

The Synod of Eastern Australia



Minutes

**Of the 162nd Annual Meeting
Held at Wantirna Victoria
11th May to 14th May 2009**

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

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09.1 OPENING

Within the Wantirna Church building of the Melbourne congregation, on Monday 11th May 2009, at 4.00pm, the Synod of Eastern Australia met and was constituted with worship, conducted by the Moderator, the Rev Dr DK Muldoon.

09.2 MODERATOR'S SERMON

Mr Muldoon read from 1 Samuel 7 and spoke focussing on the word "Ebenezer -Stone of help". Samuel had called on the people of Israel to repent and humble themselves before the Lord that they might be lifted up, and Israel was delivered from their enemy. The stone was a memorial, in thanks for God's deliverance: "Thus far the Lord has helped us". The stone was a milestone: "Thus far"- there was still further to travel - looking forward to the future coming of the Lord Jesus. We too are embarked on a pilgrim's journey. There is a way to go, and we need to focus on the one who has gone before us. The stone was a missile: Christ called his disciples to be living stones taking the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world.

The Moderator welcomed members and guests to the meeting of Synod, and made special mention of those attending for the first time.

09.3 ROLLS OF PRESBYTERIES

The Certified Rolls of Presbyteries were tendered. Central Presbytery had given notice of changes to the Commissioned Elders from Hawkesbury Nepean and the Manning. Apologies for non-attendance from those marked † below.

Northern Presbytery

Armidale

Brisbane

Hastings

Northern Rivers

Residential Supply (Brisbane): WJW Hanna†

Ministers

DP Smith

Vacant

AL Tripovich †

RW Murray †

Commissioned Elders

K Dawson †

J Greensill

D Hamilton

J Ramsay

Central Presbytery

Hawkesbury/Nepean

Hunter/Barrington

Manning

St. George's

Synod Appointment: TI Leggott (Seconded to AIM)

DK Muldoon

SR Tamata

GD Ball

JA McCallum

GA Neil

DS Upton

RR Jones

AH Steel (Treasurer)

Southern Presbytery

Geelong

Knox

Knox

Narre Warren

Ulverstone

MG Smith

RS Ward

TW Yoa

S Bajema

Vacant

DPT Manly

J Dekter

JB Louden

DJ Kerridge

09.4 THANKS

It was resolved that the retiring Moderator be thanked for his services during the year and for his sermon, and that it be published in *The Presbyterian Banner*.

4. That Correspondence Item 2 be received and considered with Administration Committee business.
5. That Committee Structure as suggested in the report be adopted, but with the change that Mr T Reeve be moved from the Training of Ministry Committee to substitute Mr D Kerridge on the Youth and Fellowship Committee.
7. That the following examiners of records be appointed:

Northern Presbytery	Rev. S.Bajema and Ulverstone elder.
Central Presbytery	Rev. M.G.Smith and Northern Rivers elder.
Southern Presbytery	Rev. D.P.Smith and Manning elder.

09.12 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 2: LETTER FROM DR WJW HANNA

Synod took up consideration of Correspondence Item 2, a letter from Rev Dr WJW Hanna. It was resolved that the content be noted, and that Mr Hanna be informed of the decision of Synod.

09.13 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of Motion were called for and read. The session was closed with praise and prayer at 8.30pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

JA McCallum
Moderator

SESSION 3

TUESDAY 12TH MAY 2009

9.00AM

The session was opened with praise and prayer at 9.00am, the Moderator reading from John 13:31-14:6, and nominated delegates leading in prayer. The Moderator spoke to the text "I am the way".

The minutes of Session 2 were read and confirmed.

09.14 AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORT: THE FORMATION OF A MEDIA AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

In the absence of the Convener Mr Murray, the Clerk presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received and noted.

09.15 LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr Ward, presented the report.

09.16 NOTICE OF MOTION: LAW AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr Ramsay presented his Notice of Motion: That the Law and Advisory Committee Report be received with the exception of the second paragraph.

On being put to the vote the Committee's Report was favoured over the Notice of Motion. It was resolved that the Law and Advisory Committee Report be received.

09.17 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

The Convener of the Inter-Church Relations Committee, Rev GD Ball, introduced Rev Dr Ken Smith from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and Rev Graeme Hart from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia. It was resolved that Mr Smith and Mr Hart be associated with the court.

09.18 CORRESPONDENCE ITEM 1: OVERTURE FROM NORTHERN PRESBYTERY

Synod took up consideration of Correspondence Item 1, an Overture from Northern Presbytery.

Mr Ramsay and Mr Smith stated the Overture:

The Northern Presbytery respectfully Overtures the Synod of Eastern Australia to rescind the “Act allowing optional alternative questions and formula while not reducing commitments in terms of the Act of Synod 1952”; delay any attempt to introduce a new form of Subscription until such a time as greater unity of mind can be secured on the matter; and effect the change under Barrier Act procedure, or do otherwise for this object as in its wisdom may seem best.

Mr Ward proposed an alternate: That the prayer of the Overture be granted in the following terms:

Synod is satisfied that the position of the church is safeguarded by the terms of the 2008 Act, notes the advantage to the church of the clear statements on church-state principles in it, and, for further assurance of where the ministry stands, directs that where a minister or student for the ministry is to be inducted to office or licensed using the 2008 Questions and Formula, such person shall also subscribe the Formula of 1952.

On Mr Ward’s proposal being put against the Overture from Northern Presbytery, there was equal voting and the Moderator abstained from making a casting vote. There was no change to the decision of 2008: An act allowing optional alternative questions and formula while not reducing commitments in terms of the Act of Synod 1952.

09.19 PRESBYTERY REPORTS

Mr DP Smith presented the report for Northern Presbytery and answered questions. Mr Muldoon presented the report for Central Presbytery. Mr Ward presented the report for Southern Presbytery. It was resolved that the reports be received.

09.20 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and read. The session closed with prayer at 12.35pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

JA McCallum
Moderator

The session was opened with prayer and praise at 2.00pm. The minutes of session 3 were read and confirmed.

09.21 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

The Convener of the Inter-Church Relations Committee, Rev GD Ball, introduced Rev Fred Vanderbom from the Christian Reformed Church of Australia. The Moderator welcomed Mr Vanderbom and indicated that he had been associated with the court.

09.22 SUPERANNUATION COMMITTEE

The Convener, Rev Dr Ward, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The convener presented the proposed deliveries and it was resolved that:

1. Synod approve the following amendments to the current Superannuation Committee Regulations:
 - a. the following addition immediately after the second last sentence in Section C 5 of the Superannuation Regulations: Superannuation contributions for members from the end of the quarter in which they attain 70 years is limited to 5% of minimum stipend/non-cash benefits figure and reduces to nil from their attainment of age 75.
 - b. the substitution of the following words for those in Section B 1 a) of the current Superannuation Regulations: SANCTIONED CHARGES (a) As from 1/4/2009 an annual levy of 14.5% of the minimum stipend/non-cash benefits as estimated at the beginning of each calendar year, such levy to apply to every sanctioned charge as a preference burden after stipend, and to be paid in four approximately equal quarterly instalments by 28/2, 31/5, 31/8 and 30/11 in each year. Aid to aid-receiving charges is to include the levy but a discount of 20%, or as otherwise resolved from time to time by Synod resolution, is to be allowed for those settled charges receiving stipend assistance from Synod.
 - c. the substitution of the following words for those in Section B 1 c) of the current Superannuation Regulations: VACANT CHARGES c) As from 1/4/2009 the discount for vacant congregations and congregations which are not required to make Superannuation contributions for their inducted or full-time supply minister will be increased from 50% to 60% for the period the situation applies. A discount of 80% of the levy otherwise payable will apply for vacant congregations paying Superannuation Guarantee [SG] contributions for full time residential supply for the period the situation applies.

This Act may be cited as Superannuation Regulations Amendment Act (Class 2, Synod 2009)

2. Synod, note the levy for 2009 of \$1,576 per quarter payable by the end of February, May, August and November with concessions as stated in the report.
3. Synod approve the immediate addition from the Super Support income account of the working funds balance as at 31/12/08 to the amount treated as capital in the SSF, and the transfer from the Super Support income account of an amount necessary to meet any deficit in the levy proceeds account as at 31.12.2009.
4. Synod record its appreciation to Mr Loudon for his lengthy Committee service (1985-2009).
5. Synod remind fund members of the advisability of seeking professional advice in regard to both choice of Fund and investments within any particular fund, and the effects of recent changes in Government legislation, so that it meets their particular needs, as this is their responsibility and not that of the church.
6. Synod request Sessions and Deacons' Courts to keep a close eye on ministers' leave entitlements to ensure ministers do not suffer burn out through failure to take it, and that Presbyteries keep this in mind in the annual examination of records to ensure outstanding entitlement is minuted at least once a year.

09.23 NOTICE OF MOTION: SUPERANNUATION COMMITTEE

Mr Steel presented his notice of motion and it was resolved that:

The Superannuation Committee undertake a thorough overall review of the current Synod "Superannuation System". The review to include:

1. The current level of contribution made by the church for the various categories of ministers, to Superannuation and/or Retirement Benefits. Particularly the case of ministers who are aged 70 years or greater so that there is some continuing contribution made for their retirement until it is effected.
2. The current level of Superannuation Levy placed on the various categories of sanctioned charges, by the Synod. Particularly the case of congregations which are not required to make Superannuation contributions on behalf of their inducted ministers or full time Supply ministers.

09.24 FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Convener, Mr A Steel, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. After questions and explanation it was resolved that:

1. We record our thanks to God for all temporal blessings received since last Synod. Mr Ball led the court in prayer.
2. The Minimum Stipend – Cash and Non-cash components, (Excluding Manse, Car and Telephone) for 2009/2010 be \$822 per week (\$42,861 pa.) ie. to remain unchanged from the last review on 1/1/09. The six monthly reviews due on 1/7/09 and 1/1/10 to be suspended and the situation to reviewed and recommendation made to Synod 2010.
3. Where a congregation has requested Stipend Relief of approximately 50% of the Minimum Stipend for the 2009/10 Synodical year, Presbytery is to conduct a Presbyterial Visitation during 2009, unless one was conducted in 2008, paying particular attention to the ongoing viability of the congregation and its efficient working with a view to the progressive reduction of aid over five years as detailed in Synod's Decision Book page 92 Sections 2 & 3.
4. Synod take note of the pressing financial situation in the Armidale congregation and authorize an appeal throughout the Church to help the Congregation meet its outstanding and current obligations.

Proposed deliverance 5. A church wide appeal for funds to assist in meeting requests for Stipend Relief from Synod by aid receiving congregations be made. The Synod Finance Committee be authorised, upon advice of the General Treasurer, to make this appeal from time to time, if considered appropriate, during the 2009/10 Synodical year. The appeal to be made through The Presbyterian Banner.

09.25 NOTICE OF MOTION: FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr Ward presented a notice of motion as an alternate: Synod encourages regular, sacrificial and cheerful giving to the needy funds of the Church, particularly Stipend Relief, and urges Sessions and Deacons' Courts to take the lead in encouraging this Biblical response to present need. The Finance Committee of Synod is authorised, upon advice of the Synod Treasurer, to make appeal from time to time as may be appropriate by direct correspondence to local church courts as well as through the Presbyterian Banner.

On being put to the vote the Notice of Motion was preferred over the proposed deliverance. The Notice of Motion became deliverance 5 and it was resolved that:

5. Synod encourages regular, sacrificial and cheerful giving to the needy funds of the Church, particularly Stipend Relief, and urges Sessions and Deacons' Courts to take the lead in encouraging

this Biblical response to present need. The Finance Committee of Synod is authorised, upon advice of the Synod Treasurer, to make appeal from time to time as may be appropriate by direct correspondence to local church courts as well as through the Presbyterian Banner.

6. Stipend Assistance for 2009/2010 (1/5/09 to 30/4/10) be granted to the following Deacons' Courts, on a strictly needs basis and subject to the availability of funds at the time of the request. Requests to be made at least on a quarterly basis from 1/5/09:

\$ 21,400 – Armidale (up to 50% of Minimum Stipend - \$42,861 as at 1/1/09)

\$ 21,000 - Hawkesbury-Nepean

\$ 20,000 - Narre Warren

\$ 10,000 - Ulverstone

\$ 72,400 Total

09.26 NOTICE OF MOTION: FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mr Ward presented a Notice of Motion and it was resolved that: Synod note that where mutually acceptable between the minister and the congregation, a Presbytery is permitted to approve an appointment or settlement, or its continuation, at a stipend/non-cash benefits level less than the minimum stipend set by Synod from time to time, provided that it is satisfied that the financial position of the person and their dependents is adequately provided for both as regards income and superannuation, and that the interests of any congregation concerned are appropriately taken into account. This provision may be suitable for a new minister with limited experience, or for pioneering work or for a small congregation with modest resources. Normally the basic figure should be not less than 80% of the minimum stipend/non-cash benefits, unless a tentmaker model is envisaged, and may rise in steps to the minimum level over say five years. Any variation from the norm is to be minuted by the Presbytery and reviewed annually.

09.27 DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES

The Convener of Inter-Church Relations Committee invited delegates from other churches to address the Synod.

Rev Dr Ken Smith, from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, was introduced and addressed the court:

Rev Graeme Hart, from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia, was introduced and addressed the court.

Rev Fred Vanderbom, from the Christian Reformed Church of Australia, was introduced and addressed the court.

The addresses will be included as an appendix to the minutes.

The Convener reported that Rev John Haveland had intended to be present as a delegate from the Reformed Church of New Zealand, but that urgent matters required his attention and he had offered an apology. There had also been an apology received from the Presbyterian Reformed Church.

09.28 GENERAL TREASURER'S REPORT

The General Treasurer, Mr AH Steel, presented his report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Treasurer presented the proposed deliverance. It was resolved that:

1. Synod confirm the charging of the deficit of \$11,439 as at 31/12/08 in *Stipend Relief Working Funds to Synod General Working Funds*

09.29 NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr Ward presented his notice of motion: That we record our deep appreciation to the Treasurer of Synod, Mr Alex H. Steel for his conscientious work during another year. The motion was carried with acclamation.

09.30 NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr Leggott presented his notice of motion. It was resolved that: The Administration Committee in close consultation with the Synod Treasurer, survey the whole of the membership of the church through enquiry to Presbyteries and Sessions, seeking out a suitably gifted and qualified person to appoint as Assistant Treasurer, with a specific aim to prepare such a person to be a successor to the Treasurer, and report to Synod 2010

09.31 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and read and the session was closed with prayer at 6.00p.m.

TI Leggott
Clerk

JA McCallum
Moderator

SESSION 5

TUESDAY 12TH MAY 2009

7.00PM

The session was opened with prayer and praise at 7.00pm.

It was resolved that the reading of the Minutes of Session 4 be deferred to the next session.

Rev Tut Wan Yoa and his wife Elizabeth shared in praise, singing Psalm 100 in the Nuer language.

09.32 GUEST SPEAKER: REV MIKE RAITER

The Moderator invited Mr Ward to introduce Rev Mike Raiter, principal of the Bible College of Victoria, and his wife Sarah. The Moderator invited Mr Raiter to address the Synod.

Mr Raiter spoke on Evangelising Aussies: The Challenge of Mission in Urban Australia. Mike drew some comparisons between religion and contemporary spirituality indicating the deep seated human desire for connection and relationship. Our lifestyle is increasingly developing individualistically: we relate to a "screen" more than to people. But God is a God of relationship and we are created for relationship. God is love and love must have an object. At the heart of the Pentecostal movement is a desire for personal encounter, an encounter with the presence of God. But the Gospel provides the real answer through a profound relationship with God through Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In evangelising: Preach the whole counsel of God, the Biblical Gospel. Take time to let relationship with others develop. Meet people on neutral ground.

The address was interspersed with questions and there followed a time of questions and discussion. Mike was invited to share about the plans and prospects for the Bible College of Victoria. The Moderator thanked Mr Raiter for his interesting address.

09.33 CLOSURE OF SESSION

Notices of motion were called for and the session was closed with prayer at 8.30pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

JA McCallum
Moderator

The session was opened with praise and prayer. The Moderator read from John 18:28-40 and addressed the Synod further on his theme, focusing on the words of Jesus: "I am the truth".

The minutes of Session 4 and 5 were read and confirmed.

09.34 NSW TRUST CORPORATION

The Clerk presented the report on behalf of the Trustees. It was resolved that the report be received. The Clerk presented the proposed deliverance. It was resolved that:

1. The *Growth* and *Income* Targets forming part of the Investment Strategy for *The Trustees of the Synod of Eastern Australia* be amended as follows:

	<u>Current Target</u>	<u>Proposed Target</u>
Growth -	CPI+ 0.5%	CPI only
Income -	Official Cash Rate + 1.75%	Official Cash Rate + 1.00%

09.35 QUEENSLAND TRUST CORPORATION

The Clerk presented the report on behalf of the Trustees. It was resolved that the report be received. There were no proposed deliverances.

09.36 THE TRUSTEES FOR VICTORIA

The Secretary Mr AH Steel presented the report on behalf of the Trustees. It was resolved that the report be received. Mr Steel presented the proposed deliverance. It was resolved that:

1. The *Growth* and *Income* Targets forming part of the Investment Strategy for *The Trustees for Victoria of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia* be amended as follows:

	<u>Current Target</u>	<u>Proposed Target</u>
Growth -	CPI+ 0.5%	CPI only
Income -	Official Cash Rate + 1.75%	Official Cash Rate + 1.00%

09.37 NOTICE OF MOTION: TRUSTEES FOR VICTORIA

Mr Leggott presented his Notice of Motion and it was resolved that:

Pursuant to Section 3 (13) of the Free Presbyterian Church Property Act 1953, Synod appoint that as from the rising of this Synod the trustees in terms of that Act shall be the Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer for the time being of the Synod of Eastern Australia.

Synod also resolved: That in the event of any of the Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer of Synod being unavailable for necessary decisions and/or execution of documents, the immediate past Moderator or, failing him, the one next preceding him who is able and willing to act, shall be the Moderator for the purpose of the Property Act, the Convener of Law and Advisory Committee shall be the Clerk, or failing him a person nominated by that Committee; and the Convener of Finance Committee shall be the Treasurer, or failing him a person nominated by the Finance Committee; and such substituted person or persons shall be entitled to make decisions and execute documents as if the holder of the office of Moderator, Clerk or Treasurer, as the case may be. A record shall be kept of any substitution and report made to the ensuing Synod.

It was further resolved that Synod record its thanks to those who have served as Trustees for Victoria over many years.

09.38 INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS

The Convener Rev GD Ball commenced by reading a letter of greeting from the Free Church of Scotland, a letter of greeting from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Liberated), and a letter from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Mr Ball presented the Committee's report. It was resolved that the report be received. It was resolved:

1. We express our satisfaction that some progress has been made in Scotland between the Free Church and the Free Church Continuing as a result of the outcome of the Commission of Assembly in December 2008. We pray that there will be a sincere attempt by everyone to seek to resolve local disputes by brotherly conference.
2. We record with gratitude the decision of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America in 2008 to enter into fraternal relations with us. We would be further encouraged if our relationship with the RPCNA could grow so that they might recognise us as a church in full intercommunion (ie. with mutual eligibility).
3. That Synod appoint two delegates to attend the International Conference of Reformed Churches scheduled to meet in Christchurch from 15-22 October 2009.

It was resolved that Mr Ball and Mr Ward be appointed as delegates to attend the International Conference of Reformed Churches scheduled to meet in Christchurch from 15-22 October 2009.

Mr Leggott reported on his visit to the 2008 Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand.

09.39 TRAINING OF MINISTRY

The Convener, Rev MG Smith, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. The Convener presented the proposed deliverances. It was resolved that:

1. Synod gives thanks to God for answering prayer in regard to the provision of students/ applicants for the ministry. Synod exhorts the church to continue to ask the Lord of the harvest and Head of the church to send out more workers both for our situation and for the wider work of God's kingdom.

Mr Muldoon led the court in prayer. It was further resolved that:

2. Synod welcomes the application from Rev Andres Miranda and approves the proposal contained in the report, namely, that Mr Miranda be declared a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia eligible for call upon (1) the certification of the Training of the Ministry Committee to Southern Presbytery that he has satisfactorily completed essays on our history and distinctive position, and (2) his signing the Formula of Subscription in the presence of Southern Presbytery.

09.40 NOTICE OF MOTION: TRAINING OF MINISTRY

Mr Steel presented his Notice of Motion and it was resolved that: Future changes to the wording of the *Student Bond Agreement* be authorised by Synod.

09.41 MISSIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

The Convener, Rev DP Smith, presented the report. It was resolved that the report be received. After discussion, it was resolved:

1. That Synod express its continued prayerful support and interest in the work of Rev Trevor Leggott in his ministry with Australian Indigenous Ministries.
2. That Synod delegates direct their congregations attention to the prayerful and financial support needed for Rev Trevor Leggott in his ministry with Australian Indigenous Ministries

3. That Synod encourage congregational members to consider volunteering to help as native English speakers in either San Andres or the Annie Soper School.
4. That Synod adopt the budget for 2009 and express general agreement with the estimates for 2010.

09.42 CHURCH AND NATION, YOUTH & FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

The Convener, Rev Dr DK Muldoon, presented the report, noting that the Committee was monitoring an issue in the Church of Scotland, and developments for a Bill of Rights for Australia. It was resolved that the report be received. Thanks were expressed for the generous donations given toward the costs of the family camp. Mr MG Smith gave a report on the PCEA web site. Mr Ward gave a brief update report on the Archives. It was resolved that:

1. Synod thank all Sunday School teachers and youth leaders for their dedicated work in teaching the young people.
2. Synod thank Rev Ray Murray and all engaged in the production and distribution of *The Presbyterian Banner* - Susan Scott, Roberta Murray, John McPhee, and Ross Campbell - and all who have provided material for this publication.
3. Synod thank Rev Gavin Smith for managing the website www.pcea.org.au
4. Synod thank Mrs Margaret Kinder for sending birthday greetings to children in the PCEA, and Mrs Irene Steel for setting and assessing Search Work questions and awarding prizes to the children.
5. Synod note and record in the Decision book that, further to the minute of Synod 1988 (Decision book 2008, Psalmody, p101), The Free Church of Scotland has published a new version of the Psalter entitled 'Sing Psalms', and this Psalter is being used in a number of PCEA churches.
6. Synod write to the Prime Minister reminding him of our prayers for him as our civil leader appointed by God, and of what God requires of us as written in Micah 6:8.

09.43 MODERATOR-ELECT FOR SYNOD 2010

The Clerk reported on those who had served over more recent years. The Moderator called for nominations for Moderator for 2010. It was resolved that the Rev GD Ball be appointed Moderator-elect for Synod 2010.

09.44 TIME AND PLACE OF SYNOD 2010

It was resolved that Synod 2010 be hosted by the Knox Congregation in the first half of May 2010, with the date and venue being determined by the Administration Committee and notice given by the end of December 2009.

09.45 REPORTS OF EXAMINERS OF RECORDS

The minutes of the Northern Presbytery for 2008-2009 were reported to be in order. The minutes of Southern Presbytery for 2008-2009 were reported to be in order. It was resolved that the Presbytery records for Northern and Southern Presbytery be attested. The minutes of Central Presbytery were not available. It was resolved that the examining and attesting of the Records for Central Presbytery be deferred to Synod 2010.

09.46 CLOSURE OF SESSION

The session was closed with prayer at 12.30p.m.

TI Leggott
Clerk

JA McCallum
Moderator

The session was opened with praise and prayer at 7.20pm. Visitors were welcomed to the meeting. It was resolved that the reading of the minutes of Session 6 be deferred until the next session.

09.47 MISSIONS EVENING

The Moderator invited the Convener of the Missions Committee, Rev DP Smith, to introduce the missionary speakers. Peter introduced Glenda de Jager, representing Mukti Mission, to the Moderator. Rowland Ward spoke of the local interest in Mukti mission and Glenda then shared about the work of the mission, speaking of the desperate needs amongst the women and girls of India, particularly the maimed, disabled and blind. Mukti aims to minister to those in need, and to train young women to be salt and light in the communities in which they live, to bring the freedom of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Convener introduced Amos Leana and invited Trevor Leggott to interview Amos about his ministry with AIM. Amos shared about his background and ministry in PNG, the steps that led him to service with AIM, and the plans and preparations for the commencement of a training program for Aboriginal church leaders using the Theological Education by Extension model.

The Convener led in prayer.

The Moderator expressed the thanks of the court to both Glenda and Amos.

09.48 CLOSURE OF SESSION

The session was closed with prayer at 8.30pm.

TI Leggott
Clerk

JA McCallum
Moderator

The session was opened with praise and prayer. The Moderator read from John 1:1-18 and 1 John:1-4 and addressed the Synod further on his theme, focusing on the words of Jesus: "I am the life".

The minutes of sessions 6 and 7 were read and confirmed.

09.49 THANKS

The Moderator expressed his thanks to the members of Synod for the spirit in which the meetings had been conducted.

The Moderator expressed the thanks of the court to the Clerk for his work. The thanks of the court was expressed with acclamation.

The Moderator expressed the thanks of the court to the Synod Treasurer for his efficient work. The thanks of the court was expressed with acclamation.

The Moderator expressed thanks to the ladies for their presence, fellowship and assistance. The thanks of the court was expressed with acclamation.

Mr Ward expressed the thanks of the court to the Moderator for his leading of the Synod and for his devotional messages.

The Moderator expressed that the thanks of the court to the Knox congregation for hosting the Synod and for their hospitality.

The Moderator thanked the precentor for his leading of the psalmody praise during Synod.

09.50 TREASURER'S REPORT RE COSTS INCURRED BY SYNOD 2009.

The General Treasurer, Mr AH Steel, gave an indication of costs incurred by Synod 2009. He made particular mention of the generous help from the Knox Deacons Court toward the costs of Synod.

09.51 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of this closing Session 9 were read and confirmed.

09.52 CLOSURE OF SYNOD 2009

Synod 2009 was closed with the singing of Psalm 133, prayer and the benediction at 10.15am.

TI Leggott
Clerk

JAMcCallum
Moderator

ACTS OF SYNOD 2009
Appended by the Direction of Synod (09.50)

Class 1 (Barrier Act Procedure)

Reference

Nil

Class 2 (Others)

No	Act	Reference
1	Superannuation Regulations Amendment Act	09.22.1
2	Superannuation System Review	09.23
3	Minimum Stipend	09.24.2
4	Stipend Relief and Presbyterial Visitation	09.24.3
5	Giving for Church Funds	09.25.5
6	Stipend Assistance	09.25.6
7	Permission for Less Than Minimum Stipend	09.26
8	Change to Trustees for Victoria	09.37
9	Delegates to ICRC Conference	09.38.3

ADDRESSES FROM DELEGATES FROM OTHER CHURCHES
Appendix (See 09.27)

GREETINGS TO THE PCEA FROM THE RPCNA

May 12, 2009

Dear Fathers and Brothers:

If anyone here might question my use of “fathers,” let me assure you that I speak for the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, not just for my elderly self. Indeed warm greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ from your fellow elders in Canada, Japan, and the United States. I consider it a rare privilege to be in Australia, but today a double privilege to represent our Synod to yours here on your own soil.

I have inquired of our Inter-Church Correspondence Committee as to what matters I might share with you to give you at least some profile of our status today. We are comprised of around 80 congregations and mission churches, plus some new works being planted. Some ten churches are at present without pastors; but we are grateful to say that God has been raising up a substantial number of new men who are pursuing the pastoral ministry.

This leads me to say that one of our challenges is seeing these men fully incorporated into our denomination. There is an “ethos” within our life as an historically old branch of Christ’s Church which cannot be picked up in classes on reformed theology or even a course on RP “distinctives.” But the challenge of mentoring men sensing Christ’s call on their lives remains a wonderful aspect of Christian ministry. And we are thanking God for His having heard our prayers for “workers,” many of whom, while not from covenant background, yet demonstrate both integrity and giftedness in their seeking to obey Jesus in this life calling. The formal training for such ministry is conducted in the RP Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Ottawa (Canada) Theological Hall, and Kobe (Japan) Theological Hall.

Speaking of the training of future pastors, the RP Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has added a new Institute for Biblical Counseling. The service of Dr. George Scipione has been obtained, additional facilities have been acquired, and a new dimension to our curriculum has been added. It has been on the heart of our president, Jerry O’Neill, in the light of intensified demands on churches to minister to “dysfunctional” and fractured families and individuals. It should also be noted that the Seminary in Pittsburgh looks forward to its 200th anniversary in 2010, one of the three oldest seminaries in the United States.

Church planting has become part of the experience of most of our presbyteries. Not all plants have succeeded. Some have closed. And it has also been true that some older churches have been disorganized. This has not discouraged the planting of new churches, however, and we continue to learn more and more about this kind of extension and what it requires. I might add that while many mainline churches in North America have turned away from the doctrines of the historical faith, it is also true that many, many new churches of evangelical and reformed tradition are being planted constantly. But these latter enterprises seldom make the news.

One of our most extensive “church plant” efforts has been the opening of a ministry of the word in Sudan, Africa. Under Global Missions (our denominational board) a team of eight adults and nine children comprise what is known as “Cush for Christ,” an attempt to establish indigenous reformed churches in the area of Awil. To accompany the intense work to train men for ministry, a radio tower was recently erected to facilitate sending the message out on a wider scale. We are glad to report that our workers have not experienced any direct effects of the warfare that has been going on in southern Sudan.

Our Synod has been committed to two long term tasks which seem to be nearing completion. The first of these is a revision of our English psalter; and I use the word “English” to remind you that our Japan Presbytery has been for some time engaged in the development of a Japanese psalter, much of which has been completed and in use. Our last English version is dated 1973; so it has been some thirty-five years since its publication. That edition has been very successful outside our denomination; so why do we need a new version? Psalter usage has indicated that certain tunes just

do not take; and to keep a balanced use of the psalter, we periodically change tunes and arrangements. Along with that we seek to clarify awkward translation, while giving close attention to retaining the original meaning. But as with any new version, we will have to await its publication to prove its usefulness over our present version.

The second project in which our Synod has been engaged is the revision of our Directory for the Worship of God. This has been attempted before, only to result in impasse and the dissolving of the committee. However, it appears that this draft may ultimately be approved by the Synod, but then, of course, await adoption by the Sessions. Much discussion has ensued in terms of what kind of liturgy is acceptable in our form of worship. And it has also brought up the questions as to who may or may not participate in leading a worship service. Until the matter has reached Synod approval, the results of these discussions will continue; and the Synod, of course, is still to arrive at consensus on all such issues. But that's part of being a "deliberative" body. We look forward with the Spirit's direction to completing this work and having a new Directory.

Last Synod we joined the growing consensus among the NAPARC churches in rejecting as error, the particular doctrinal deviations (e.g. redefinition of "faith," "justification," "imputation", "covenant," etc.) that are found in the movement identified as the New Perspective on Paul and the Federal Vision. The report of our study committee and the resolutions for rejecting these errors were unanimously adopted by the Synod.

Finally, we continue to minister to the elderly and infirm in the Reformed Presbyterian Home in Pittsburgh, which has room and services for 135 residents in various stages of life, age, and health. And we continue to minister to some 1,500 youth from wide backgrounds seeking higher educational degrees at our own Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, a fully accredited, four-year, liberal arts college.

I've sketched a bit more detail in this report since it happens to be our first official contact in fraternal relationship with the PCEA. We certainly extend to you our very best wishes in Christ for your prosperity in the pursuit of His call and mission. Thank-you for allowing me to attend this gathering and extend to you these greetings.

Kenneth G. Smith, Presby of the Alleghenies, RPCNA

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

Tuesday, 12 May, 2009

Mr Moderator, delegates, fellow brothers in the Lord.

Thank you for the invitation to address the court. It gives me great pleasure to be here sending greeting from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia.

As you all know, we have been enjoying fraternal relations for some years now. This has been worked out on several levels. Firstly, our Geelong congregation has held combined services with your Geelong congregation and vice versa. They have been appreciated by the members of both congregations. One a different level, the ministers from the Reformed and Presbyterian churches in Geelong have been meeting for lunch every month. I have personally appreciated this time with like minded men and have been blessed through these lunches. On a more formal level, it was good to have Sjirk Bajema join us for our Presbytery meeting last week in Frankston. We hope this could become a regular pattern in the future.

As many of you know, our denomination only has three congregations, all in Victoria. That provides many challenges in terms of lack of resources and other areas. Even so, the Lord has been good to us and we have experienced many of his blessings.

One blessing we experienced last year was the 150th celebration of the Geelong congregation. Various activities were held to mark that special occasion. Another special event was the organisation of the Frankston congregation last year. It has been encouraging to see the growth of that church plant as the people there endeavour to reach out to that needy community in Frankston. We were also thankful the Lord preserved our campsite at Dixon's Creek in the Yarra Valley during the recent Black Saturday bush fires. We have offered the use of camp facilities to those displaced by the fires. This offer is yet to be taken up. On another matter, there is always a need for men to lead, teach, and train the people in our congregations. So, we are thankful the Lord recently provided new elders in the Geelong and Frankston congregations. We've also been thankful that the Lord has added to our number through evangelism, albeit slowly. We've also been very blessed to have Ken Smith here from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America while Andrew Stewart has been in Ireland for four months. We've also been encouraged by the start of new ministries, such as one to international students at the Gordon TAFE college in Geelong. It is a real blessing to be able to host a first year student intern from the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh. He arrives the week Ken and Floy Smith leave! One week later we welcome among us a group of young people on a short term mission trip from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. They will assist in evangelistic activities and serve in different capacities in each of the congregations.

But as I said, being a small denomination also has its challenges. Our biggest challenge before us is the revitalisation of the McKinnon congregation. Alastair McEwen is currently working one day a week, preaching, teaching, leading a fellowship group, providing pastoral care, leading an evangelistic Bible study, and being involved in the discipling of a young Christian family. And all this, while he is still working four days a week at the Reformed Theological College! The session there is comprised of two interim elders (David Feldman and Allan Nelson) from the Geelong congregation. There is a desperate need for men in McKinnon; men with leadership skills and potential. There is also a desperate need for families with an evangelical and discipling heart, able to reach out to the local community with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another challenge before us is the continual growth and care of the Frankston congregation. Even though they are experiencing some growth, it has not converted to membership. The congregation is also delicately balancing financial viability. We pray that God would continue the positive start among them, so they would be able to provide a faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Frankston community.

The other issue before us is that of church planting in Geelong. There is a growing desire among some in that congregation to extend the kingdom of God through planting a daughter work, whether that be in Geelong or in the western suburbs of Melbourne. It is a new and daunting thing for some. So we need to be working through the issues involved in that process and seeking the leading of God.

These are just some of the encouragements and issues before us as a denomination. We would covet your prayers as we work in the places God has put us and seek to extend his kingdom.

I thank you once again for the invitation to address your court of Synod and may God's blessings be yours in abundance. Rev Graeme Hart

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA
Rev. Fred L Vanderbom (Inter-Church Relations Committee, CRCA)
12 May 2009

Dear Brothers

Thank you for your invitation to be here this afternoon, and your warm welcome to me.

It is a great pleasure to be with you, to follow some of your business, and to bring you the Christian greetings of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA). The CRCA's Synod is also meeting this week, very close, at Wonga Park.

The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) has a very special place in the beginnings of the CRCA. One of my earliest memories is of the first tentative link between the PCEA and CRCA. My father was the first Dutchman called to provide pastoral care for Dutch and Reformed migrants in NSW. He was sponsored by the PCEA in 1951 and for our first months in Sydney, we met with the congregation of St George's Church in Castlereagh Street. Our worship of God in that grand old building and the powerful a-capella singing of the Psalms made a deep and treasured impressions on me as a 5 year old lad.

I'm sure everyone here knows the basics about the CRCA, so I will just try to fill in some current details. The CRCA are experiencing several trends, some of which you are probably also finding.

1. During the past two decades the membership of our Churches has declined from over 10,000 to about 8,500. The number of congregations has remained steady at about 45, but there are in addition to this some half dozen church plants, with another 5 or 6 planned.
2. During the past decade the CRCA have welcomed and enfolded large numbers of South African (Afrikaans) migrants and several ministers. The national, cultural and Christian background of these people is in some respects different from that of the "older" CRCA: this represents a very real challenge to all concerned.
3. We have many "adherents" now: it is part of our postmodern culture that people will attend church and even join in its life and work, but not have membership for various reasons. So despite falling membership the CR churches are not declining in strength.
4. We are seeing greater movement between Christian Churches: our members and other Christians are less loyal to a "brand" church and will join or leave us for a variety of reasons.
5. There is a growing diversity among our congregations on non-essentials, and the tension between and discussion about the unity and diversity of the Christian Church is quite alive.

At our last Synod, three years ago in 2006, the CRCA adopted a Fourfold Aim –

1. To PRAY for the Lord's Spirit to be poured out on us as people of God, whilst repenting of our significant fruitlessness.
2. To PLANT fellowship groups and churches in an ongoing way.
3. To PREPARE leaders who will lead such fellowships and churches.
4. To PRODUCE the structural reforms necessary for our churches to fulfil the Lord's work.

The CRCA recognises that structural reform and mission statements alone will not honour our Lord, nor further His work. We are determined to continue in obedience to the Scriptures and in loyalty to our Reformed confessions as the basis for our understanding of Christian faith. We also recognise that the CRCA must become more intentional about obeying the Lord's call to advance the Gospel with energy.

I would like to mention some areas of common interest –

- 1) We continue to encourage local cooperation in places where both the PCEA and CRCA have congregations and/or members, especially of course along our East Coast from Brisbane to Geelong and in NW Tasmania.
- 2) We rejoice that our common theological and confessional position has allowed members and ministers to move fairly easily between our two parts of the Body of Christ. I acknowledge in this especially my brother ministers Sjirk Bajema and Peter Gadsby.
- 3) I mention the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, where we have enjoyed times of sharing in training ministers and others. The PCEA Geelong congregation has also benefited from the vibrancy of the RTC community.
- 4) I am a little envious of the long list of missionary links in your Report to the Synod, although the CRCA also has some deep commitments to the Lord's work beyond our congregations and communities. I am grateful that our Churches have decided to support the Christian Witness to Israel, of which you are very supportive, and have noted that Australian Indigenous Ministries is receiving more attention in our circles.

Your Church has a long heritage. The Lord has been working among you for many years and the Gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ has gone out from you, changing and nurturing many people.

You treasure the Reformed understanding of the Gospel and the Bible truths rediscovered at the Protestant and Calvinist Reformation, as do we. We also differ on some matters which seem difficult to overcome – arising from the different ways the Lord has led us in terms of historical paths and Confessional formulations.

Let us continue to be interested in and accepting of each other's part of God's work, including each other in our prayers, and working together when and wherever that is practicable.

May I end my words of greeting to you with what the apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church. *With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 1:11f)*

Fred Vanderbom
12 May 2009