the minimum audit requirements set by the ACNC from time to time.

ACT 3 – Amendment of Mutual Eligibility Requirements

Wednesday 2nd May 2018

(Minutes 18.16.3)

In the mutual eligibility acts with FCS, RCNZ and OPC, *replace the words*

‘Where a minister is potentially or actually under call or appointment called by a PCEA congregation such a meeting with the presbytery (colloquium doctum) may take place after a call is issued and before it is accepted in order that the called minister may assess more closely whether he should accept the call and know, should he accept it, that he will be admitted.’

with the words:

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

ACT 4 – Candidate Placement Scheme costs bonded from Synod 2019

Wednesday 2nd May 2018

(Minutes 18.23.5)

That all costs for the Candidate Placement Scheme from 2019 be subject to the Student Bond, subject to the discretion of Synod.

ACT 5 – Student’s Minister & Conflict of Interest

Wednesday 2nd May 2018
(Minutes 18.24.1)

Pursuant to the Act Concerning Conflict of interest (Act 1, Class 1, Synod 2011; Handbook 6.1) Synod resolve that the involvement of a student’s minister in assessment of that student at Presbytery level or in the Training of Ministry Committee is to be limited to a written report on the student and answering questions on the same. The rights of the minister at Session or Synod level are unaffected by this decision.

ACT 6 – Annual Examination of Students

Wednesday 2nd May 2018
(Minutes 18.24.2)

In meeting not less than annually with a student for the ministry, as required by Handbook 4.49g, areas appropriate for Presbytery to cover include the following:

Personal life. Are there any issues of health or stress? Is the family supportive? Are finances satisfactory? Any other personal struggles? How is his sense of call?

Family life. Are there areas of housing, health, education or other needs affecting the family?

Church Involvement. Regularity of attendance of student and family in worship? What tasks has he in the church (eg. Bible Class or Youth leader? Elder? Precentor? Is he gaining familiarity with the Handbook of Practice and Procedure? Has he had opportunity to experience the operation of church courts? How often has he conducted public worship and what is Session or Presbytery’s opinion of his efforts?

Doctrinal issues. Does he have any questions concerning the Reformed faith as set out in the Westminster Confession of Faith as adhered to by the PCEA?

Study programme. How is he finding the demands of study? Are his grades below or above average? Is Pastoral Care included in his College course?

Overall. Is the Presbytery satisfied with the candidate and his progress? Have positive and negative issues been discussed with him? Are there matters requiring advice of the Training of Ministry?

ACT 7 – Appointment of DP Smith as Treasurer of Synod effective 30 June 2018

Wednesday 2nd May 2018
(Minutes 18.30.2)

That Synod now appoint Rev Donald Peter Smith as General Treasurer from the 1st July 2018.

ACT 8 – Response to Same-sex Marriage Legislation

Wednesday 2nd May 2018
(Minutes 18.31.1)

Synod records its dismay and deep disappointment at the introduction and legalisation of same sex marriage in December 2017. It is clearly and obviously contrary to the Word of God and the purpose of God. It represents a clear rejection of His authority and of that which is good and honourable. The

prophet warns, 'Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness' (Isaiah 5: 20).

ACT 9 – Youth Rallies
Wednesday 2nd May 2018
(Minutes 18.35.4)

Synod amends the Handbook in relation to biennial Youth camps to allow annual youth camps where there is interest and a suitable venue can be found, and allow for other suitable dates in the calendar, to read as follows: [Synod 1990; amended 2018] It was resolved that there be a biennial Youth Rally (at Easter) in the alternate year to the Family Rally, and at other times where there is interest.

ACT 10 – Resolution re Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated)
Wednesday 2nd May 2018
(Minutes 18.37.2)

Synod, while recognising that the RCN(L) sought to base its decision on women in office on Scripture, is grieved at the direction that is being taken by that denomination which has such an honourable history of furthering Reformed ecumenism and assisting needy churches in the developing world. We particularly urge further review of the decision and also counsel that homosexual practice cannot be condoned as acceptable on the part of those in membership of Christ's church.

ACT 11 – Addition of Rev DP Smith to list of signatories on Synod bank accounts
Thursday 3rd May 2018
(Minutes 18.43.3)

The name Donald Peter Smith be added to the list of authorised signatories to operate Synod's bank account(s), and the name Donald Peter Smith be added to the list of authorised users of Synod's Bendigo e-banking facility. (Handbook – Finance Committee (B – Synodical p.92)

ACT 12 – Extension of terms for Trustees of Victoria (Kerridge & Ward)
Thursday 3rd May 2018
(Minutes 18.47.2)

Synod extends Mr Kerridge's term as trustee by a further five years terminating at midnight on 30 June 2023, and extends Dr Ward's term as trustee by a further three years terminating at midnight on 30 June 2021.

ACT 13 – Lodgement of Deeds with Paton Hooke Lawyers, Taree
Thursday 3rd May 2018
(Minutes 18.45.1 & 18.47.3)

The packet containing land Title Deeds and other documents in the name of The Trustees for Victoria of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia be uplifted from the National Australia Bank, 163 Rowe Street, Eastwood, NSW and lodged for safe keeping with Paton Hooke, Lawyers, 25 Albert Street, Taree, NSW.

ACT 14 – Amend Guidelines for Church Workers 2013

Wednesday 2nd May 2018

(Minutes 18.16.b & 18.18)

The Guidelines for Church Workers 2013 as amended and set out in Appendix 2 be approved.

The wording of Appendix 2 as follows:

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH WORKERS,

To be inserted at the front of Session, Deacons' Courts and Presbytery Minute books:

Important annual requirement of Session not less than annually the Session must minute to the following effect: 'Each member of Session certifies that he is aware of the current Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct, faithfully keeps it, and is also aware of the legal requirements under State and/or Church law to report suspected or actual cases of child abuse or pornography. Each member also certifies that he is not aware, after suitable enquiry, of any rumour or allegation in breach of the policy and code of conduct except.....' [here state the exception and the action to be taken].

A. General

1. Those activities of the congregation not the prerogative of the minister are under the ultimate supervision of the Session. The Session should know what is happening in the various areas. If necessary, Session will appoint a liaison person to report on a particular activity.

B. Guarding against Sexual or other Misconduct Here are listed for convenience some elements of the Safe Church Policy [for full text see Handbook, 6.29]

a. In the case of persons from other congregations or denominations applying for membership without a full and clear disjunction certificate, the Session must check with the previous church, and would be well advised to do so in any case. Any concern should be documented and advice sought as appropriate.

b. To ensure that there are no outstanding issues or adverse history Sessions must also be careful concerning the background history of those who apply for membership by confession of faith.

Pastoral care and home visitation is important in this respect. c. A Session shall not issue a Disjunction Certificate if, after careful enquiry, there is any suspicion/allegation of abuse without first investigating the matter. The result of the investigation must be duly minuted, and the Certificate with-held or qualified if necessary.

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

e. No person with a known history of sexual molestation or the like offending may be employed in a supervisory role, or be alone with children. [Church insurance does not cover abuse by known offenders.]

- f. A notice in the church foyer or hall indicating where or from whom a copy of the PCEA Safe Church Policy and Code of Practice may be viewed or obtained must be displayed. It is to be readily available on the PCEA website.
- g. Leaders of church activities must report any suspected physical or sexual abuse to the Session immediately and the Synod's procedures followed. No allegation may be trivialised.
- h. Membership rolls and records required by the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct must be carefully kept, and Presbyteries are to take particular note that this is so, and ensure certified copies of important documents are held by the Presbytery Clerk.

C. Those Working or Using Church Property

- 1. When work is being done by volunteers on the church premises, a competent person should supervise, particularly when heights, or the use of special tools, are involved. Lighting, paths, steps and handrails, as well as the condition of floorcoverings, electric cords/switches and access to chemicals, need regular attention.
- 2. Non-PCEA groups using Church facilities must commit in writing to having proper supervision of their people at all times, as well as meeting other conditions set by the local in accordance with Section 3.18 of the Handbook of Practice and Procedure. Such conditions should include no smoking; no raffles or other gambling; appropriate Public Liability Insurance; responsibility for damage; and provision for termination by either side. Non-PCEA groups using church facilities must be provided a copy of the Safe Church Policy and Code of Conduct as an illustration what is expected of those using our facilities. Formal leases require Presbytery approval, see 3.19.

D. Protection of Privacy (see Handbook Section 2.30a)

- 1. Membership lists should only be used outside the Session according to a procedure agreed by Session communicated to all those whose names will be included in such a list.
- 2. Health information secured for camps or outings is to be used only for the purpose obtained and kept in confidence. Records of such information should not be kept after their purpose has been fulfilled.
- 3. It is important also to exercise care in revealing personal information on notice sheets or in church announcements or social media. Before revealing personal information, permission should be obtained from the person concerned.

ACT 15 – Amend Handbook 7.3

Wednesday 2nd May 2018

(Minutes 18.16.c & 18.18)

Handbook 7.3 be amended to read as follows (the underlined words being the changes):

7.3 No discipline, other than private discussion, can be exercised for an offence committed, or alleged to have been committed, more than five years before the charge is made, unless it be of a most serious kind (e.g., bigamy, child abuse), or becomes again flagrant, or involves a civil matter that is not subject to the statute of limitations in the relevant civil law.