

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
FIFTIETH SESSION
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE
**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF
AUSTRALIA**



HELD IN SYDNEY
SEPTEMBER 2019

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
of the
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA
2019

ASSEMBLY OFFICERS

Moderator

REV. PETER EDWARD BARNES, MA, DipEd, BD, ThD
55 Tower St, Revesby NSW 2212
(02) 9774 5740

Clerk of Assembly

REV. BRUCE McLINTOCK MELLER, BD, ThL, MA (Theol)
PO Box 2196, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
0418 650 618

Deputy Clerk of Assembly

REV. LESLEIGH J.F. HALL, BA, AdDipTheol
4/19 Lang Parade, Milton QLD 4064
(07) 3716 2800

Business Convener

REV. PETER J. BARSON
4/19 Lang Parade, Milton QLD 4064
(07) 3398 9823

Procurator

MR GREGORY BURTON, SC, FCI Arb, BCL, BA, LLB
5th Floor, Wentworth Chambers
180 Phillip Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Law Agent

MR SIMON FRASER, BA, LLM
Colin Biggers & Paisley,
Level 42, 2 Park Street, Sydney NSW 2000
Phone: (02) 8281 4555 Fax: (02) 8281 4567

Trustees

PO Box 2196, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
Telephone: (02) 9690 9333 Fax: (02) 9310 2148

**The Assembly will commence its 51st Session on Monday 5th September, 2022
at 7:00 p.m.
in the Presbyterian Church, Cnr Park Rd & MacMahon Street, Hurstville, NSW,
or at such other date, time and place as may be decided.**

PAST MODERATORS
of the
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF AUSTRALIA

Rev. John Meiklejohn, DD.	1901
Rev. Alexander Hay, DD.	1902
Rev. David Bruce, DD.	1903
Rev. P.J. Murdoch, MA.	1905
Rev. T.E. Clouston, DD.	1906
Rev. Peter Robertson.	1907
Rev. John Ferguson.	1909
Rev. W.S. Rolland.	1910
Rev. J. Laurence Rentoul, MA, DD.	1912
Rev. George Davidson, MA, DD.	1914
Rev. Ronald G. Macintyre, CMG., CBE., MA., DD.	1916
Rev. John Walker, DD.	1918
Rev. James Gibson, MA.	1920
Rev. John Mathew, MA, DD.	1922
Rev. James Crookston.	1924
Rev. R. Scott-West, DD.	1926
Rev. Alexander Crow.	1928
Rev. Donald A. Cameron, MA.	1930
Rev. G.R.S. Reid, MA, DD.	1933
Rev. John Mackenzie, MA, DD.	1936
Rev. John Flynn, OBE, DD.	1939
Rev. R. Wilson Macaulay, BA., DD.	1942
Rev. Alexander C. Grieve, BA.	1945
Rev. Julian R. Blanchard, CBE, BA, DD.	1948
Rev. Richard Bardon, OBE, BA.	1951
Rev. Sir Francis W. Rolland, OBE, MC, MA.	1954
Rev. David J. Flockhart, MA.	1957
Rev. Alan C. Watson, MA, DD.	1959
Rev. Hector Harrison, OBE, MA, BD.	1962
Rev. William Young, BA.	1964
Rev. Norman Faichney, BA.	1967
Rev. James Frederick McKay, CMG, OBE, MA, BD.	1970, 1971
Rev. Gillam Albert McConnel Wood, OBE, AM, BA.	1973
Rev. Neil MacLeod, AM, MA, DD.	1974
Rev. Kenneth Joseph Gardner, OBE, DD.	1977
Rev. James Mullan, BA., DipRE.	1979
Rev. Norman Monsen.	1982
Rev. Edward R. Pearsons.	1985
Rev. Alan C. Stubs, BA, BD, MTh, DipRE.	1988
Rev. Murray J.K. Ramage.	1991
Rev. Prof. A.M. Harman, BA, BD, MLitt, MTh, ThD.	1994
Rev. Bruce H. Christian, ME, BD.	1997
Rev. Jack J. Knapp.	2001
Rev. Charles Robert Thomas, ThD.	2004
Rev. Robert P.F. Benn, LTh, DipRE.	2007
Rev. David N. Jones, BD, CertPastoralStudies.	2010
Rev. David A. Cook, BTh, MA, ThL, DipDM.	2013
Rev. John Wilson, BSc, DipEd, BTh, DMin.	2016

CLERKS
of the
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF AUSTRALIA

Rev. James S. Laing, DD.....	1901-1906
Rev. George Tait, MA.....	1906-1933
Rev. R. Wilson Macaulay, BA, BD.....	1933-1942
Rev. W.D. Marshall, MA.....	1942-1945
Rev. R. Wilson Macaulay, BA, BD.....	1945-1951
Rev. W.D. Marshall, MA.....	1951-1957
Rev. G. Ross Williams.....	1957-1970
Rev. L. Farquhar Gunn, MBE, ED, MA, BD.....	1970-1974
Rev. Edward R. Pearsons.....	1974-1985
Raymond P.W. Jell, LTh, AREI, AICM, AAIM, JP.....	1985-1988
Very Rev. Kenneth J. Gardner, OBE, DD.....	1988-1991
Rev. Paul G. Logan, OAM, BA, DMin, DipEdStud, MACE.....	1991-2014
Rev. B.M. Meller, BD, ThL, MA (Theol).....	2015-

DEPUTY (OR JUNIOR)
CLERKS

Rev. George Tait, MA.....	1901-1906
Rev. E.E. Baldwin, MA, DipEd.....	1922-1939
Rev. W.D. Marshall, MA.....	1939-1942
Rev. G.W. McAlpine.....	1942-1945
Rev. W.D. Marshall, MA.....	1945-1951
Rev. J.M. Stuckey, BA.....	1951-1962
Rev. C.M. Dyster, MA, BD, STM.....	1962-1964
Rev. L.F.F. Gunn, MBE, ED, MA, BD.....	1964-1970
Rev. A.M. McMaster, BA, BD.....	1970-1977
Raymond P.W. Jell, LTh, AREI, AICM, AAIM, JP.....	1977-1985
Rev. J.J.T. Campbell, BA.....	1988-1991
Rev. B.M. Meller, BD, ThL, MA (Theol).....	1991-2014
Rev. Lesleigh J.F. Hall, BA, AdDip (Theol).....	2015-

LAW AGENTS

Messrs Davies and Campbell	1901-1930
Mr Alexander Gerald Proudfoot	1930-1950
Mr J.P. Adam, MA, LLB, DipEd.....	1950-1972
Mr John G.R. McArthur, LLB.....	1972-1977
Mr Lindsay J. Moore, LLB.....	1977-1991
Mr Simon H. Fraser, BA, LLM.....	1991-

PROCURATORS

Mr John Garland, KC, MA, LLB.....	1901-1921
Mr John A. Ferguson, BA, LLB.....	1921-1936
Mr Brian C. Fuller, QC, BA, LLB.....	1936-1956
Mr Douglas M. Little, QC.....	1956-1959
Mr F. Maxwell Bradshaw, MA, LLM.....	1959-1992
Mr Garry K. Downes, AM, QC, BA, LLB.....	1992-2002
Mr Gregory K. Burton, SC, FCI Arb, BCL, BA, LLB.....	2003-

Presbytery of the Hunter

Rev. S. Taylor

Presbytery of the Illawarra

Rev. Brett Richardson

Mr Peter Boggs

Presbytery of the Mid North Coast

Rev. D. Hann

Presbytery of New England

Rev. S. Andrews

Mr L. Jackson

Presbytery of North West NSW

Rev. S. Smith

Presbytery of the Northern Rivers

Rev. C. Lindsay

Rev. G. Samuel

Presbytery of the Riverina

Rev. C. Nicholas

Mr C. Monamy

Presbytery of Sydney East

Rev. G. Pather

Rev. C.R. Tucker

Dr B. Wong

Presbytery of Sydney Inner West

Rev. D. Au

Rev. M. Powell

Mr J. Park

Mr W. Thompson

Presbytery of Sydney North

Rev. J. Buchanan

Rev. G. Goswell

Rev. P. Harris

Rev. M. Oates

Rev. K. Weerakoon

Dr J. Pratt

Mr M. Smith

Presbytery of Sydney South

Rev. P.E. Barnes

Rev. J. Ang

Rev. D. McDougall

Rev. J. Mobbs

Mr W. Richards

Mr J. Rolland

Presbytery of Wagga Wagga

Rev. R. Keith
Rev. P. Sheely

Mr A. Lawson
Mr J. Van Every

**QUEENSLAND
(Elected by the State Assembly)**

Rev. P. Case
Rev. G. Henderson
Rev. J. Norved
Rev. M. O'Connor

Mr A. Farguharson
Mr L. Foster
Mr A. Gregory
Mr G. Newnham

Presbytery of Brisbane

Rev. P. Campbell
Rev. S. Hoadley
Rev. G. Swann

Mr G. Rodgers

Presbytery of Central Queensland

Rev. R. McLennan
Rev. A. Poyser

Mr P. Eckersley
Mr P. Willkie

Presbytery of Darling Downs

Rev. T. Cheetham
Rev. P. Evans

Mr J. Parry
Mr A. Schache

Presbytery of Moreton Bay

Rev. J. Nicol

Mr P. Cotton

Presbytery of Mowbray

Rev. A. Bain
Rev. N. Campbell
Rev. R. Wilson

Mr M. Baddeley
Mr S. Bailey
Mr R. Thompson

Presbytery of North Queensland

Rev. A. Richardson

Mr I. Putt

Presbytery of Wide Bay-Sunshine Coast

Rev. W. Brown
Rev. R. Schwartz

Mr J. Eaton
Mr B. Hooper

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA
(Elected by the State Assembly)**

Rev. G.J. Ware

Mr B. Harvey

Presbytery of South Australia

Rev. D. Gunning

Mr R. Bannister

TASMANIA
(Elected by the State Assembly)

Rev. J. Summers

Mr G. Roberts

Presbytery of Bass

Rev. G. Munro

Mr J. Gibb

Presbytery of Derwent

Rev. C. Markham

Mr D. Leitch

VICTORIA
(Elected by the State Assembly)

Rev. D. Brown
Rev. P. Phillips
Rev. J. Stasse
Rev. R. White

Mr R. Butcher
Mr A. Letcher
Mr C. Morrow
Mr D. Wright

Presbytery of Ballarat

Rev. L. Isham

Mr P. Denness

Presbytery of Flinders

Rev. M. Cole
Rev. B. Peatman

Mr A Putnins
Mr D. Stanley

Presbytery of Geelong

Rev. D. Middleton

Mr R. Worth

Presbytery of Gippsland

Rev. C. Garrett

Mr T. Guilford

Presbytery of Maroondah

Rev. B. Porter

Mr Michael McNair

Presbytery of Melbourne East

Rev. P. Chang
Rev. G.J. Nicholson
Rev. C. Siriweera

Mr P. Barton
Dr J. Hare
Mr B. Palmer

Presbytery of Melbourne North

Rev. M. de Pyle
Rev. A. Vines

Mr T.Cuneen
Mr S. Harris

Presbytery of Melbourne West

Rev. C. Duke
Rev. J. Ellis

Mr N. Johnston
Mr N. Vasiliades

Presbytery of North East Victoria

Rev. K. Maxwell

Mr A. Horsburgh

Presbytery of North West Victoria

Rev. J. Walz

Mr C. Morrow

Presbytery of South West Victoria

Rev. B. Johnson
Rev. I. Leach

Mr T. Fleming

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA
(Elected by the State Assembly)**

Rev. S. Bonnington

Mr W.A. MacRae

Presbytery of Western Australia

Rev. J. Otten
Rev. K. Song

Mr L. Kruize
Mr C. Woonings

COMMISSION OF ASSEMBLY

New South Wales:

Rev. D. Balzer
Rev. M. Cropper
Rev. P. Harris
Rev. J.R. Irvin

Mr J. Falls
Mr C.M. Langford
Dr M. Whitelaw
Dr R. Yager

Queensland:

Rev. P. Betts
Rev. P. Campbell
Rev. P. Case

Mr. J. Eaton

South Australia:

Rev. G.J. Ware

Mr B. Johnson

Tasmania:

Rev. J. Summers

Mr. G.K. Roberts

Victoria:

Rev. D. Carroll
Rev. D.J. Palmer
Rev. B. Stasse
Rev. P. Phillips

Mr C. Morrow

Western Australia:

Rev. S. Bonnington

Mr W. MacRae

Assembly Officers:

Moderator as Chairman
Clerk
Deputy Clerk
Business Convener
Law Agent
Procurator

Rev. Dr P.E. Barnes
Rev. B.M. Meller
Rev. L.J.F. Hall
Rev. P.J. Barson
Mr S.H. Fraser
Mr G.J. Burton

Former Moderators-General:

Very Rev. Dr. K.J. Gardner
Very Rev. Prof. A.M. Harman
Very Rev. B.H. Christian
Very Rev. J.J. Knapp
Very Rev. Dr. C.R. Thomas

Very Rev. R.P.F. Benn
Very Rev. D.N. Jones
Very Rev. D.A. Cook
Rev. Dr J. Wilson

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES - COMPOSITION

The composition of all standing committees, unless expressly varied by the Assembly, is: 10 members elected by the Assembly as follows: New South Wales, 3; Queensland, 2; Victoria, 2; South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia, 1 each; a Convener elected by the Assembly; and the Assembly officers ex officio.

AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN WORLD MISSION

Composition: Non-standard

A Convener elected by the General Assembly; the National Director; the Convener of the State committees on world mission from New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia; an additional representative from the State committees on world mission from New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria; and 5 additional members elected by the General Assembly of whom at least three shall be from the state in which the national office is located.

Elected by the Assembly: Rev. Brett Graham, Messrs Peter Burke, Bob Quinn, Mesdames Sheryl Sarkoezy and Stephanie Schwarz.

Ex-officio: National Director
Assembly Officers

Convener: Rev. Brett Graham

CHURCH AND NATION

Composition: Standard

New South Wales: Rev. A.C. "Sandy" McMillan, Mr P. Christopher, Mrs Sheryl Sarkoezy

Queensland: Professor Nicholas Aroney, Mrs Robyn Bain

South Australia: Rev. Gary Ware

Tasmania: Mr Martin Webb

Victoria: Rev. Chris Duke, Mrs Moira Deeming

Western Australia: Rev. Ross Fraser

Ex-officio: Assembly Officers

Convener: Rev. Dr John McClean

CODE

Composition: Standard

New South Wales: Rev. John Irvin, Justin Ang, Dr Rod Yager

Queensland: Rev. Matthew Viney, Mr Daniel Whitmore

South Australia: Rev. Gary Ware

Tasmania: Rev. Greg Munro

Victoria: Rev. Peter Phillips, Rev. Dr John Wilson

Western Australia: Mr W. "Bill" MacRae

Ex-officio: Assembly Officers

Convener: Rev. Bruce Meller

COLLEGE

Composition: Non-standard

- (a) A convener elected by and from the members of the Committee.
- (b) The Convener of the state committee on theological education from the assemblies in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia.
- (c) The principals of the theological colleges operated by the state assemblies of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria.
- (d) Two members of the faculty of each of the colleges listed in (c) who shall be elected by the relevant faculty.
- (e) The officers of the Assembly ex officio.

DEFENCE FORCE CHAPLAINCY

Composition: Standard

New South Wales:	Rev. Paul Harris, Gary Hooper, Richard Quadrio
Queensland:	Rev. Daniel Cassidy, John Nicol
South Australia	Rev. Joshua Bouzanquet
Tasmania:	Rev. Ian McKendrick
Victoria:	Rev. Peter Owen, Barry Porter
Western Australia:	Rev. Ross Fraser
Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers
Convener:	Rev. P.W. Phillips until 31/12/19; then Rev. Martin De Pyle.

FINANCE

Composition: Standard

New South Wales:	Rev. John Irvin, Mr Jeof Falls, Miss Margaret McKenzie
Queensland:	Mr Greg Rodgers
South Australia	No appointment (<i>One standing vacancy</i>)
Tasmania:	Mr Graeme Roberts
Victoria:	Rev. Richard O'Brien, Mr Andrew Letcher
Western Australia:	Mr Chris Woonings
Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers
Convener:	The Chairman for the time being of the Presbyterian Church (NSW) Property Trust (currently Miss Margaret McKenzie).

MISSION TO AUSTRALIA (SPECIAL COMMITTEE)

Composition: Special Committee: non-standard composition

The Convener of the Committee on home missions from each State Assembly; the Convener of the Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee (PIM); the full-time Directors or Superintendents of the committees on home missions in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria; and the Superintendent of PIM.

Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers
Convener:	Appointed by the Committee

MODERATOR'S NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Composition: Non-standard

The Moderator and Clerk of the Assembly, 3 ministers and 3 elders from each State Assembly, the Clerk of Assembly being the Convener.

NATIONAL JOURNAL

Composition: Non-standard

The Committee shall consist of a Convener and ten members appointed by the General Assembly. No more than three persons from any one State shall be elected to the Committee.

Persons	Rev. Stuart Bonnington, Andrew Clarke, David Cook, Guido Kettmiss, Mark Powell, Jason Summers, Mr Neville Taylor
Victoria:	Rev. Dr John Wilson, Rev. Peter Hastie, Mr Barney Zwartz
Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers
Convener	Mr Duncan Parker

OVERSEAS AID AND DEVELOPMENT (PresAID)

Composition: Special Committee: non-standard composition

The committee shall consist of 4 members, ministers or elders, from Victoria (who shall form the executive), 2 members, ministers or elders from NSW, 1 minister or elder from Queensland, the National Director of APWM, the Convener of the GAA APWM Committee and the state Conveners of APWM.

New South Wales:	Mr Bill Thompson (<i>One standing vacancy</i>)
Queensland:	Rev. Trevor Cheetham
South Australia:	Rev. Gary Ware

Tasmania:	Rev. Phil Simmonds
Victoria:	Miss Geraldine Goswell
Western Australia:	Rev. Stuart Bonnington
Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers, Convener APWM, National Director APWM, Convener RWOC committee
Convener:	Rev. Dean Carroll

PRESBYTERIAN INLAND MISSION

Composition: Standard

New South Wales:	Rev. Peter Barber, Sam Smith (<i>One standing vacancy</i>)
Queensland:	Rev. Andrew Clausen (<i>One standing vacancy</i>)
South Australia:	Rev. Josh Bouzanquet
Tasmania:	Rev. Peter Williamson
Victoria:	Rev. Martin De Pyle, Mr Dennis Wright
Western Australia:	Rev. Ross Fraser
Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers and the PIM Superintendent
Convener:	Rev. L.G. Fowler

PUBLIC WORSHIP AND AIDS TO DEVOTION

Composition: Standard

New South Wales:	Rev. Stuart Andrews, Andrew Campbell, Dr Michael Whitelaw
Queensland:	Rev. Andrew Clarke (<i>One standing vacancy</i>)
South Australia:	Rev. Gary Ware
Tasmania:	(<i>One standing vacancy</i>)
Victoria:	Rev. Luke Isham, Matthew James
Western Australia:	Mr W. "Bill" MacRae
Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers
Convener:	Rev. Scott Kroeger

RECEPTION OF MINISTERS

Composition: Standard

New South Wales:	Rev. Moses Hahn, Matthew Oates, Mr Jim Park
Queensland:	Rev. Dr Gary Millar, Andrew Richardson
South Australia:	Rev. Gary Ware
Tasmania:	Rev. David Jones
Victoria:	Rev. Chris Siriweera, Gerald Vanderwert
Western Australia:	Mr W. "Bill" MacRae
Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers
Convener:	Rev. David Burke

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Composition: Standard

New South Wales:	Rev. Dr John McClean, Corie Nel, Kamal Weerakoon
Queensland:	Messrs Mark Baddeley, Robert Thompson
South Australia:	Rev. Gary Ware
Tasmania:	Rev. Greg Munro
Victoria:	Rev. Chris Duke, Matthew James
Western Australia:	Rev. Stuart Bonnington
Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers
Convener:	Rev. Dr John Wilson

TRAINING AND DISCIPLESHIP (SPECIAL COMMITTEE)

Composition: Special Committee: non-standard composition

The Convener of the Committee on home missions from each State Assembly; the Convener of the Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee (PIM); the full-time Directors or

Superintendents of the committees on home missions in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria; and the Superintendent of PIM.

The Directors of Youth Ministry from those states where a Director or equivalent is appointed; the Directors of Christian Education from those states where a Director or equivalent is appointed; the Convener of the state Christian Education committee (or the Convener's deputy) from states where no person is appointed as the Director of Youth Ministry or of Christian Education.

Ex-officio: Assembly Officers
Convener: Appointed by the Committee

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Composition: Ad hoc

New South Wales	Mesdames Jenni Smith and Vanessa Stuckings
Queensland	Mrs Ceale Orford
Tasmania	Mrs Christine Jolly
Victoria	Rev. Ben Johnson, Mrs Karina Brookes
Ex-officio:	Assembly Officers
Convener	Rev. James Snare

PANEL OF ASSESSORS

(Appointed under Article 13)

Ministers

S.M. Bonnington
Rev. C. Garrett
Rev. D.J. Hassan
Rev. J.R. Irvin
Rev. P. Strong
Rev. R. Vandervelden
Rev. G. Ware
Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson

Elders

Mr M. Baddeley
Mr C.M. Langford
Mr C. Morrow
Mr I. Putt
Mr G.K. Roberts
Mr W. MacRae

AUTHORISATIONS, INSTRUCTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assembly Committees:

- Instruct the **Women's Ministry** Committee in the next triennium to consult with key stakeholders such as women's ministries groups within the Church, Theological Colleges, churches, ministers, elders, youth ministers and individual members within churches (Facebook or website subscribers) to develop a Women's Ministry Strategy which will guide future activities and direction of women's ministry within the PCA, and present the Strategy to the next meeting of the Assembly. (Min. 25(5))
- Instruct the **Women's Ministry** Committee to explain and give clear examples of "complementarian partnership in action" in the Strategy. (Min. 25(6))
- Authorise the **APWM** Committee to hold an annual appeal throughout the Presbyterian Church of Australia, on the nearest Sunday to the conclusion of NAIDOC week, for funds for APWM's Aboriginal Ministry. (Min. 33(11))
- Encourage the committee on **Relations With Other Churches** to continue promoting the ministries of the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF), and thank the Rev. Dr John McClean and the Rev. Robert Benn for their services on the WRF Board. (Min. 35(3))
- Review the MoU formed with the Christian Reformed Church of Australia (CRCA) at the meeting of the General Assembly in 2025; instructing the **Relations With Other Churches** Committee to engage with the CRCA in the preparation of that review.
- Direct the **Ministry to Australia** Committee to give consideration of the formula which uses sanctioned charges only as the basis for representation at GAA as stated in the articles of agreement and report back to the next meeting of the GAA. (Min. 61(7))
- Request the **PIM** Committee to communicate to the congregations of the PCA, in due course, the opportunities at New Dunesk that are available to their members. (Min. 66(7))
- Request the **PIM** Committee to bring a report on the progress of New Dunesk to the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly. (Min. 66(8))
- Appoint a committee consisting of the present and former Moderators-General, with the Rev. Dr P.E. Barnes as convener, to examine the practical and theological implications of permitting **Welcome to Country** or Acknowledgment of Country rituals in activities of the Presbyterian Church.
- Refer the following motion to the **Code Committee**:
Confirm the accepted practice that deacons, along with ministers and elders, hold office in accordance with the doctrine of the Church, and that admission to that office, after proper election, is by means of ordination which ordination is for life unless voided by resignation or deposition. (Min. 107(1))

Amendments to Constitution, Procedure and Practice

- Amend the Standing Orders by the removal of clause 20(b), so that the rule will read as follows:
 20. Committees of the General Assembly shall submit to the Assembly a written report; recommendations for action shall be appended in a proposed deliverance; such reports and proposed deliverance shall be printed and circulated among members of the Assembly at least one day before they are considered. (Min. 15(1))
- Amend Rule 1.05 of the Code of Discipline by removing all words and replacing them with the following:
 - 1.05 No accusation shall be received or proceeded with in respect of any offence alleged to have been committed more than five years before the date of the accusation, unless it relates to sexual abuse or abuse of authority.
When an allegation is made under the Code of Discipline, it must be investigated and pursued thoroughly, responsibly and as quickly as the case might allow so that no delay in process or judgement will prejudice either the accuser or the accused. (Min. 15(2))

- Amend the first question asked at ordinations and inductions, contained in the Constitution, Procedure and Practice, 6.1(i) and 6.6(i), by deleting all words in each place and replacing them with the following:
 “Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only rule of faith and practice?” (Min. 15(3))
- Amend the Code of Discipline to strengthen processes for the protection of children. (Min. 15(4))

State Assemblies

- Request the State Assemblies, when called upon to do so, to reimburse the Finance Committee without delay expenditure in connection with the holding of the 2019 General Assembly of Australia, the expenses of Committees of the General Assembly of Australia and expenditure of the Moderator, in the proportion set out in the Finance Committee regulations. (Min. 41(8)(f))
- Request the State churches to adopt the National Safe Ministry Framework as a statement of their own principles, policy and procedures while recognising the need for the State churches to augment or amend the stated procedures to ensure that they remain fully compliant with secular legislation in their respective States. (Min. 43(5))
- Request the State churches, through the leaders of their child protection units, to maintain close liaison with one another and with the Clerk of Assembly in order that maximal uniformity might be maintained in the practices of Presbyterian Churches across Australia, and so that recommended changes to the National Safe Ministry Framework might be presented to the GAA with one voice. (Min. 43(6))
- Request the State churches, through the leaders of their child protection units, to share with one another, and with the Clerk of the Assembly, their experience in using the National Safe Ministry Framework in order to bring recommended changes to the next meeting of the GAA. (Min. 43(7))
- Request State Assemblies, when revising their rules, to consider the adoption of uniform titles for various types of charges. (Min. 61(3))
- Request State Assemblies and presbyteries to encourage ministry workers and their spouses to consider participation in Renewal Retreat Groups and intentional mentoring processes. (Min. 61(4))
- Request the State Assemblies to ensure that their codes are structured in conformity to the decisions of the GAA. (Min. 73(11))

Presbyteries

- Request State Assemblies and presbyteries to encourage ministry workers and their spouses to consider participation in Renewal Retreat Groups and intentional mentoring processes. (Min. 61(4))
- Commend the PIM’s Congregation Connect programme to churches and presbyteries as a means for accomplishing long-distance ministry in parishes with limited resources. (Min. 83(4))
- Commend to all churches and presbyteries the Congregational Survey and ask that each congregation engage in the survey. (Min. 83(5))
- Request State Assemblies to review the contents of their state Codes, including any appendices thereto, and remove any recognition of the titles Right Reverend (Rt Rev.) and Very Reverend (V. Rev.) from their Codes insofar as they might refer to the Moderator-General. (Min. 90)
- Without implying that any such behaviour had occurred, remind State Assemblies that church members should not purchase church property at anything other than market value and in an arms-length transaction. (Min. 101)

Sessions

- Urge ministers, sessions, mission committees and church members to set aside one or more Sundays in the year to promote the cause of cross-cultural mission in their congregations. (Min. 33(5))
- Request all sessions and boards or committees of management to give sympathetic consideration to supporting future Easter and Christmas PresAID Appeals. (Min. 34(2))
- Remind sessions that they have a responsibility for the admission to the Lord's Table, as well as suspension from it, and that admission to the Table should not be left entirely to the decision of individuals or families. (Min. 73(6))
- Affirm that the responsibility of a Session with regard to admission to the Lord's Table is discharged by the preaching of the word and may also be by means of admonition, course of instruction and other mechanisms. (Min. 73(7))
- Instruct sessions which wish to provide for children to receive the Lord's Supper to ensure that children are instructed in the faith and about the nature of the sacrament and that children have either made a public profession of faith, or that the Session has confirmed in consultation with their believing parent/s or guardians that they have made a credible profession of faith. (Min. 73(8))
- Encourage sessions to clarify their understanding of the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper, including admission to the Supper; and communicate this clearly to the congregation. (Min. 73(9))
- Encourage sessions to deal carefully and charitably with members who transfer to their congregation and have been used to a different pattern of admission to the Lord's Supper. (Min. 73(10))
- Commend the PIM's Congregation Connect programme to churches and presbyteries as a means for accomplishing long-distance ministry in parishes with limited resources. (Min. 83(4))
- Commend to all churches and presbyteries the Congregational Survey and ask that each congregation engage in the survey. (Min. 83(5))

Boards/Committees of Management

- Request all sessions and boards or committees of management to give sympathetic consideration to supporting future Easter and Christmas PresAID Appeals. (Min. 34(2))

Congregations

- Strongly encourage ministers, elders, committees of management and congregational members to subscribe to AP, and also strongly encourage congregations to seek the publication of their details in the magazine's quarterly Church Directory. (Min. 47(8))
- Call on our churches throughout Australia to pray fervently for the emergence of a gospel centred church planting movement in the city of Adelaide within the Presbyterian Church of Australia. (Min. 82(1))
- Inform all presbyteries and congregations of the websites of the Public Worship and Aids to Devotion Committee (pwad.org.au and rejoicehymnbase.com.au) and commend them as useful resources for the conduct of public worship and as an aid to the Church in general for private and family devotions. (Min. 86(2))

Ministers

- Encourage ministers and especially younger ministers to consider available opportunities for service either in full-time or reserve ADF chaplaincy. (Min. 20(2))
- Encourage the ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to support the ministry of the PWA and assist those involved by providing Bible teaching, training where needed, and praying regularly for its members to grow in the Lord and to serve him faithfully. (Min. 24(2))
- Draw to the attention of ministers and elders the need to support Indigenous ministry in prayer and finance. (Min. 33(4))

- Urge ministers, sessions, mission committees and church members to set aside one or more Sundays in the year to promote the cause of cross-cultural mission in their congregations. (Min. 33(5))
- Strongly encourage ministers, elders and congregational members to subscribe to the new AP website at ap.org.au (Min. 58(6))

Elders

- Encourage the ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to support the ministry of the PWA and assist those involved by providing Bible teaching, training where needed, and praying regularly for its members to grow in the Lord and to serve him faithfully. (Min. 24(2))
- Draw to the attention of ministers and elders the need to support Indigenous ministry in prayer and finance. (Min. 33(4))
- Strongly encourage ministers, elders and congregational members to subscribe to the new AP website at ap.org.au (Min. 58(6))

Church members

- Strongly encourage ministers, elders and congregational members to subscribe to the new AP website at ap.org.au (Min. 58(6))

State Moderators and Theological College Deans/Principals

- Request State Moderators and Theological College Deans/Principals to promote the opportunity for people within the church (women and men) who have a desire to see women thrive, grow and flourish within our churches, to be State or College representatives on the Committee. (Min. 25(4))

REPORTS

AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN WORLD MISSION

Introduction

The last three years have been extremely encouraging as God has (a) opened up new mission opportunities, and (b) raised up new missionaries as existing missionaries have retired or resigned. We thank God for His sustaining hand upon APWM in providing for the needs of this ministry — particularly through the generous gifts of State Assemblies, congregations and individuals. It is a profound joy to see God at work across the world.

The Committee

The 2016 Assembly elected Mr Alex Shaw as the Convener and re-appointed the Rev. Kevin Murray as National Director. Mr Alex Ralston served as Treasurer for 18 months and was succeeded by Mr Peter Burke, who serves from time to time in mission administration and finance with SIM in Nigeria.

Mr Shaw is not available for re-election and we thank him for his service spanning nine years. The Committee nominates the Rev. Brett Graham for the position of Convener.

The Committee met face-to-face four times per year and God has blessed the Committee with rich gospel-hearted relationships. This is not something we take for granted and we praise God for his mercy.

The Committee continues to operate with three subcommittees

- (a) ***The Indigenous Ministry Subcommittee*** is convened by the Rev. Jim Elliott from NSW. Jim is not a member of the APWM Committee but was a former APWM Committee Deputy Convener and brings a wealth of knowledge and relationships to the role of Convener.
- (b) ***The Administration Subcommittee*** meets quarterly and does a lot of the 'day-to-day' work of APWM. It has authority to execute limited operational matters and drafts policy recommendations for the APWM Committee where necessary.
- (c) ***The Timor Leste Subcommittee*** meets annually face-to-face and corresponds by email during the year.

In 2016 the Committee undertook a major re-working of its policy document 'Partnership in Mission'. This is not available as a hard copy but can be downloaded from the APWM website at www.apwm.org.au/who-we-are/vision-and-mission/. Partnership in Mission is a 'living document' and is frequently modified to deal with emerging issues and changing circumstances.

PIM Partnership

The Committee continues to enjoy a close working relationship with the Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee. This is because both Committees share a common purpose, particularly in ministry to Indigenous people in Australia. We are particularly grateful for the partnership we share in the ministry at Mount Magnet, Western Australia, an area with a natural link to Indigenous ministry by the PIM Patrol Pastors. We give thanks to God for the ministry of the Rev. Surendra and Mrs May Wesley who serve at Mount Magnet.

Christ College Partnership

Since 2014 the National Office has been based at Christ College, Sydney. This has proven to be a strategic partnership and has provided APWM with tremendous opportunities to interact with students and visitors to Christ College. APWM is extremely grateful for the ministry of the Christ College staff, both Administrative and Academic, and is especially grateful to staff who have been willing to engage in overseas short-term lecturing with some of our Partner Churches.

One of the most strategic ways in which we can assist the maturation of our Partner Churches is through training nationals to carry out ministry. We are grateful for the ministry of the Victorian Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union for awarding a bursary to the Rev. Chanreiso Lunglung, a lecturer from the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Dehradun, India, thus enabling him to engage in Doctoral studies at PTC Melbourne. Similarly we are grateful for the generosity of those who have enabled the APWM National Committee to award a bursary enabling another Presbyterian Theological Seminary lecturer from

Dehradun, the Rev. Vijai Tagore, to engage in Doctoral studies at Christ College. Both these men are ministers with our Partner Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India. We are grateful to their supervisors at PTC and Christ College for their service to the wider body of Christ.

Missionaries

For a detailed list of our missionaries please see our 2018-2019 Mission Directory.

Summary of Missionary Team (as at May 2019)

Category	Units	Adults	Children	Total
Partner Agency	97	159	109	268
Partner Church	8	15	12	27
Associates	5	8	4	12
Totals	110	182	125	307

Office Staff

Accounts Clerk (15 hours per week): Mr Bruce Campbell continues to make sure that our accounts are properly administered.

Director's Assistant (4 days per week) Mrs Sheryl Sarkoezy, a graduate of Christ College, serves in the role of 'Director's Assistant' and serves very capably in research, policy development, Safe Church procedures, co-ordination and in a myriad other ways. In all of this she employs her theological training to help APWM better serve the church.

The National Director

The Rev. Kevin Murray serves as National Director and his appointment expires at the end of 2019. The Committee recommends to the Assembly his re-appointment for a further three years. Mr Murray has informed the Committee that he is willing to serve as National Director for three more years but not beyond that. This means that the Committee will come to the 2022 Assembly with a fresh nomination for the position of National Director.

The Director's duties have covered the following areas:

- (a) **Administration** Preparation of the business papers for the Committee Annual General Meetings, Executive Meetings and Administration Subcommittee Meetings and follow up of items. Frequent meetings with the APWM NSW Committee and annually with the APWM Queensland and APWM Victoria Committees and occasional meetings with the Tasmanian and Western Australian Committees.
The Director has visited the Queensland, NSW, Victorian, Tasmanian and West Australian Assemblies.
- (b) **Pastoral & Member Care Duties** Missionaries receive pastoral care from the Director, the Director's Assistant and the APWM State Committees. The Director and his Assistant have met with many missionary candidates and missionaries on home assignment. The limitations of time and geography have made it difficult to meet with every missionary on home assignment. While on overseas trips the Director has met with missionaries on the field including in Ethiopia, India, Japan, Myanmar, Vanuatu and Zambia. In addition, he has met many times with those involved in Indigenous ministry in Australia.
- (c) **Publicity, Promotion & Teaching**
 - (i) **Speaking:** During the last three years, the Director has preached in parishes throughout Australia with a focus on both local and overseas cross-cultural mission.
 - (ii) **Print Publications:** APWM places material in the Queensland 'PresLife', the NSW 'Pulse' and the Victorian 'Fellow Workers'. APWM is very grateful for the cooperation of the editors of each of the State publications. For many years the APWM Newsletter was published with the PIM Newsletter and sent out with the 'Australian Presbyterian' magazine. This arrangement

ceased at the start of 2019 for financial reasons.

APWM continues to produce a **biannual Directory** listing our missionaries and their details. We aim to place the Directory in the hands of as many Presbyterians as possible who are interested in praying for, and supporting, APWM.

Our **bimonthly prayer notes** 'Email Update' are compiled by the Director's wife, Julie, together with the Director's Assistant. They are distributed by email or by direct mail to those who request it. We are particularly aware of the need to be very careful with the details of APWM members who serve in security sensitive contexts.

- (d) **Website & Social Media:** Our website <http://www.apwm.org.au> continues to develop and we offer a variety of avenues for donations (cheque, direct deposit, PayPal and credit card).

APWM actively posts on Facebook. This has proven to be a very helpful way of efficiently distributing APWM news.

(<https://www.facebook.com/AustralianPresbyterianWorldMission>).

APWM also has its own Vimeo channel (vimeo.com/user16292236) which can be accessed via the APWM website.

Partnerships with Overseas Churches

The Presbyterian Church of Australia has Partner Church agreements with the following Churches, with the Ethiopian and Indian partnerships being the most recent:

ETHIOPIA	Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia
INDIA	Reformed Presbyterian Church of India
JAPAN	Presbyterian Church in Japan
MALAWI	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Blantyre Synod)
MYANMAR	Evangelical Reformed Church (ERC)
SOUTH SUDAN	Presbyterian Church of South Sudan
TIMOR LESTE	Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste
VANUATU	Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu
ZAMBIA	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Zambia Synod)

Since the last meeting of the GAA the Director has made the following overseas trips:

2017

- (a) **India:** Visiting the Presbyterian Theological Seminary and holding discussions with the leadership of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India leadership regarding partnership. The Moderator General accompanied the Director on this trip.
- (b) **Myanmar:** Visiting the Evangelical Reformed Church and teaching at the Reformed Bible Institute.
- (c) **Ethiopia:** Visiting APWM missionaries Motor Yat, Rob Handicott and Kym & Steph Schwarz and visiting the members of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan in the refugee camps.

2018

- (a) **Vanuatu:** Visiting the Dekkers and the Richards (Westminster Presbyterian Church) and attending the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu.
- (b) **New Zealand:** Attending the General Assembly of the Grace Presbyterian Church New Zealand and engaging in a roundtable discussion on mission in the South Pacific.
- (c) **Japan:** Visiting APWM missionaries Nathan & Tomoko Stewart, leading a small team including the Moderator General, from Australia and attending the Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Japan.
- (d) Sheryl Sarkoezy made a pastoral visit to Lauren Crase serving in **Timor Leste**.

2019

- (a) **India:** Meeting with leaders from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India to discuss some ministry initiatives and then engaging in a trip to scope out potential ministry in India.
- (b) **Vanuatu:** Teaching at a conference for 90 Presbytery representatives on

'Mobilising the Church for Mission' and visiting APWM missionaries Dan & Jen Cooke.

- (c) **Myanmar:** Visiting the Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar and teaching on Mission at the Reformed Bible Institute.
- (d) **Timor Leste:** Attending the 10th Anniversary Synod of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste to encourage the church, preach and be involved in the installation of the incoming Synod.

ETHIOPIA Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia

This is our newest Partner Church relationship. This denomination is 20 years old and has a very small presence in the capital city, Addis Ababa, and is strongest in rural Ethiopia and appears to be engaging in solid outreach among people who either belong to another major non-Christian religious group or who adhere to an animist-based religion. Motor Yat, our missionary serving with the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan in the refugee camps, works in close partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia. In 2019 PresAID provided money to construct a well in a needy location. It is anticipated that the Rev. Solomon Gossaye of the Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia will be present at the GAA.

INDIA Reformed Presbyterian Church of India

We have enjoyed an informal relationship with the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India for many years. This was formalised with the signing of a Partner Church agreement in 2018. The PCA has a substantial role in supporting the Presbyterian Theological Seminary both through financial contributions, sending staff from Australia for short-term teaching and the provision of bursaries to enable two Seminary lecturers to undertake doctoral studies in Australia. It is anticipated that a representative of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India will be present at the GAA.

JAPAN Presbyterian Church in Japan

Our relationship with the Presbyterian Church in Japan continues to grow. It was with sadness that we permanently recalled John & Rose Evans to Australia for health reasons. Our current missionaries in Japan are Nathan & Tomoko Stewart, Adam & Helene Ramsay and Andrew Adams. We continue to enjoy an excellent relationship with the Presbyterian Church of America's mission arm, Mission to the World.

MALAWI Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Blantyre Synod)

Our primary contact for this relationship is the Rev. Dr John Wilson. We currently have no one serving directly with this church and so it is harder to maintain the relationship.

MYANMAR Evangelical Reformed Church (ERC)

At present we have no one serving with this church. We maintain our relationship through visits to preach and teach. Various congregations provide financial support for the Evangelical Reformed Church.

SOUTH SUDAN Presbyterian Church of South Sudan

Members of the Assembly may recall that a largely tribal-based civil war erupted in 2013. This resulted in a degree of uncertainty regarding the safety of Motor Yat, our APWM missionary serving with the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan. Motor is now based in Ethiopia and is ministering to those who lead the 100,000 members of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan located among the 400,000 people in the refugee camps. In late 2018, under the leadership of the Rev. David Burke, APWM ran a five day 'pop-up' workshop for pastors in the camps. We plan to repeat this in late 2019. Rhys and Rhondda Hall continue to serve in South Sudan/Uganda with ACROSS.

Following our appeal for funds for Bibles and other materials we purchased:

- Approximately 11,000 whole Nuer Bibles.
- 36 ESV Study Bibles and Global Study Bibles for pastors.
- 35 pairs of glasses for pastors
- 200 Audio Bible players for the blind

We are extremely grateful to the many people across Australia who gave so generously toward this appeal.

TIMOR LESTE Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste

In November 2019 the Director will attend the 10th Anniversary Synod of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste. Until her resignation in late 2018 Lauren

Cruse was our APWM missionary serving with the church. We have another couple from Victoria who are preparing to serve in Timor Leste with CMS. CMS already has one couple serving with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste and we enjoy a close working relationship with them. David Burke and Rob Duncanson frequently visit to carry out teaching for the church's leaders. It is anticipated that Pastor Carlos Marcal of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste will be present at the GAA.

VANUATU Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu

The Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu is our oldest Partner Church with our Partner Church missionaries being John & Kara Dekker. Under an MOU with the Westminster Presbyterian Church Western Australia Presbytery, the Rev. Tom & Mrs Margaret Richards also serve at Talua under the APWM banner — and this is a mutually beneficial relationship. The PCA continues to be the primary supporter of theological education for the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu. It is anticipated that Pastor Philip Baniuri, Principal of the Talua Theological Training Institute, will be present at the GAA.

ZAMBIA Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Zambia Synod)

Our primary contact for this relationship is the Rev. Dr John Wilson. We currently have no one serving with this church and so it is harder to maintain the relationship. In more recent days PresAID support has enabled the Chasefu Theological College to expand its facilities.

PresAID

Across these partnerships APWM is extremely grateful for the partnership with PresAID which has enabled the giving of tangible aid which has further strengthened our relationships.

Indigenous Ministry

The Rev. Rick & Mrs Kayleen Manton ministered in Mount Druitt in Sydney for over 20 years. In late 2017 they finished serving at Mount Druitt with a view to serve in a training capacity with the wider Aboriginal Christian community. In the first half of 2018 they planned to go on long service leave before taking up wider ministry in the second half of the year. Early in their long service leave Kayleen was diagnosed with breast cancer and this led to a great deal of uncertainty for Rick and Kayleen. Rick then returned to ministry at Mount Druitt and will soon commence a wider training and mentoring ministry.

Other APWM missionaries who serve with Aboriginal Australians include:

- **Rob & Jenni Alley** (NSW, Pioneers) conduct mission exposure trips among Indigenous communities.
- **John & Jenna Armstrong** (NSW, Wycliffe) engage in discipling ministry and care for cross-cultural workers.
- **Noel & Catharine Carpenter** (TAS, Wycliffe) serve as a pilot and literacy/language worker in the Northern Territory.
- **Cliff & Carolyn Letcher** (NSW, Australian Indigenous Ministries) provide pastoral support and encouragement for AIM field staff.
- **Aaron & Katie Rigg** (VIC, MAF) serve with MAF in Arnhem Land.
- **Bob & Lucy Quinn** (NSW, Pioneers) serve in Theological Education by Extension.
- **Matt & Kate Vinicombe** (VIC, CMS) serve at Groote Eylandt, NT, in church resourcing.
- **Surendra & May Wesley** (WA, Presbyterian Inland Mission) serve at Mount Magnet, WA, and regularly minister to people of an Indigenous background.

We give thanks to God for raising up these families for this service. We urge pastors and elders of our church to pray regularly for this ministry and make people aware of the needs that exist on our own doorstep. Donations to APWM for Indigenous ministry do not meet the ministry costs. If Aboriginal ministry could be adequately funded then the APWM Committee's finances would be in a much healthier state.

Funding

APWM receives income from the following sources:

- (a) Donations from individuals.
- (b) Donations from congregations.

- (c) Interest on funds held with the GAA Trustees.
- (d) Contributions made from state APWM Committees.
- (e) Occasional bequests.

The Committee is extremely grateful to those who support this ministry in prayer and finance. We are able to project likely income each year from our funds and from the very generous contributions made by APWM State Committees in recognition of the infrastructure and support provided by the National Office. However in recent years we have seen a gradual reduction in the amount that APWM State Committees have been able to contribute to the running expenses of the National Committee. The great variable is the donations by congregations and individuals. These can be very hard to predict.

The Committee is of the opinion that if its finances continue on their present trajectory then there will be a financial crisis in 4-5 years time. As stated above, if APWM's Indigenous ministry could be better funded then the Committee would be in a much more stable position – however, Indigenous ministry will rarely 'break even'. The Committee has worked very hard at minimising expenditure and considers that any further reduction will significantly reduce its services to its missionaries, our Partner Churches and the wider Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The Committee's assets are two Sydney houses:

- (a) A house at Picnic Point which is leased for \$630 per week. This has traditionally been the residence for the APWM Director but because the current Director owns his own Sydney home, this property is rented out. At his request, the Director is not paid a manse allowance and that means that when his successor is appointed and lives in this house there will be a reduction in APWM's income of approximately \$32,000 pa. This will add to the pressure on APWM's finances.
- (b) A house at Rooty Hill which is used for Indigenous ministry and houses Rick and Kayleen Manton.

Safe Ministry Policy

In 2014 the APWM National Committee adopted, as its own Safe Ministry Policy, the Breaking the Silence (BTS) policy of the PCNSW. APWM has also adopted the various amendments made to BTS since 2014. BTS is the default policy of APWM, and remains the most suitable policy for APWM's context because it focuses on safe ministry with respect to vulnerable adults as well as children, as well as including responses to domestic and family violence.

APWM requires that APWM National Committee members, APWM missionaries, and all applicants for membership of APWM, comply with the BTS policy. APWM State Committee members are required by their State Assembly to comply with safe ministry policy of their State. Missionaries are included in the policy's definition of "persons in positions of authority" in our church, regardless of whether or not they work with children, and regardless of the State from which they are sent.

Specifically, APWM missionaries and APWM National committee members are required to

- (a) hold a current working with children clearance issued by the relevant government authority in their sending State, because even if not required by law, it functions as a screening tool to ensure that APWM members have met certain standards of behaviour in ministry;
- (b) complete BTS training (or equivalent) every three years.

APWM uses the services of the Conduct Protocol Unit (CPU) of the Presbyterian Social Services in NSW for

- (a) provision of BTS training material;
- (b) verification of working with children clearances from all States around Australia;
- (c) audits of our safe ministry procedures;
- (d) assistance in maintaining a compliance list of APWM missionaries.

In 2017 APWM carried out a regular audit of its safe ministry practices, under the oversight of the CPU. The outcomes of this audit were:

- (a) Expansion of our compliance management processes to include Partner Agency missionaries and APWM Associates. Prior to the audit, our processes had been

focused on Partner Church missionaries, who are sent directly by the PCA to serve in Aboriginal ministry in Australia, or with the PCA's overseas Partner Churches. Partner Agency missionaries (who are sent out with dual membership of APWM and another Agency) and APWM Associates had not been included in our processes, and safe ministry matters for these missionaries had been left solely to their Agency.

- (b) A review of the safe ministry policies and training materials in place in our Partner Agencies.

Throughout 2018 and 2019, significant progress has been made toward bringing our missionaries into compliance with BTS. We are able to report that, as at May 2019:

- (a) There were 186 adult missionaries under APWM's oversight.
- (b) All APWM National Committee members and all missionaries, apart from those who are working in security sensitive contexts, have completed their initial round of training.
- (c) Most APWM missionaries have provided current working with children clearances. Those who haven't either serve in security sensitive contexts, or have not yet had a period of home assignment in Australia in which they can apply for a working with children clearance from the relevant government authority in the State from which they are sent.
- (d) We have begun our review of Partner Agency safe ministry policies and training material.
- (e) We estimate that in terms of work hours, the cost of managing compliance with the BTS policy in 2018 was approximately \$10,000, but the cost is far outweighed by the results for both the PCA and those we serve around the world.

There remain a number of challenges in implementing the policy. These include:

- (a) Understanding the differences between the working with children (or vulnerable people) clearances required in the various State jurisdictions. We are very thankful for the assistance of Mr Jon Flood, Director of the CPU in NSW, and for the work done by his staff on our behalf to verify clearances and to help us maintain our compliance listing. We note that one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse is that in Australia there should be a "National Office for Child Safety". It is not yet known whether such an office would administer a national working with children clearance scheme, but until it does, APWM will continue to work within the requirements of the State jurisdictions, navigating the different requirements of the various State government clearance schemes as best we can.
- (b) Determining which of the training packages used by our Partner Agencies meet the requirement of "equivalence with the BTS training material". Again, we are thankful for the assistance of Jon Flood, who has invested many hours working with us to reach the principles that we now apply when assessing equivalence. They are:
 - (i) The Victorian Safe Church training material and the Queensland PresSafe material are counted as equivalent to the BTS training material.
 - (ii) The material offered by some APWM Partner Agencies is counted as partially equivalent to the BTS training material. We offer several options to "fill the gap". While this complicates our record keeping, it does mean that all Partner Agency missionaries have access to the training necessary to be compliant with the policy and to serve well.
 - (iii) Missionaries who serve with Partner Agencies that are still developing their own safe ministry policies and training material, are expected to complete the full BTS training.
- (c) Resistance to our requests that missionaries provide working with children checks and complete the relevant training.
 - (i) Some APWM members, and some applicants, have argued that they don't work directly with children and so shouldn't be required to provide working with children clearances. The Committee thinks this is symptomatic of a

weakness across the PCA, in which many members of our congregations seem to think that safe ministry policies apply only to people working directly with children. The Committee thinks that more education is required about the breadth of the PCA's safe ministry policies, so that members of our congregations understand that safe ministry policies apply to people who work with adults as well as those who work with children.

- (ii) Some APWM members have argued that they are under the oversight of their Presbytery or State Assembly, and so shouldn't be required to comply with APWM's policies (which are based on the PCNSW BTS Policy). The Committee is thankful for the assistance of the officers responsible for safe ministry in each State Assembly in resolving these questions as they arise. We think, however, that if work was done across the PCA to standardise safe ministry policies and training materials this would prevent such questions arising in the first place.
- (iii) Some missionaries are unreasonably tardy with their responses to our requests for compliance. Our policy now is to issue reminders when clearances and/or training are about to expire, including a deadline for compliance, and with the consequence that a missionary's membership of APWM is suspended when the missionary falls out of compliance. The Committee has, regrettably, been compelled to initiate the suspension process for 4 missionaries who failed to comply with our policy. Thankfully, this action proved to be a powerful motivator, and none had their membership terminated.
- (d) Difficulties in communicating with missionaries who are serving in security sensitive contexts. The Committee has decided, in consultation with Jon Flood of the CPU, that the risk of compromising the security of these missionaries (through sending them documents that are full of references to Christian ministry and the PCA) is greater than the risks associated with them not being compliant with BTS. Our practice is to facilitate clearances and training for these missionaries when they are on home assignment.
- (e) Difficulties in communicating with missionaries who serve in places where internet access is poor.
- (f) Difficulties in obtaining clearances or police checks for missionaries who are not resident in Australia. APWM missionaries who went on the field prior to the various State jurisdictions introducing their working with children clearance schemes are not able to obtain clearances until they return to Australia for home assignment. All of these missionaries have completed their BTS training, and have been reminded of the need to obtain a clearance when they are next on home assignment.

In the opinion of the APWM Committee, the PCA, and the communities we serve in gospel ministry (whether in Australia or overseas), would benefit from

- (a) The establishment of a national safe ministry policy for the PCA;
- (b) The introduction of a national database capable of holding the safe ministry records currently maintained by the separate State Assemblies, and which were accessible by appropriately qualified officers from those State Assemblies.

Committee Nominations

The Committee nominates the following people for election to the APWM National Committee:

Convener: Rev. Brett Graham

Members: Rev. William Morrow, Messrs Peter Burke and Bob Quinn, Mesdames Sheryl Sarkoezy and Stephanie Schwarz

B. GRAHAM, Acting Convener
K. MURRAY, National Director

APWM Supplementary Report

Funding for Aboriginal Ministry

Among other things, Article 5 of Constitution, Procedures and Practice states:

Mission: *The mission of the Church is to take the Gospel to people of all ethnic and cultural groupings. That mission is pursued in Australia and overseas according to the following schema:*

- (a) *APWM shall give effect to the responsibility of the General Assembly to initiate and support world mission outside Australia and overseas and indigenous ministry within Australia.*

APWM thus enjoys the privilege of bearing the responsibility of overseeing work among the indigenous people of this land on behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. APWM has therefore willingly overseen the work of Rick and Kayleen Manton in Mount Druitt for many years.

However this ministry is both a joy and a burden. A joy, because many indigenous people in Western Sydney and other areas are seeing and hearing the reality of the life-changing gospel. A burden, because this ministry, and the wider indigenous ministry of APWM, is receiving financial support from only a minority of congregations so that income does not meet our necessary expenses.

Why is Aboriginal Ministry not as popular as it should be?

Reasons include:

- (a) Aboriginal ministry is not seen as being as 'exotic' as serving overseas. It's our own backyard. It's very domestic.
- (b) Aboriginal ministry is hard and slow and the results may not seem as dramatic compared, for example, to responses to the gospel in some other cultures.
- (c) We don't seem to consider Aboriginal ministry all that important. If we did, it would receive better financial support.
- (d) Some congregations pray for Aboriginal ministry around times such as National Sorry Day or NAIDOC week or talk about the need for reconciliation but do little more than this.
- (e) We don't always realise the full extent of our responsibility toward our indigenous neighbours.

The Implications for APWM are:

APWM is bleeding financially. The GAA has given APWM responsibility for Aboriginal ministry but not the financial resources to begin to meet the responsibility. If the current trend continues then a lack of proper financial resources for Aboriginal ministry will bring APWM to a financial halt in as little as four or five years' time. The time to address this problem is now.

Due to the cost of trying to meet our financial responsibilities in Aboriginal ministry, APWM faces not the possible end of APWM's involvement in Aboriginal ministry, but the possible end of APWM's entire mission work including Aboriginal ministry. This could mean the end of our capacity to send people to Vanuatu, Japan, Malawi, Ethiopia, Zambia, Myanmar, Timor Leste, India etc. In the medium term APWM cannot continue to financially support Aboriginal ministry from its existing resources.

One Possible Solution

The GAA could use the Sunday nearest NAIDOC week (begun by Christians) as a day to hold a special collection for APWM's Aboriginal ministry throughout our churches.

B. GRAHAM, Acting Convener

BUSINESS

The committee reports that, once again, efforts to secure a more amenable venue for the Assembly with reasonable accommodation have been difficult. The auditorium of the NSW Teachers' Federation, being adjacent to the Rydges Central Hotel, would be an

excellent venue and an application to hire that auditorium was duly made in July 2018. In an act of overt discrimination, the Federation refused that request with this explanation:

Your request was given full consideration but has been declined as your organisation does not align well with NSW Teachers Federation purpose and policies.

Concerned by the many complaints which have been expressed over at least the last two assemblies concerning the uphill walk to the Chinese Church, the lack of parking and the limited food outlets, the Committee supported the Clerk's suggestion and decided to hold the Assembly at the Hurstville Presbyterian Church.

Hurstville proved adequate for the special assembly held in September 2018. It is served by a major train station and has an abundance of eating places to suit every taste and budget. What it doesn't have, yet, is nearby accommodation. That deficiency will be addressed shortly, when a large Travelodge hotel is constructed in the centre of the CBD, only two minutes walk from the church. The Committee considers that while there will be some inconveniences associated with holding the Assembly at Hurstville, these will be more than offset by the advantages that the Hurstville site offers. While remaining very appreciative of the Chinese Church's hospitality for many years, there was a considerable financial cost in using that facility (\$12,000 in 2016), and the space available to the officers of the Assembly was never satisfactory. As far as members were concerned, once the platform had been installed for the Assembly, movement within the church building was severely restricted and there was no opportunity to cross by the front of the Assembly. The Hurstville church has none of those restrictions. The officers of the Assembly will be able to communicate and work together far more adequately, members of the Assembly will have three aisles (not two) for ingress and egress, and it will be possible to pass across the front of the Assembly making access to microphones far simpler – and without the need to climb a flight of narrow steps. Also, while there is only the most limited parking available at the Hurstville church, there is free, all-day parking in nearby streets requiring only a couple of minutes' walk.

Because of the current lack of accommodation at Hurstville, the Committee intends to house members on a twin-share basis at the Novotel hotel adjacent to Central station. That gives direct access to all major modes of transport: plane, train and coach. It also directly connects to Hurstville station with a travel time between 21-23'. While that is far less than the average Sydney commute, the Committee proposes that the evening sederunts conclude at 8.30 p.m. (not 9.30, as before), thus making it possible for people to be back at their motels (or their homes) earlier than they could have been in the past.

The business coming before this meeting of the Assembly has several elements that are far more complex than some matters considered at previous meetings and the Committee therefore intends to provide accommodation from Monday to Friday nights, inclusive, so that commissioners should plan to travel home on Saturday, 14/9/19 – not before.

Travel and accommodation arrangements, if they are to be funded by the Assembly, should be made through the Church's travel agent and not privately.

Observance of this requirement will significantly relieve the Clerk's workload and be greatly appreciated.

P.J. BARSON, Convener.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Membership:

Since the 2016 meeting of the GAA, the following have been regular members of the committee: Hui Lim (VIC), John Nicol (QLD), Bill Macrae (WA), Alan Clarkson (SA). During this time we farewelled Murray Norman (NSW) & Graeme Roberts (TAS), and welcomed new members: Andrew Vines (Convenor, VIC), David Stone (NSW), Leon Thorpe (NSW),

Dave Philips (NSW) and Andrew Satchell (TAS). We also thank the ex-officio members for their faithful attendance and helpful input.

Our Work, 2017-2019:

Since GAA 2016, our focus has been on a strategic review of the work of the committee (as outlined later in this report). We have also:

- ✓ Made funds available for people to attend PY Internship (NSW), Youth Leadership Conference (QLD), and Engage Youth Ministry Conference (VIC). However, this was not well publicised and so was barely accessed.
- ✓ Set up a web page, listing publications available from the Committee (ce.presbyterian.org.au).
- ✓ Arranged for distribution of resources via the Ministry & Mission office (NSW).
- ✓ Approved the translation of the "Truth Matters" into Chinese by Reformation Translation Fellowship.
- ✓ Received reports on encouraging work happening at State level, including:
 - The expanding YNET youth ministry in QLD.
 - The continuing PY internship program in NSW.
 - Youth camps recently held in SA & WA.
 - "See for Yourself" Kids church material produced in VIC (seeforyourself.com.au).
 - An emphasis on youth leadership training in TAS.
- ✓ Managed the Committee's funds which are now in excess of \$48,000.

The history of the Committee:

As we considered the future of our committee, Rev. David Stone prepared the following report on the early history of Christian Education at a GAA level:

It would seem that at the Federation of the Church there was no GAA Christian Education Standing Committee. However, that soon changed, so that meetings of the GAA in the first 10 years received Reports from a Special Committee on what was happening in the States re. Christian Education. These reports often included references to what paid employees ("missioners") were doing.

For example, in 1908, the Report of the "Religion and Morals and Sabbath Schools Committee" included the following statement: "The Missioners have not spared themselves, but have toiled with extraordinary enthusiasm to bring souls to decisions." Clearly, evangelistic endeavour is being reported on.

It seems that it wasn't until 1909 that a Committee on Evangelism was formed, but it doesn't seem to have continued.

What all this adds up to is that in the early history of the GAA there wasn't the sort of distinction that we might make today between Christian Education and Evangelism.

The Clerk of the GAA also investigated the origin and development of the GAA Christian Education Committee for me, and has provided the following information.

Up until 1926, the State Assemblies each maintained a Committee called the Welfare of Youth Committee, a major responsibility of which was the preparation of a Sunday School curriculum and other resources.

In 1926, an Overture was brought to the Assembly to establish a "Board for the Administration of Welfare of Youth Work", which shall be called the "Board of Religious Education" (GAA BB1926, Min 37). The Overture was sustained and given interim authority, and cursory regulations were defined.

In 1928, these regulations were confirmed, so that the Board of Religious Education was held responsible for the development of a policy and programme of Religious Education covering the whole of the Commonwealth. In the prosecution of that work, it is required to consult the wishes and to enlist the co-operation of the State Departments. The

proprietary rights that the State Departments had in their previously published material were assigned to the Board of Religious Education such that they became assets of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

In 1957, the Board of Religious Education became the Board of Christian Education with the same responsibilities as before.

At some stage the Articles of Agreement must have been changed to include Christian Education in the areas in which the GAA has supremacy [such that the Christian Education Committee is included amongst the Standing Committees].

To this, we can add our appreciation of the strategic role the GAA Christian Education Committee has had since 1977. Many elders and ministers will relate that in the early 1970s they had never so much as seen a copy of the Westminster Confession of Faith, let alone read it. Under the leadership of men such as Bob Thomas (and in more recent years Greg Goswell), the Christian Education committee has been responsible for making such core documents widely available, as well as other Reformed and Evangelical resources. This has helped to shape our church in its current form, and has been an invaluable help to many pastors who have ministered far from any Christian bookshop.

The future of the committee:

As we have reviewed our current situation, we have observed a number of things including:

- The current regulations are not very clear about the purpose of our committee; e.g. in practice, our committee doesn't "supervise Christian Education activity within the State" (refer regulation 4) in any meaningful way - the State Assemblies do this.
- With regard to publications, the internet has made access to international resources of high standard much easier (e.g. The Gospel Coalition), and the emergence of eBooks make self-publishing much more accessible to everyone.

The committee did consider a number of things that could be its focus in the coming years (such as digitisation of its resources), but in the end it came to a realisation that we are a committee looking for a job, rather than a team responding to a pressing kingdom need. And so, as outlined in our deliverance, we propose that the Assembly recognise the good work done in the past and discharge the committee.

As we discussed this, we identified that there are two functions of our committee that would be very important for the GAA to continue:

1. There will continue to be a need for publication of the Westminster Confession of Faith (especially in its Australian form), and other core constitutional documents. We consider that this does not require a standing committee, but could be managed by the GAA Clerk's office (as long as it is adequately resourced).
2. There will still be great value in representatives of the state-based youth ministries and Christian Education departments getting together. One of the weaknesses of our current committee is that many of our members are not directly involved in these state-based ministries and so those actually doing the work are not the ones getting together when we have our meetings. It is our proposal that the Assembly form a special committee consisting of those "at the coal face". The committee would be known as the "Training & Discipleship Committee." We advise that the Assembly take care not to burden already busy people with "extra jobs," but rather to see this committee as an opportunity for members to support each other in doing their current jobs (by encouraging one another, and sharing ideas/resources as is helpful). We consider it worthwhile to formalise this new committee so that as personnel change, the fellowship across states may continue (rather than meetings petering-out once key people retire). Thus, if approved, the purpose of the "Training and Discipleship Committee", as a Special Committee of the GAA would be as follows:

To bring together those working at the state church level in Youth Ministry, Christian Education or equivalent who shall meet for the purpose of:

- i. mutual encouragement,*

- ii. *sharing of ideas and resources,*
- iii. *looking for strategic opportunities for the represented State-based ministries to assist one another,*
- iv. *administering a youth leadership scholarship scheme.*
- v. *bringing the financial needs of state-based ministries to the GAA.*

A. VINES, Convener

CHURCH AND NATION

The Church and Nation Committee seeks to serve the Church by connecting the work of the State Church committees on public issues and ethics and by contributing directly on national issues. The last triennium has provided much to occupy the Committee, especially with the introduction of same sex marriage and the growing pressures on freedom of religion.

Committee Matters

During this triennium, the Committee held face to face meetings in January/February. On each occasion we met for an afternoon and the following morning in order to leave time for full discussion. Each year there have been at least two other phone and/or online meetings.

During the triennium, Darren Middleton resigned from the Committee, and was replaced by Chris Duke, the Convenor of the PCV Church and Nation Committee. Darren served on the Committee for several years, and the Committee records its thanks for his service, specially his leadership as Convenor for six years.

The Committee invited Sheryl Sarkoezy (NSW) and Robyn Bain (QLD) to attend meetings, and in 2019 confirmed them as “consultant advisors” (per the regulations).

Early in the triennium the Moderator-General met with the Committee and there was a useful discussion about how the Committee would advise him. The Committee appreciated being able to work closely with him and, several times, to advise him on public statements.

The Committee has been attempting to audit all current state committee resources and GAA statements relevant to the Committee back to 2000, and to make this accessible by all State committees. This is an ongoing project.

Encouraging engagement

At the 2018 meeting the Committee discussed presentations on cultural and political engagement made by Committee members.

Through most of the twentieth century, the Presbyterian Church had a strong emphasis on social and political issues. By way of illustration, the PCV (1943) and PCNSW (1944) both declared that while the primary task of the church is to proclaim the Gospel there is no hope of “a more Christian social order ... except through the labour and sacrifice of those in whom the Spirit of Christ is active and that the first necessity is Christians taking their full responsibility as citizens for the political, social, and economic system under which they live”(M. Hutchinson, *Iron in Our Blood*, 292-93). Tsai observed that in the 1960s and 70s, in the PCT, the mission of the church was understood to be “confronting affluence and poverty in a united front to save the face of the gospel” (D. Tsai, “Tasmania”, *Burning or Bushed*, 72).

In contrast, during WWII and afterwards, conservative theological positions became more associated with conservative and more ‘quietist’ political views. So, it was “harder and harder for evangelical Presbyterians to hold their biblical faith together with an active social conscience” (Hutchinson, 296). This is parallel to development in American evangelicalism through that period (see R.D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective*, Crossway, 2004). In the years after 1977 there has been a continued tendency for our churches and Assemblies to be relatively uninvolved in social issues generally, and social justice specifically. (This of course is a generalisation for which there are notable exceptions).

Globally, there has been a demonstrable change in thinking among evangelicals and a growing perception that a clear gospel ministry does not preclude cultural and political engagement, and indeed that the gospel *requires* such engagement. This was asserted in

the *The Lausanne Covenant* (1974) and further in *The Cape Town Commitment* (2010). It has been explored by many well-known books (see, for example, T. Keller, *Generous Justice*, 2010; C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, 2006; M.W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*, 2011; Russell Moore, *Onward: Engaging the Culture Without Losing the Gospel*, 2015). Kevin DeYoung, writing for the Gospel Coalition, offers a cautious affirmation that when both terms are understood properly "social justice is certainly a gospel issue" (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/social-justice-gospel-issue/>).

These developments have, of course, drawn criticisms, most prominently the 2018 *Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel* (<https://statementonsocialjustice.com/>). From a very different perspective see the concerns of J.K.A. Smith (*Awaiting the King*, 2017).

The Committee is not seeking to resolve the various debates which inevitably come with questions of social involvement. We are convinced that in a culture in which Christians feel somewhat side-lined, it is imperative that we engage positively and not simply retreat into more comfortable Church and Christian circles.

The Committee hopes that in future years it will be able to encourage the Assembly, and the whole Church, to think more carefully about engagement and to pursue it well. We hope to publish resources which encourage church members to engage as Christians in their vocations as well as politics, media and the arts. There will, inevitably, be different views about how best to engage and we expect lively debate at times about general strategies and particular issues. This debate is welcome if it stirs us to action (with our different strategies).

Markham and Gee Complaint

Starting in August 2017, Rev. Campbell Markham (the minister of Cornerstone Church, Hobart) and David Gee (a member of that congregation) faced action in the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Tribunal following complaints about the content of Mr Markham's blogs and Mr Gee's street preaching, both in reference of the LGBT community. The complaint was ultimately dropped.

The extent of legal costs for Cornerstone Church has not yet been determined but the Committee is concerned that the congregation will be left with significant legal costs. We are also concerned that the church should prepare for possible similar cases in the future. In January 2019 the Committee wrote to the Finance Committee seeking clarity whether Mr Markham is indemnified under Finance Committee Reg. 10 (a). The Finance Committee has referred this to Law Agent and Procurator, and at the date of writing this report we await a reply.

Same sex marriage

In 2017 the Federal government announced a postal survey to discover the opinions of the Australian electorate about changing the definition of marriage in the Marriage Act, so that it included same sex couples. In August 2017 the Moderator-General, with the support of the Committee, sent a pastoral letter to all churches urging them to prayerfully and practically support the "No" case in opposing the redefinition of marriage.

In October the Committee recommended that the Moderator-General prepare a pastoral letter responding to the likely result of the survey. This letter was signed by the Moderators of all State churches. John Wilson and John McClean were overseas when the postal survey result was announced; in their absence, David Burke (Moderator PCNSW) dealt with the few media enquiries.

Ruddock review

In the lead up to the introduction of Same Sex Marriage there was considerable concern about the lack of protection for religious freedom. The Moderator-General and the Convenor provided a letter to Andrew Hastie, MP, expressing the concerns of the Presbyterian Church.

As a result of party room pressure, the Government established the Expert Panel to examine religious freedom protection in Australia (the Ruddock Review). As the Committee prepared a submission for the review on behalf of the Church, we were in the interesting position that Nicholas Aroney, a member of the Committee, was appointed as a member of the review panel. He was absent from meetings when the Committee discussed the particulars of the PCA submission.

The PCA submission urged the Panel to propose recommendations which maximize freedom of religion in Australia and drew attention to a variety of current and likely threats to this freedom. It endorsed the report submitted by Freedom for Faith, though with hesitation about the proposal for a Religious Freedom Commissioner. It affirmed the church's commitment to a general freedom of religion from our Christian convictions and for the good of Australian society. It noted that religion remains a very important element in the cultural life of many Australians, and so there is a demonstrable need to strengthen protection of freedom of religion in Australia. It raised particular concerns in the following areas: freedom of parents to make decisions about educating their children; availability of public space for religious groups; implications of same sex marriage; the function of churches and their agencies, and independent Christian agencies under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, and various Anti-discrimination legislation and the implication of some anti-vilification provisions.

The government released the full Ruddock report in December 2018 (see <https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/HumanRights/Documents/Response-religious-freedom-2018.pdf>). The government accepted all recommendations in principle, but referred five recommendations dealing with religious schools and LGBT students and staff to the Australian Law Reform Commission for review. The government has said that it intends to introduce a Religious Discrimination Bill to provide comprehensive protection against discrimination based on religious belief or activity; establish a standalone position of Freedom of Religion Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission; support the AHRC to increase awareness of the importance of freedom of religion; and work with State and Territory Governments to ensure consistency of freedom of religion. As of the writing of this report, there are no concrete proposals about these steps.

Anti-discrimination legislation debate

In the wake of debate over the Ruddock report in late 2018 the Federal parliament considered a series of bills intended to stop religious schools from discriminating against gay and lesbian students. Christian schools generally affirmed that they would not refuse to enrol or seek to expel gay and lesbian students.

The proposed Bill from Senator Penny Wong went well beyond dealing with enrolment policies. It may have been applied in such a way as to prohibit schools, colleges and other educational bodies, including even church based education, from presenting, advocating and practising traditional Christian views of marriage, gender and sexuality. It may also have stopped schools and other institutions from selecting staff and implementing policies which flowed from religious convictions about the nature of marriage, gender and sexuality.

In the hectic weeks of the debate, the Moderator-General, with the advice of members of the Committee, wrote personally to several political leaders, including the leader of the opposition. This letter was reported in *The Australian* on November 2nd.

Eventually the bill proposed by Penny Wong and the circulated amendments were referred to a Senate Committee.

The Committee made a submission to the Senate Committee, on behalf of the Church, arguing for the retention of the freedom for all religious communities to conduct schooling and other educational activities in ways which reflect the doctrines and traditions of those communities. The submission clarified that the PCA did not seek to protect a right for schools to refuse or terminate enrolment of students on the basis of sexual orientation alone. It warned that the removal of exemptions for religious schools could result in schools facing complaints for policies relating to student sexual behaviour, uniform requirements, provision of bathrooms, changerooms and accommodation, as well as requirements that students attend chapel and take classes which teach classic Christian views of sex, marriage and gender. The submission also warned that the proposed changes would remove protections not only for schools, but potentially also for theological colleges, churches and church teaching ministries. It called for more careful thought and wider community consultation before any changes were introduced and argued that, following the recommendations of the Ruddock inquiry, a positive affirmation and protection of religious freedom in Australia should be inserted into law at the same time as any changes are made to the Sex Discrimination Act.

The Committee was invited to appear on behalf of the Church at the public hearings of the Senate Committee and was represented by Rev. Chris Duke (PCV), Mrs Sheryl Sarkoezy (PCNSW) and the Clerk, Rev. Bruce Meller. They felt that they received a very fair hearing. At the hearing Senators raised some specific cases of claims of discrimination by Presbyterian schools against gay and lesbian students. As far as it was possible to identify these cases, investigations over the next day revealed that the claims were not substantiated. These results were communicated to the Senate Committee.

Freedom for Faith

The Church continues to benefit greatly from the work of Freedom for Faith. The last few years have highlighted the need for a defence of freedom of religion in Australia. The proposed changes to the Sex Discrimination Act (see above) provide a concrete example of the risk there is to the freedom of religious bodies to pursue their mission. State legislation continues to place pressure on religious expression in the public square, as evidenced by the recent action against Campbell Markham and David Gee in Hobart (see above). The ongoing case regarding the termination of employment contract for rugby player Israel Folau demonstrates the threat to freedom of religion in corporate Australia.

In this context, Freedom for Faith makes a vital contribution to the preservation and promotion of religious freedom. It made the leading submission to the Ruddock Inquiry in support of freedom of religion. It successfully draws Christians together to work on the issue and is bringing concerns to the attention of politicians.

The Church was involved in the early development of Freedom for Faith, especially through the work of Rev. David Palmer. Since 2013 we have committed to an annual financial contribution to the work of the organisation. In January 2018, the Finance Committee approved a special payment of \$10,000 to help support the work of Freedom for Faith in relation to the Ruddock inquiry.

Mr Jeof Falls, General Manager of PCNSW and Secretary to the Finance Committee, has joined the Board of Freedom for Faith.

With the agreement of the Business Convenor, the Committee has invited Michael Kellahan, Executive Director of Freedom of Faith, to address the Assembly.

Combined report with Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion

The Committee has been concerned about the lack of clarity which exists for Ministers who are not registered as marriage celebrants under the Marriage Act. The 2016 decision of the Assembly was ambiguous as to their ability to continue to use the marriage rites of the PCA. The notes on the revised Marriage Services produced by PWAD raised the same issue, and so the two Committees agreed to produce a combined report and deliverance dealing with that matter.

Sex, Gender and Marriage statement

In 2018 the NSW Assembly requested its Gospel, Society and Culture Committee to consider how to establish more clearly the church's understanding of a biblical view of anthropology including gender and marriage. This request was raised with the Committee. In the meantime, Sydney Inner West Presbytery requested the Committee to consider the Church adopting the Nashville Statement (see <https://cbmw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/The-Nashville-Statement.pdf>).

The Committee considered these requests and determined that it would present to the Assembly a statement developed specifically for our Church. The Assembly and several State Assemblies have made statements about various issues in relation to sex, gender and marriage over the last decade or so. It seems timely to summarise these into a full statement. Such a statement would provide guidance for Ministers, Sessions and Church institutions both in teaching and pastoral care. It would also provide information and encouragement for church members, many of whom want the Church to state its position decisively. It would provide easy reference for enquiries from people outside our church, especially when representatives of the church are asked about our position on matters of sex, gender and marriage.

Finally, and very importantly, a clear statement of the Church's position, as an implication of Scripture and in consistency with our subordinate Standard, may prove to be an important provision in the case of anti-discrimination complaints. Most anti-discrimination

legislation in Australia provides exemptions when religious bodies act in accordance with their 'doctrine'. The precise terms vary between the legislation in the jurisdictions (for instance the Federal Act refers to 'the doctrines, tenets, beliefs or teachings'). In the case of a complaint, a tribunal or court may seek to determine the doctrine of the Church. Since many of the matters likely to be in contention are not addressed directly in the WCF, it is prudent for the Assembly to provide a summary statement that deals with the full range of relevant issues (as far as we can foresee them) and that applies to the whole Church.

The Committee intends to present the statement as an overture and to ask the Assembly to adopt it as a declaration. Such a declaration would not provide grounds for discipline, though it would indicate the way in which church courts would be likely to interpret Scripture and the Subordinate Standard if there were to be a discipline case over teaching or practice in areas of sex, gender or marriage.

Divorce

In developing the statement on sex, gender and marriage the Committee considered the 1967 declaration on "Guiding Principles concerning the Remarriage of Divorced Persons" (B.B. 1967 Min. 107(3)(a)), which is currently printed in copies of *Constitution, Procedure and Practice*. The statement declares that "no bar should or can be put in the way of ministers accepting any divorce recognised by Australian law as having effectively dissolved the marriage concerned".

This statement was developed before the introduction of the Family Law Act (1975) and no-fault divorce. It was written in a different social situation to that of 21st century Australia and in an era when the Presbyterian Church had a very different theological stance. The Committee believes that it would be prudent to review the 1967 declaration. Our proposal is to write a report to present to a meeting of the Commission of Assembly in 2020 and inviting responses, with the hope of being able to bring recommendations to the next meeting of the General Assembly.

Apology to Victims of Sexual Abuse

Following the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Federal Government established the National Redress Scheme. The scheme allows people who have experienced child sexual abuse in institutions to access counselling and psychological support and a redress payment. Participating institutions agree to provide redress to people as determined by Independent Decision Makers.

It is likely that all of the State churches will have joined the scheme by the time the General Assembly meets. In which case, it would be appropriate for the Assembly to make a public apology on behalf of the entire Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The Committee hopes to be able to consult with appropriate parties in the state churches and to bring a notice of motion to the Assembly proposing an apology.

Committee regulations.

The Committee proposes the following changes to its regulations.

Regulation 10.4.3 allows the Committee to co-opt "consultant advisers" and gives guidance for their qualifications. It is not clear whether such persons are members of the Committee with voting rights. Yet it would seem to be in the power of any Committee to request people to consult or advise it on particular issues. If the Committee could be assisted by having others involved in the full deliberations, then it would be preferable to make them voting members of the Committee provided that they are members of the PCA.

We propose that 10.4.3 be amended as follows.

Non-elected members

The Committee may add up to three (3) non-elected members to the Committee. Such a member should be qualified and gifted to help with the Committee's work and be a Minister, Elder or member of the Presbyterian Church. The Committee shall report to the Assembly any additional members appointed.

Regulation 10.4.4 directs the Committee to elect a Convenor from among its members. This is in conflict with Chapter 9. 3.1 which states that "the convener of each committee shall be elected by the Assembly". In light of the general provision, 10.4.4 should be removed.

The regulations give the Committee a role in issuing statements to, and on behalf of,

the Church, yet the process for making statements could be clarified, along with the permitted aims of such statements. Reg. 10.4.6 (d) allows for statements about “denominational policy/positions and/or considered opinion”, which would naturally include public statements. The allowable aims of such statements are treated in 10.4.7 (a)-(c) and are set out as “equipping Church members and other Christians”, “informing government and other appropriate authorities” and “liaising with others of like mind”.

These aims do not explicitly include public statements, though informing government is a form of public statement. Furthermore, in contemporary life any statement has the potential to become public. It would be appropriate to clarify the power of the Committee to help compose public statements.

There is a convention that the Committee is only to make statements based on previously determined positions of the Assembly. Clearly the current regulations allow far more freedom than this, though they offer no direction to the Committee. Assembly meetings, and even meetings of the Commission of Assembly, are infrequent and costly; and matters often arise on which the Assembly has made no direct determination. It would be appropriate for the Assembly to give the Committee some clear authority to speak for the Church, along with some more explicit guidelines and a basis for accountability to the Assembly.

The third purpose of statements (“liaising with others of like mind”) is not clear, but presumably allows for statements to be made with other persons and bodies.

Further, 10.4.7 (d) and (e) are included in a list of items purportedly about the aims of statements, but in fact deal with the process for authorizing statements. This needs to be rectified.

The Committee requests that **regulation 10.4.7** be redrafted as follows.

10.4.7 Statements:

- (a) Statements may be issued on the Church’s behalf either by General Assembly, or between meetings of the General Assembly by the Moderator-General and/or the Convener or by their nominated representatives. This may include producing a joint statement with other persons or bodies or endorsing a statement prepared by another person or body.
- (b) Such statements may only be issued between meetings of the General Assembly with the authorisation of the Committee. In authorizing a statement, the Committee shall ensure that it is consistent with the doctrinal basis of the Church and any relevant statements of the Assembly, and is likely to reflect a consensus or clear majority position of the Assembly. All such statements are to be reported to the Assembly.
- (c) Any statement by the Moderator-General or the Convener, or any other member of the Church, which is not so authorised must be identified as a personal opinion and not the policy or position of the Church. The Moderator-General, Convener and the Clerk of Assembly shall not issue or sign a statement identifying them by their office without authorisation by the Assembly or, between meetings, by the Committee.
- (d) Statements may be issued with the aim of equipping Church members and other Christians to make an informed contribution to the discussion/debate on issues concerning the nation’s life from a Christian, biblical, reformed position; or of informing government, other authorities and the public of the Church’s position.

Resignations and Nominations

Campbell Markham (Tas), Daniel Combridge (Vic), Nathan Campbell (Qld) and Akos Balogh (NSW) have all indicated that they will not stand for renomination to the Committee. The Committee thanks them for their service over the years they have been members.

The following are nominated for the Committee.

Mrs Robyn Bain (Qld) worked as a medical doctor for several years, is the Convener of the PCQ Gospel in Society Today (GiST) committee, and assists with the teaching of theological ethics at QTC. She has a degree from Moore College, Sydney, has completed postgraduate study in bioethics at USyd and is completing an MA (Theology). Robyn is chair of the annual Brisbane-based GROW Women’s Conference and has worked as the women’s pastor on a church team as well as in student ministry with AFES in NSW. She is a member

of Coorparoo Presbyterian Church.

Prof Nicholas Aroney (Qld) is Professor of Constitutional Law at The University of Queensland and holds positions at several other international Universities. He is widely published in the fields of constitutional law, comparative constitutional law and legal theory. His areas of research include Law and Religion, Islamic Legal Systems, Labour and Employment, Law and Humanities. He is a member of Mitchelton Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Sandy McMillan (NSW) is the minister of Drummoyne Presbyterian Church, having served for over twenty years at St Aidan's Presbyterian Church in the regional city of Wagga Wagga. He has a long-standing interest in justice issues and as Moderator in 2011-2012 he thought more about how the Church can have its voice heard in the public square. He is a member of the Gospel, Society and Culture Committee (GS&C) in NSW.

Mr Peter Christopher (NSW) is an elder at Ashfield-Petersham Church. Peter enjoyed a 40-year career in media, as a reporter, sub-editor, editor, publisher and CEO. After retiring from media in 2013, he was CEO of a medical research foundation for four years. He is a member of the Gospel, Society and Culture Committee (GS&C) in NSW.

Mrs Sheryl Sarkoezy (NSW) is the Researcher and Writer for the Gospel, Society and Culture Committee (GS&C) in NSW and also works for Australian Presbyterian World Mission as the Director's Assistant. She has a degree in applied science and Graduate Diploma in employment relations from UTS, and a Masters of Divinity from Christ College. Sheryl is a member of Redemption Hill Church.

Rev. Chris Duke (Vic) is Convener of the Church and Nation Committee in Victoria. He is the minister of Clifton Hill - Essendon Church Parish. Before training for ministry he was a financial planner and school teacher and he continues an active involvement in Christian Schooling.

Mrs Moira Deeming (Vic) is the researcher for the Church and Nation Committee in Victoria. She has a Bachelor of International Relations and a Post Graduate Diploma in Education and has taught in public and private schools for 12 years. She currently home schools her four children. She has published several articles and was interviewed by various media organisations arguing against the Safe Schools and Doctors in Schools programs. She is a member of the Brimbank Church.

Mr Martin Webb (Tas) has worked as a Laboratory Technician in a Hobart school for the past 35 years, and in recent years has worked part-time as Life and Family Advocate with the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania and Tasmania Research Assistant with FamilyVoice Australia. He is a member of Cornerstone Church in Hobart, Tasmania.

Rev. Gary Ware (SA) serves the Mount Gambier Presbyterian Church as pastor. Prior to that he served in pastoral positions in Queensland and Victoria. He has served the South Australian Presbyterian Church as Moderator, Clerk of Assembly, Clerk of Presbytery, and Convener of numerous Committees. Within the GAA, he has been a member of many Committees, including Code, Relations with Other Churches, Mission to Australia, and Church and Nation.

Rev. Ross Fraser (WA) has been the minister of the Bassendean Church for the last 14 years. He has a passion for the freedoms of religion and speech and the impact of government policies upon society and has been actively involved in Church and nation affairs for many years. He has been regularly involved in Family Voice Australia WA meetings and teaches Christian worldview courses.

Rev. Dr John McClean (Convener)

John is the Vice-Principal of Christ College and teaches theology and ethics. He is interested in Christian engagement in the public square and apologetics as well as a range of ethical issues and has published and taught widely on these topics. He is Convener of the Gospel, Society and Culture Committee (GS&C) in NSW.

J. McCLEAN, Convener

The conduct of wedding services apart from the Marriage Act

The Church and Nation Committee (C&N) and the Public Worship and Aids to Devotion Committee (PWAD) present this common report on the question of the conduct of 'marriages' by Ministers (and others) who are not registered as celebrants under the Marriage Act. It sets out the need for the General Assembly to make some further resolutions about the issue and reviews the current situation and possible options. It recommends that the Assembly (1) request the two committees to deliberate further in the light of the Assembly discussion and return to the Commission of Assembly with fuller recommendations and (2) make an interim request that no officer of the PCA should conduct a "marriage" outside of the Marriage Act.

The current ambiguity

The 2016 General Assembly acknowledged that with the introduction of same sex marriage some Ministers might consider "that they cannot continue to officiate at weddings as they have done in the past" and resolved to "allow individual conscience to dictate whether ministers retain their registration as marriage celebrants". This resolution was ambiguous as to whether such a Minister could use the forms of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to conduct a 'marriage' outside the Marriage Act. It may have been the intention of the framers of the resolution to indicate that a Minister would no longer officiate at weddings at all, but the wording does not make that clear.

The Assembly should clarify whether Ministers and Home Missionaries who are not registered celebrants (henceforth "non-registered Ministers") may offer a service using the rites of the PCA.

Some Ministers have withdrawn as registered Marriage celebrants under the Marriage Act for reasons which make withdrawal a "matter of conscience" (though different ministers would give different reasons for their decision). There are about twenty Ministers who have done so at present.

Further, there may be some couples who seek a "marriage" conducted by a non-registered Minister; though the Committees are not aware of any cases where a Minister has conducted a "marriage" outside the Act.

The legal limitations

The Marriage Act (Section 101) makes it an offence for a person who is not a registered celebrant to solemnise, or purport to solemnise a marriage. There are two views as to the scope of this prohibition. It may be that it applies to any claim to conduct a 'marriage' which is not conducted under the Act or it may simply prohibit any claim to conduct a marriage under the Act by a person who is not a registered celebrant.

The Procurator's view is that because the Marriage Act 40(1) states that it applies "to and in relation to all marriages solemnised, or intended to be solemnised, in Australia", the definition of "marriage" is generic (that is, it applies to any ceremony which might be characterised as marriage).

The Procurator's advice is that a Minister would not be in contravention of the provisions of the Marriage Act if he were to conduct a public ceremony to recognise an exclusive union of a man and a woman for life without making any reference to 'marriage'. In this case the Minister should avoid words such as "I now declare you lawfully married", while making clear that he is not acting under the Marriage Act.

It would be possible to take advantage of the fact that the Marriage Act no longer refers to husband and wife, and for services outside the Act to use the phrase "husband and wife" instead of the word marriage. Such services could "witness the union of husband and wife". The rest of this report will refer to such services, if they were to be permitted in the PCA, as "unions".

For the sake of completeness, it is worth noting that the Marriage Act (Section 113, subsections 5 & 7) permits a religious service to recognise and celebrate a marriage which has previously been solemnised under the Marriage Act or which was conducted overseas and is recognised in Australia. In this case the couple are not to be provided with a certificate which refers to the Act and any document must describe the couple as already married. Many Ministers have conducted such services in the past, and some non-registered Ministers have conducted or intend to conduct such a service.

The options

There are two options available to the Assembly (though each may be open to some variation).

- (a) Allow non-registered Ministers to use the Presbyterian rites to conduct a service which witnesses the union of a husband and wife.
If the Assembly were to allow unions, it would mean that couples would not be considered 'married' under Australian law. At law, they would be in a de facto relationship.
- (b) Allow only Ministers and Home Missionaries who are registered celebrants to use the Presbyterian rites (that is, prohibit the conduct of 'marriages' outside the Act).

The case for allowing unions

Marriage is a divine institution. The historical reason that the Church shared the administration of marriage with the state is that European states recognised the jurisdiction of the Church over marriage. There is no biblical or theological principle which requires the Church to rely on the State to create valid marriages.

In Australia, the State has adopted a definition of marriage which while it includes or permits the biblical view, is certainly not shaped by it. Marriage under Australian law is a union of two persons which may be dissolved by the decision of either partner, not a union of a man and a woman for life. The Church may continue to participate in the civil arrangements, but it is not bound to that.

The principle of Christian freedom implies that the Assembly should recognise the objections of some Ministers and couples to the Marriage Act and allow for unions.

The case for prohibiting ministers to conduct unions outside the Act

Despite this case, there are reasons which might lead the Assembly to prohibit un-registered Ministers from conducting "marriages".

The first argument is that submission to the State requires us to recognise that the Australian Federal Parliament has the right to regulate marriage. This argument seems to cede to the State a right which it does not have. As stated above, marriage is a divine institution which the state cannot redefine. The PCA has continued to state that "marriage is a covenant between a woman and a man", rejecting the claim of the State to introduce a different definition.

It may still be argued that although not required prohibition is a wiser course and expresses appropriate respect for the State and participation in wider society.

There are pastoral concerns which might count against allowing unions. First, while admitting that Christians are not bound to have marriages regulated by the state, such marriages may be an affront to the conscience of some Christians and disruptive to Christian fellowship. While de facto relationships became common in Australia, the PCA has not endorsed this as an appropriate relationship for Christians. The 2010 GAA resolved to "call on all involved in de facto heterosexual, domestic relationships to solemnise those commitments by means of marriage". It may be offensive or confusing for the Church to now accept de facto relationships (albeit under very specific circumstances).

These pastoral concerns are highlighted if we consider the prospect of a couple united outside the Act, moving to a congregation where that has not been practiced (including a congregation of another denomination). If their relationship status became known it might create difficulties.

The Church should be concerned about possible consequences for couples who enter into a union. Under Australian law de facto couples receive almost all the rights and protections granted to married couples. A couple would be wise to receive legal advice about matters such as insurance, superannuation and wills. There are no extra protections from domestic or family abuse or violence for a married person than for a couple who are in a de facto relationship.

There is a pastoral concern regarding the dissolution of such relationships. Under Australian law, a de facto relationship is terminated by either partner informing the other of their decision to end the relationship. The process for dealing with the custody of children is

the same as after a divorce¹, and the process for deciding property arrangements is much the same.² We may wish that Christians be in relationships which were harder to dissolve, though the difference between ending a *de facto* relationship and a divorce is only a matter of twelve months.

Finally, there are church discipline questions about whether someone who ends a *de facto* relationship is considered to be validly 'divorced', and if they are free to remarry (or reunite).

Who may be permitted to conduct a union?

It should also be noted that a consequence of allowing non-registered Ministers to conduct unions may be to open this to any person. At present there is no limitation on anyone offering to conduct a Presbyterian funeral (for instance). A funeral, however, has no implications for church discipline. Since a union changes the standing of a couple in the eyes of the Church, it would preserve order to limit permission to use a service of union to Ministers and Home Missionaries.

Recommendation

The Committees recognise the need for the Church to move carefully in this area.

In the first instance, it would be wise for the Assembly to clarify its position by requesting non-registered ministers to refrain from conducting any 'marriage' outside the Marriage Act, at least in the interim.

The Committees are not convinced that the arguments against unions are decisive. This leads to the recommendation that the Committees consider further the theological, legal and pastoral implications of allowing unions and report to the Commission of Assembly. The Committees may bring a recommendation to allow unions along with a proposed form of service. The Committees would welcome comments from Commissioners and others in the PCA who have an interest in the matter.

J. McCLEAN, C&N Convener
C.S. KROEGER, PWAD Convener

CODE

The Code Committee has met formally four times since the last meeting of the General Assembly. It has also transacted business by email and videoconferences.

Assembly instructions

Your committee has considered the matters referred to it by the Assembly and reports as follows:

Judicial Commission At GAA 2016, Min. 96, the Committee was requested to "consider the establishment of a judicial commission with responsibility to consider, and seek to resolve, disputes addressed to the Assembly as complaints, appeals or petitions, and to report to the next meeting of the Assembly."

After extensive consideration, the Committee resolved to:

- (a) *Advise the Assembly that the formation of a commission of the Assembly in 1997 (Min. 131) has rendered the formation of a judicial commission unnecessary inasmuch as the Commission is comprised of members from all states and can be convened by the Moderator on short notice with power to finalise any matter referred to it by the Moderator.*
- (b) *Recommend to the Assembly that it take no further action to form a judicial commission.*

Reference from GANSW anent eldership At GAA 2016, Min. 68 (2) and (3) the Assembly requested the Committee to

- (2) *undertake a comprehensive investigation of the principles and practices that have informed the Church's understanding of the eldership and report to the next*

¹ See <https://www.ag.gov.au/FamiliesAndMarriage/Families/ChildrenAndFamilyLaw/Pages/default.aspx>

² See <https://www.ag.gov.au/FamiliesAndMarriage/Families/Pages/DeFactoPropertyRegime.aspx>

meeting of the Assembly, having given careful consideration to factors that might have changed through the Church's history; and

- (3) *engage fully with the principals of the recognised theological colleges or their delegates and with the Very Rev. Dr A. Harman in its enquiry and the formulation of any recommendations anent the Church's understanding of the eldership.*

In consultation with members of the NSW Committee on Elders and Deacons, and with Dr Michael Whitelaw (at his request), the Committee considered several discussion papers on this subject and, having reached some degree of maturity in its thinking, then met with the principals of the theological colleges as requested. Their input was very helpful and, after incorporating their insights, and after further interaction with members of the NSW Committee, a revised paper was sent to the Very Rev. Dr A. Harman for review. Dr Harman commented that the revised paper was "very fine work. It sets out the background material so well, and I think explains how we can have certain differences in practice over eldership without having to try and change the constitutional documents." The revised paper now appears as an appendix to this report.

Additional matters considered by the Committee

In addition to the matters specifically referred to it, the Committee has attended to its ongoing responsibilities as reflected in the following observations.

Republication of *Constitution, Procedure and Practice* The Convener reported that he had incorporated all recent amendments into the *Constitution, Procedure and Practice* (CP&P), that he had caused new binders to be prepared (the older stock being almost exhausted), that he had incorporated a comprehensive table of contents and a fully revised and hyper-linked index, and that he recommended that in view of (i) the increasing tendency to source documents online with a consequent reduction in demand for printed copies and (ii) the speed with which printed copies go out of date and become stale, copies of the updated CP&P no longer be commercially printed but that hard copies, if requested, be printed to order. The Committee endorsed that recommendation and approved the online publication of the CP&P as a PDF file. In addition, a corresponding Word file has now been added to the denominational website.

Declaration on the Spiritual Freedom of the Church The Convener presented a discussion paper concerning Ch. 7 of CP&P being the Declaration on the Spiritual Freedom of the Church, the Declaration on the Nobile Officium, and Rules to Give Effect to the Declaration. It was clear that the numbering of the parts of chapter 7 did not accord with the numbering as originally adopted by the GAA in 1910 and 1912 and that the current numbering system was confusing and inconsistent. Accordingly, the Committee resolved to approve the renumbering and notation of the Declaration on the Spiritual Freedom of the Church, the Declaration on the Nobile Officium, and Rules to Give Effect to the Declaration in order more closely to reflect the formatting of these as they were enacted.

Child Protection: administration and discipline The Committee had cause to consider, again, matters pertaining to child protection in their disciplinary and administrative aspects. With the indispensable help of the Law Officers, the Committee prepared new rules for consideration by the Assembly. Those new rules came before a special meeting of the Assembly on 6 September 2018 and were granted interim authority pending Barrier Act procedure. The report on Returns to Remits shows how the presbyteries and state assemblies have responded to these new rules.

Committee Regulations The Committee has, upon request, reviewed proposed changes to the regulations of several committees and has given advice to those committees as required.

Code of Discipline The Code of Discipline (CoD) has seen more use in the last few years than in the previous five decades. Increased use has uncovered several ways by which the CoD might be improved and the Committee has authorised the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the Law Officers to commence work towards a complete revision of the CoD.

Membership

With warm appreciation, the Committee acknowledges the contribution to its work made by Mr Malcolm Beveridge over a period of 12 years. Mr Beveridge is not seeking re-election to the Committee.

The Committee learned with sorrow of the death of the late Clerk of the Queensland Assembly, the Rev. Ron C. Clark, and recorded its appreciation of him and his labour in the following memorial minute.

The Committee noted, with sorrow, the recent death of the Rev. Ron Clark and, thus, his inability to continue his service on this committee. Ron had served the Church in Queensland with distinction as a parish minister, as the Director of Home Missions and Christian Education, and as the Clerk of Assembly. He was repeatedly commissioned to the GAA by the Presbytery of Mowbray or the Queensland Assembly and attended all ordinary meetings of the Assembly held between 1979 and 1997 inclusive. He served at various times on the Beneficiary Fund Committee, the Selection Committee, the PIM Committee and the Christian Education Committee until 2001 when he accepted membership of the Code Committee on which he served diligently until his death. The Committee records its thanks to God and its appreciation of the person and work of his faithful servant.

Ex officio, the Assembly Clerk is the Convener of the Code Committee and the law officers are members together with the Moderator, the Deputy Clerk and the Business Convener. The Committee makes the following nominations for election by the Assembly:

New South Wales (3):	Rev. John Irvin, Rev. Justin Ang
Queensland (2):	Rev. Matthew Viney, Mr Daniel Whitmore
South Australia (1):	Rev. Gary Ware
Tasmania (1):	Rev. Greg Munro
Victoria (2):	Rev. Dr John P. Wilson, Rev. Peter W. Phillips
Western Australia (1):	Mr Bill Macrae

B. MELLER, Convener.

Report concerning Reference (iv) of 2016 from GANSW anent the Eldership

Summary

There is not, and there never has been, one consistent view of the eldership that has been held in common by all Presbyterian or Reformed churches. Debate about the eldership has persisted since the end of the apostolic period. With the development of the monarchical papacy, biblical eldership was obscured until the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Throughout the Reformation, divergent views were held among the reformers but it was generally agreed that the functions of ministers, elders and deacons were to be distinguished from one another even though their responsibilities overlapped in several places. In the early nineteenth century, Samuel Miller, then a lecturer at Princeton, became concerned at the demise of the eldership in America and wrote and spoke extensively about the issue in order to “raise the standard of public sentiment in reference to [the duties incumbent on Ruling Elders so that] they shall be found cordially and diligently co-operating with those who ‘labour in the word and doctrine’.”³ The ensuing debate about the duties and functions of the officers of the church continued for several decades.

Throughout the centuries, the clear thing that Presbyterians have agreed upon is that the Presbyterian form of church government is “founded upon the word of God and agreeable thereto.”

While the Scriptures give strong evidence of God’s intention that his people should be governed by teams of elders acting in a co-operative and conciliar manner, and while the people are to respect those elders and submit to them as those over them in the Lord, there are many details of church governance which may be inferred from Scripture but are not mandated by it (WCF 1.6).

Reflecting this lack of specificity concerning the details of church governance, the

³ Miller, Samuel, *The warrant, nature and duties of the office of the ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church*. Jonathan Leavett, New York, 1831. vi.

practised doctrine of the eldership, as historically held by reformed churches in general and the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA) in particular, is expressed in the Form of Presbyterian Church Government as follows:

*As there were in the Jewish church elders of the people joined with the priests and Levites in the government of the church; so Christ, who hath instituted government, and governors ecclesiastical in the church, hath furnished some in his church, beside the ministers of the word, with gifts for government, and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto, who are to join with the minister in the government of the church. Which officers reformed churches commonly call Elders.*⁴

This paper briefly summarises the progression in ideas of church governance and looks for points of compelling consistency that should be perpetuated within the body of Christ in all places and in all generations, most notably the plurality of biblical leadership; the privileged duty of pastoral care for fellow-believers; the importance of maintaining genuine concern for the welfare of church members and their moral, doctrinal and organisational discipline; and the pre-eminence of teaching according to the Scriptures. The paper concludes with recommendations for the GAA followed by a listing of all of the known places where the General Assembly of Australia (GAA) has considered the issue of the eldership.

Background

By way of background to this paper: in 2015 the NSW General Assembly (GANSW) established a Committee on Elders and Deacons (CED) with responsibility to:

- (a) Provide to the next Assembly a paper presenting the teaching of the Scriptures on the nature and functions of the offices of elder and deacon and examining The Code (PCNSW) in the light of this teaching, and
- (b) Bring recommendations to the NSW General Assembly 2016 designed to clarify the nature and functions of elders and deacons, which recommendations may include possible amendments to The Code which, if adopted, could be sent down to presbyteries for consideration and report to the 2017 General Assembly.⁵

That committee, in 2016, presented the GANSW with two things:

- A paper entitled “Shepherds and Servants” which sought to provide a comprehensive treatment of biblical teaching on elders and deacons, and included an argument for a two-office view of ministry,⁶
- An overture proposing the reordering and rewording of parts of the NSW Code in relation to elders, which overture sought to “clarify and strengthen” that Code on the basis of the teaching of the Scriptures.⁷

In the debate at the NSW Assembly, the “Shepherds and Servants” paper overshadowed the overture and impacted on the NSW Assembly’s consideration of the overture. The NSW Code Committee, anticipating questions that might arise in the Assembly, considered that it would be helpful for the NSW Assembly to have access to an opinion from its Procurator on “the competence of that which is proposed by the overture.” The NSW Code Committee also requested the NSW Procurator to “provide advice on the permissibility of a State Assembly making a statement on a question of doctrine (for example, on the roles, responsibilities and qualifications of an elder, or on sexuality) without referring it first to the GAA in circumstances where the GAA has not made a statement on the same question of doctrine.”

That opinion and advice, dated 29 June 2016, was shared by the NSW Code

⁴ Adopted by the Westminster Assembly in 1647, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government was originally prepared by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1645.

⁵ GANSW BB 2016, Min. 87(2)

⁶ A two-office view asserts that there are only two orders of ministry established by God for the oversight and care of his Church: elders and deacons, ministers being a subset of the order of elders distinguished by the fact that, along with the work of “ruling” over God’s people, they are set apart to “labour in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17, ESV). The paper is accessible at GANSW BB 2016, pp. 99-107.

⁷ GANSW BB 2016, pp. 156-166.

Committee with the Committee on Elders and Deacons.⁸ The CED then submitted a revised overture. In turn, that overture was also referred to the Procurator for further opinion, and that additional opinion, dated 5 July 2016, was made available to the NSW Assembly with its Procurator's earlier advice.

The overture was sustained by the 2016 GANSW, which resolved (Min. 87, in relevant part) to:

- (a) Forward to the GAA as a reference ... the overture, seeking the advice of the GAA as to whether it finds **any objection to the overture due to inconsistencies with the doctrinal position of the Presbyterian Church of Australia**.
- (b) Forward the paper "Summary of Findings: Shepherds and Servants" to the GAA, as an accompanying document to the reference.

The GAA received the reference (containing the overture) on 14 September 2016 (Min. 49). Upon the reference being stated, debate was adjourned so that the GAA might request and receive an opinion from its Procurator (dated 6 September 2016), which it did. Debate being resumed on 15 September, the GAA (at Min. 68) resolved to:

- (1) Advise the General Assembly of New South Wales that:
 - (a) The proposal contained in Reference (iv) may tend towards the imposition of a uniform or exclusive view of the duties and functions of the eldership;
 - (b) The Presbyterian Church of Australia has not, thus far, required a uniform or exclusive view of the duties and functions of the eldership but has allowed a variety of practice;
 - (c) To require an exclusive view on the matter may constitute a restatement of the Church's doctrine and thus invoke the requirements of Section III of the Basis of Union;
 - (d) Inasmuch as any move to require uniformity in this matter may impact on the Church's understanding of its ministry, the GAA claims jurisdiction over the matter pursuant to Article 2.1 of the Articles of Agreement;
 - (e) The Church's doctrine on the eldership is not fully developed and the General Assembly requests that no substantial changes to state Codes in relation to eldership be made until the matter has been further considered within the General Assembly.
- (2) Send the reference to the Code Committee with a request that it **undertake a comprehensive investigation of the principles and practices that have informed the Church's understanding of the eldership** and report to the next meeting of the Assembly, having given **careful consideration to factors that might have changed through the Church's history**.
- (3) Require the Code Committee to engage fully with the principals of the recognised theological colleges or their delegates and with the Very Rev. Dr A. Harman in its enquiry and the formulation of any recommendations anent the Church's understanding of the eldership.

The Code Committee of the GAA now submits this report in consequence, noting that the Committee was not asked specifically to analyse and respond to the paper on "Shepherds and Servants" and although that was considered along with much other material in the preparation of this report, that paper is not in focus in this report.

What principles and practices have informed the Church's understanding of the eldership?

The eldership, as understood in reformed churches, originated in the Old Testament where old men were respected for their age, experience and accumulated wisdom. Elders do not appear in a given moment as a body of men appointed to a familial and governmental role. Rather, they emerge from the pages of Scripture already in that role. So, in Exodus 3:16 Moses was instructed to assemble the (already recognised) "old men" of Israel, tell them

⁸ GANSW BB 2016, pp. 147-153.

about God's dealings with him, and enlist their support in persuading Pharaoh of the need for the Hebrews to go into the desert to worship God. The "old men", when they heard these things, then set an example for the people in their worship (Ex. 4:29). Progressing through the Old Testament the elders helped in the first Passover (Ex. 12:21) as also in offering sacrifices (Lev. 4:13), administering justice (Dt. 19:11-12), arbitrating in family disputes (Dt. 22:13-19), and teaching the Law of God (Dt. 27:1, 31:9-13). The elders assisted Moses and greatly strengthened his ministry as they did with Joshua after Moses' death. They were not, however, consistent in faithful service, and in the days of Samuel, it was the elders who wrongly recommended that the ark of the covenant be carried with the Hebrews as a talisman in their battle with the Philistines (1 Sam.4:3). During the Monarchy, the elders interposed between the people and the king in such an important way that to lose their support was to lose effective kingship (thus in spite of the declaration that God had "torn the kingdom of Israel from him" King Saul still pleaded that Samuel might honour him before the elders (1 Sam. 15:27-30). By contrast, David was made king through the allegiance of the elders (2 Sam. 5:3) and, later, Absalom's rebellion was empowered by the elders (2 Sam 17:4,15). Like the prophets, elders counselled kings (largely on strategic and military matters) (1 Kings 20:7,8) but they could also be deceived and deceive others (1 Kings 21:7-11) for which they were condemned by the prophets (Isa. 3:14; Ezek. 8:11-12, 34:1-5 (where they are referred to as "shepherds of Israel")) and subjected even to the penalty of death (Ezek. 9:6; Lam. 1:19). Those who didn't lose their lives lost hope (Lam. 2:10) and respect (Lam. 4:16). After the return from exile, the elders acted as local leaders and administrators (Ezra 10:8, 14). Their role was central to the functioning of Israel and represented one of the oldest and most fundamental institutions with a place that was nearly as basic as the place of family.

Elders in the OT were official community leaders with functions that were religious, political and judicial and established well before both the Aaronic priesthood and the kingship with which they were not confused. Their functions were always exercised corporately through a council of elders and not by elders working independently.

In the gospels, the elders of Israel are repeatedly criticised for their rejection of Jesus' ministry (Mk 8:31), and for their complicity in plans to kill him (Mk 15:1). While they might have been blinded and wandered into evil, as Israel's elders did before, their sin did not cause the office of the elder to be abandoned by the people or to be eliminated by God. The book of Acts presents a new breed of elders – faithful elders of the church – who assist the apostles by taking care of administrative matters (Acts 11:29-30), teaching God's word to protect his people from false teachers, and guarding them like a shepherd (Acts 20:28-31). Elsewhere they are found ruling over congregations and (again) teaching God's word (1 Tim. 5:17), visiting and praying for the sick (James 5:14-16) as they set an example in godliness, prayer, knowledge of God's word, encouragement, faith, and the outworking of Christian character in the home and community (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:3).⁹

In the OT, the primary word used to refer to the elders was *zqnm* (lit. "old men") which is translated as "elders" in the NIV 121 times but also rendered as "dignitaries", "leaders", "chief" and even "veteran", among other things. But other words, including "shepherd" are occasionally used in reference to the same people. In the NT, the primary word used to refer to the elders is *presbuteros*, (66 occurrences with a primary reference to age but a developed reference to a position of respect and influence among the people – see, also *gerousia*, respecting the wisdom of years), but the word *episkopos* is also used (five times) to reflect the role of elders as "overseers" who watched over, cared for and directed the relational life of the community. The word "shepherd" (*poimen*) is applied to the elders as a noun (Eph. 4:11) and the duty of shepherding God's "flock" (*poimnion*) is imposed with the verb "to shepherd" (*poimainw*) (Acts 20:28), thus continuing the OT function of community-based pastoral care and counsel.

It is apparent that throughout the whole Bible, God has provided oversight, leadership, direction and protection for his people through men acknowledged for their godly wisdom. This provision is so consistent (even acknowledging the serious failures of persons who were

⁹ This overview of eldership within the Bible summarises work done by the Rev. Dr I.K. Smith, Principal of Christ College, and is used with appreciation and with his approval.

recognised as elders), that it is evidenced as part of God's divine order for his church. The more so because the apostles systematically appointed elders even in the most immature church situations and entrusted the welfare of the infant church to them while also instructing their ambassadors (e.g. Timothy and Titus) to "appoint elders in every place" (Tit. 1:5; cf. Acts 14:23) so that the sheep would not be scattered but, rather, be defended against false teaching and the wily deceit so characteristic of the devil.

It has been argued that, given the transitional phase in which the early church found itself in the apostolic period, interpreters need to consider whether the NT describes a developing pattern of church governance which may be subject to further definition after the apostolic period; or, in the alternative, if the NT describes a developed pattern of church governance which is to be continued through time and from which the church has progressively strayed? Against the idea of a developing pattern of church governance, any transitional period would have been short, spanning a period of, possibly, only 40 years. More tellingly, the same pattern of church governance by elders is expressed in Paul's address to the elders at Miletus (Acts 20:17-35) and the writings of both Paul (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9) and Peter (1 Pt 5:1-4). In all of those places elders are presented as men committed to serving the people of God as pastors, teachers, directors and correctors. James likewise affirms the important office of the eldership in prayerful attention to the needs of God's people (Js 5:13). The consistency of these themes in both OT and NT, and the uniformity of NT expectations is consistent with the view that God intends for his people to be supported and protected by elders, and that view is explicitly stated in Acts 20:28 where Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that they are to keep watch over the flock of God "of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (i.e. elders)".

For a variety of reasons, through the history of the Christian church and even amongst the continental reformers, divergent views have been held as to the relationship that should exist between ministers and elders, but it has always been agreed that they work together in complementary partnership, that their responsibilities overlap, that none is independent of the others, and that their diverse work is focused on the pastoral care of God's people who are to be taught, directed, corrected and comforted so that they might become mature servants of God.

To provide an agreed foundation for the harmonious co-operation of reformed churches, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government was approved by the Westminster Assembly in 1645. It recognised that "for the edification of his church, and the perfecting of the saints," Christ had appointed officers for his church some of which were extraordinary ("apostles, evangelists, and prophets, which are ceased"); and others that were "ordinary and perpetual" so as to be continued through time ("pastors, teachers, and other church-governors, and deacons"). The Divines based their statement on Romans 12:8 and 1 Corinthians 12:28 with their recognition of gifts of leadership or governance (*proistemi*) and administration (*kubernesis*) respectively.¹⁰ They avoided drawing hard boundaries around the "offices" established by Christ for his church. The same person, for example, could occupy the offices of pastor and teacher, for example. They were clear, however, in their recognition of a distinction in roles between their four offices, including those of ministers and elders.¹¹

Over the following 200 years the pastoral, teaching, and (particularly) ruling functions of the eldership declined to such a degree in America that Samuel Miller (of Princeton) felt the need to reaffirm the "warrant, nature and duties of the ruling eldership" and to call the church to recognise anew the indispensability and the vital ministry of ruling elders.¹² He did

¹⁰ *Kubernesis* loses so much in translation. "Administration" does not suggest strategic leadership and the capacity to navigate through challenging situations with a calm head and a cool mind but that is its origin. It described the skill of a marine pilot who would chart a course against wind, tide and current, past threatening shores, reefs and hostile people to bring his cargo safely to its intended port. The skilful pilot, the careful mariner, was therefore known as a *kubernetes*. That is the gift that God has given to his church and placed in the hands of his appointed elders.

¹¹ The Basis of Union adopted in 1901 nowhere refers to the number of offices in the Church and the GAA has never made a declaration on that subject.

¹² Miller, Samuel, *The warrant, nature and duties of the office of the ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church*. Jonathan Leavett, New York, 1831.

not see ministers comprising a class of their own, entirely separate from the (ruling) elders. Nor could he agree that ministers and elders were all alike with equal rights to undertake preaching and other functions within the church. Against both of those positions, he saw ministers and (ruling) elders as being of the same class but with distinct (if overlapping) functions to be exercised in harmonious, servant-hearted co-operation. He also, helpfully, expanded the base on which biblical eldership was argued by giving emphasis to the provisions of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

The historic position of the Presbyterian Church of Australia has been to maintain a functional distinction between ministers and elders, as evidenced by the Form of Presbyterian Church Government; the particular functions assigned through State Codes to ministers and not elders; the various Books of Common Order approved for use throughout the Church; the vows taken upon ordination and induction; the practice of dual ordination, distinguishing between elders and ministers and, importantly, the 1939 decision of the GAA that “at the ordination of licentiates, the Moderator and the other Ministers present are the proper persons to take part in the imposition of hands” (GAA BB. 1939, Min. 152).

Thus, the historic doctrine of the eldership is that, while elders are not ministers, it belongs to them to shepherd the congregation which includes the requirement to rule. They establish the standard (i.e. the “measure” or “rule”) by which faith and conduct are to be tested in the congregation. They were responsible to teach, admonish, instruct and guard the people of God entrusted to their care – in short, to maintain personal and organisational discipline– in co-operation with the minister/s of their congregation.

Historically, ministers have been given the primary responsibility for the systematic teaching of the congregation. Trained in an approved course by approved teachers, they have been subjected to trials before being “licensed” to preach the gospel. In some cases, licentiates were then subjected to further trials for ordination. Once approved for ordination to the ministry of word and sacraments, they were expected (and required) to teach according to the Standards of the Church and their accountability to their Presbytery provided a means by which the Presbytery could exercise its jurisdiction over its congregations. Not being required to preach, elders had a less public teaching role, but all elders were expected to have the capacity to teach (normally in less public ways) according to their gifts and opportunities. So, in their pastoral care, they were responsible to provide biblical and pastoral counsel to the members assigned to their care, to catechise them, to correct them if they should err from biblical standards of life or doctrine, and to “inspect” them so that the elders might report to the Session on the preparedness and suitability of communicant members to approach the Lord’s Table.

Thus ministers teach and rule; and elders rule and teach. Teaching has been a part of the duty of elders from the days of Moses. As they adjudicated disputes, as they administered the law, as they counselled people in wisdom, and as they maintained a life-style of personal witness consistent with their social status, they unavoidably taught. This function is explicitly continued in several NT passages, not least in 1 Tim. 3:2 where elders must be “able to teach” and Titus 1:9 where elders must “hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that [they] can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”¹³

The doctrine of eldership as historically embraced within the Presbyterian Church of Australia recognises that elders are “other church governors” appointed to share in the rule (including pastoral care) of particular congregations and allows that, in the pursuit of that mission, there will be a substantial overlap in the responsibilities of ministers and elders so that they function as a team.

Although it might appear to be a three-tiered ministry, there is no NT evidence that the Lord Jesus Christ, in person or by his Holy Spirit, appointed a separate class of people to be, as it were, pastor-priests to a congregation in addition to the elders and deacons. Rather, the biblical evidence is for a team of deacons and also a team of elders, all of the elders ruling

¹³ Within the PCA, “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2) has been interpreted to mean that an elder would have the capacity to give instruction in the Christian faith, not necessarily that all elders must be able to preach (although some might).

and some of them, in accordance with 1 Tim. 5:17, being assigned particular privileges and responsibilities in view of their “double honour”. By convention, those “who labour in the word and teaching” are called “ministers” and within the PCA their particular privileges and responsibilities (subject to the jurisdiction of the Church’s superior courts) include the right to the pulpit and the administration of the sacraments, moderatorship of the Session, chairmanship of the body entrusted with the management of temporal affairs, and superintendency of all agencies of their congregation/s.

What factors informing the Church’s understanding of the eldership have changed through the Church’s history?

The recovery of biblical eldership during and after the Reformation took different forms in different places depending, largely, on the circumstances in which the reformers found themselves. Of greatest significance for the Presbyterian Church of Australia is that, in Geneva, Calvin was particularly conscious of the overlapping roles of the leaders of the congregation and the leaders of the community. This pattern prevailed also in Scotland where the burghers frequently functioned as the governors of their local congregation. It was desired that in each church there be one or more pastor-teachers, a team of governors who would maintain order and discipline over and within the congregation, and another team who would care for the poor and needy members of the congregation.

As the democratisation of society impacted on the Church, particularly in the twentieth century, a number of changes were made in the State churches in the period between the two world wars. The purpose of these changes was to attract to the role of “elder” as church governor, people who had established themselves in business or administration and who might, thus, bring a more business-like approach to the eldership. The expectation that elders would “rule” the church by taking a significant role in the development and discipline of the congregation diminished over time and with that change came a tendency to elect people to the eldership as a mark of honour, because they had provided good service to the church in another capacity, or simply because they lived as outstanding citizens. This resulted in a change to the vows expected of elders. At the same time, diaconal ministry fell out of favour, the Church’s commitment to evangelical orthodoxy was severely challenged, and the government of the Church was increasingly justified on the basis of assumed wisdom rather than being explicitly grounded in Scripture. The democratisation of the Church also resulted in changes to the expectation that elders would be men and in 1967 the General Assembly of Australia agreed to admit women to the eldership (GAA BB. 1967, Min. 131).

After the Church was divided in 1977, the vows required of elders were returned to their earlier form and extensive efforts were made to reinstate a more biblically oriented eldership. The admission of women to the ministry of word and sacraments was discontinued but repeated efforts to reverse the admission of women to the eldership, all proved ineffective. Some State assemblies made changes in their own jurisdiction but changes at the GAA level were resisted, largely on the ground that, while the training of candidates for the ministry and the admission of persons to the ministry are clearly within the domain of the GAA, matters pertaining to the eldership are not doctrinal but governmental in nature and thus outside of the supreme jurisdiction of the GAA.

What is the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA)?

The Presbyterian Church of Australia is (at law) a voluntary association formed in 1901 by the federal union (not merely the confederation), of certain Presbyterian churches then operating in the several states of Australia. Each of the state churches, in agreeing to unite, affirmed themselves as “holding the same doctrine, government, discipline, and form of worship,” whilst “believing that it would be for the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom that they should form one Presbyterian Church ... to be called the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and under authority of Christ alone.”

The doctrine of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, formally so called, is that defined within the Basis of Union at Parts I and II, namely:

- I The Supreme Standard of the united church shall be the Word of God contained

in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

- II The Subordinate Standard of the united church shall be the Westminster Confession of Faith read in the light of the declaratory statement adopted by the Church on 24 July 1901.

This is the uniform and unifying commitment of the Church which, by vow and by subscription to the Formula, all officers of the Church pledge themselves to assert, maintain and defend to the utmost of their power within their station. For the fulfilment of that pledge (and their personal continuance in God-honouring behaviour) they are to be held accountable in terms of the Code of Discipline.

This formal body of doctrine may be amended by processes established in the Basis of Union, but in whatever amended form it may take, the doctrine of the Church will conform to the Basis of Union as mentioned above.

That said, doctrinal **expectations** exist within the Church, even if they have not been established as doctrinal **obligations**, and there is a received heritage within the PCA (and, to varying degrees, within the State churches) that cannot be ignored.

The subsidiary Westminster documents, including the Form of Presbyterial Church Government are a partial representation of that heritage. They may not have legislative authority within the PCA, but they have residual currency, as does the legacy expressed in the First and Second Books of Discipline. They are not definitive, but they have been formative, and they need to be considered in any comprehensive engagement to work through challenging questions.

If the GAA has supreme authority in matters of doctrine, what capacity exists for state churches to enunciate doctrine/s?

The GAA has legislative, administrative and judicial powers which are supreme with respect to the doctrine of the Church and other matters prescribed in Article 2 of the Articles of Agreement. Supreme power, however, is not exclusive power. It is competent for other bodies within the Church to make statements in relation to doctrine, provided that they do not contradict any determination made by the GAA and further provided that any such statement is subject to revision and, if necessary, replacement by the GAA in the normal course of the Church's operations.

How is doctrine enunciated in areas where the GAA has not spoken?

There will always be questions (of doctrine and otherwise) concerning matters in which the GAA has not exercised its supreme authority. That may be because a particular question has not come before the GAA. It might also be because the GAA, after considering a matter, has determined not to exercise its supreme authority.

For example, it might send a reference back to the court from which it originated and leave it to that body to decide on an appropriate outcome. Alternatively, it might issue a statement of opinion or advice, rather than a direction. Again, it might deliberately leave a question open so that a range of positions might be held within the Church on a non-exclusive basis, determining, by such action, that it is undesirable for Christian liberty to be entrained beyond what is necessary.

Inasmuch as the Church allows liberty of opinion on matters not essential to the doctrine taught within the subordinate standard,¹⁴ and guards against the abuse of this liberty to the injury of its unity and peace, it may need to act to proscribe the bounds of liberty on some occasions and to protect the exercise of liberty (within proper bounds) on other occasions if endeavours were made to curtail those liberties by particular requirements on matters deemed by the GAA to be of secondary importance.

In relation to the matter of eldership, by not making prescriptive doctrinal statements, the GAA appears to have made a positive decision to keep the field open for a variety of positions to be adopted by state assemblies, provided that the functional distinction between ministers and elders is preserved.

¹⁴ Declaratory Statement, section 5.

What is the PCA's doctrine of the eldership?

Notwithstanding that the professed doctrine of the PCA is expressed in its subordinate standard, there exists also a practised doctrine as mentioned above. Such a practised doctrine might be held explicitly, implicitly or tacitly but it is the explicit form which must be relied upon in the determination of controversial questions.

Tacit agreements, by their nature, may not be conscious and cannot be recorded. Implicit agreements may be discussed but not formally defined, being understood by implication rather than specification. For the purposes of the question before us, we must deal with what is explicit, and such statements concerning the doctrine of the eldership are found in various places, including (by way of example):

- The First and Second Books of Discipline (more particularly the latter, reflecting, as it does, a more developed form of presbyterial governance) and in which, for example, are statements to the effect that "it is not necessary for all elders to be teachers of the Word, albeit the chief ought to be so" and yet "their office is, as well severally as conjointly, to watch diligently upon the flock committed to their charge, both publicly and privately, that no corruption of religion or manners enter therein"; that the "Elders should be careful in seeking the fruit" of Biblical teaching; that they should "assist the Pastor in examination of them that come to the Lord's table", "cause the Acts of Assembly ... to be put into execution carefully" and "be diligent in admonishing all men of their duty according to the rule of the Gospel". It is worthy of note that none of these later duties may be performed without some element of teaching.
- The several Books of Common Order that have been used (and authorised for use in the PCA) where the words of the Form of Presbyterial Church Government are used systematically in services for the ordination or induction of elders.¹⁵
- The Codes of the state churches, all of which have explicit statements of the qualifications and expectations of elders, and which implicitly connote elements of the church's doctrine, as do rules relating to the manner of election.
- The vows to be taken by elders and the Formula to be subscribed.

It becomes apparent that the practiced doctrine of the PCA is expressed in many and various ways and these are not uniform across all state churches. What is uniform is that elders are not identified with ministers of the word and sacraments but perform a different function in the life of the congregation as they work with the minister to protect the corporate and individual welfare of the members of the congregation and promote the spiritual maturity of each member. They are neither pastor-teachers nor deacons but govern and guard the Church as the bride of Christ.

What is the difference between matters of doctrine and government?

In 1997, at Min. 59, the GAA determined that the issue of the eldership "is not one of the doctrine of the Church as found in the Westminster Confession of Faith (read in the light of the Declaratory Statement), but of government of the Church as found in the Form of Presbyterial Church Government."¹⁶

The difference is more easily observed than defined. The doctrine of the Church will drive certain practices to be adopted in the Church. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity will drive worship to be directed to the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit; the doctrine of the sacraments will prevent the recognition of any sacrament other than baptism and the Lords' Supper; the doctrine of election will drive the Church to evangelism. Doctrine drives practice and provides a foundation on which those practices can be

¹⁵ Note the inclusion of teaching among the duties of elders recognised in the Church's approved service for the ordination and induction of elders – see *Worship: the book of common order of the Presbyterian Church of Australia*, Presbyterian Church of Australia: Sydney, 1998, 100

¹⁶ For a review of the difference between the doctrine of the Church and the government of the Church, refer to the Law Agent's speech to the GAA commencing on GAA BB 1997, 138.

perpetuated and regulated – in other words, governed. Government is informed by doctrine, but it cannot drive doctrine.

The PCA believes – and its officers avow – that the Form of Presbyterian Church Government is “founded upon the Word of God and agreeable thereto” but some who make that affirmation want to say more than that our form of government is “agreeable”. They assert that it is mandated from heaven so that it is not only permissible under Scripture, but required by Scripture. Presbyterians have struggled with this question for so long that we are unlikely ever to find uniformity on this point. We lack agreement in this area and so are unable to embrace a particular understanding as expressive of the Church’s doctrine. Nevertheless, before we allow any persons to sign the formula, we require them to promise that, “through the grace of God, [they] will firmly and constantly adhere to [the Presbyterian form of church government], and to the utmost of [their] power, in [their] station, assert, maintain and defend the same.”¹⁷ That is to say more than that it is merely permissible. It is defensible and must be asserted and maintained with diligent vigour.

When this pledge is made, any breach of it becomes actionable by way of discipline but not because it is contained within the Church’s doctrine. Rather the cause of action lies in the person’s promise to embrace a particular system of governance.

But if eldership is entirely a matter of governance alone such that all decisions relating to it are reserved to State Assemblies, how is it that in 1901-02 the GAA determined the promises to be made by elders, including the promise to adhere to and promote the presbyterian form of church government?¹⁸ Clearly the Church as a whole has looked to the GAA to make authoritative pronouncements in these areas that impact fundamentally on its overall governance. And it must. Consider what would happen to the Church if elders in some states were regarded as a “board of directors” or, say, “ecclesiastical postmen” with no expectation of theological development, while elders in other states were expected, in terms of the 2nd Book of Discipline, to “be careful to seek the fruit of the [preached word] in the people.” If some elders were expected to have spiritual discernment sufficient to equip them to teach God’s word (but not, necessarily, to preach), while others were not expected to be theologically developed, and yet both share the same authority as ministers in the courts of the Church where doctrinal questions are touched upon and determined, how quickly the Church’s doctrine and practice could be completely corrupted. The colonial/state churches that united to form the PCA saw themselves as holding the same system of governance and so it was not improper for them to have the GAA determine those issues of deep and common concern – such as the nature of eldership and the commitments expected and required of those who would be elders. While doctrine and governance were distinguished, and the GAA was given supremacy in doctrine but not governance, nevertheless, the uniting churches looked to the GAA to set common standards. No state proceeded alone to admit women to the eldership. They waited until the GAA had determined, in 1967, that such an admission was permissible.

Governance and doctrine are not so distinct that they can be dealt with in isolation from one another.

How can the GAA speak into a matter of government

If eldership is a matter of government, does that mean that all matters concerning elders (including questions of “order/office”) are subject only to the authority of their state assembly, or does the state assembly’s authority only relate to some areas of governance such as the functions, qualifications (including gender), manner/s of election and terms of service, expected and required of elders?

The GAA clearly has authority to determine questions that impact on its understanding of the ministry of word and sacraments and admission thereto (Article 2.1). Where another matter, such as the nature and functions of the eldership, intersects with the Church’s doctrine of the ministry of word and sacraments, the GAA has authority to determine the

¹⁷ Ordination vow (iv) required of all ministers, licentiates, deacons/deaconesses, elders and persons set apart for full-time appointments to professorial and teaching roles within those colleges run by the Presbyterian Church.

¹⁸ The GAA also amended the questions to be asked of elders in 1926-28, with no state challenging its authority to do so.

Church's response to those points of intersection. That is what the Procurator was at pains to point out in each of the three opinions made available to the GAA in 2016 which built on and were congruent with his opinions in 2009-10 and the Law Agent's advice to the GAA in 1997.

Appendix

Consideration of Eldership by the GAA

Since 1901, the General Assembly of Australia (GAA) has considered issues relating to the eldership in:

- 1901 & 1902 - Questions to be asked of elders in accordance with the Formula.
- 1926 & 1928 - Revision of the Formula to be signed, and questions to be asked of, elders.
- 1930 Rejection of overture to remove life tenure for elders.
- 1939 Determination that only ministers should participate in the ordination of licentiates (Overture 7 from GAV, p. 114), Min. 152.
- 1959 GAV Overture to admit women to eldership sustained and remitted for approval: Min. 137.
- 1962 GAV Overture failed to obtain necessary approvals and lapsed: Min. 136
Committee established on Service of Laity (CSL).
- 1964 CSL reported on women in eldership (p. 203) noting that "in Australia there is a great diversity of opinion about the nature of the office [of eldership] and its relation to that of the Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Until the Church in Australia has a definite doctrine of the eldership, it would seem wise not to finalise the question of the admission of women to it."

At Min. 153(2) the Committee was instructed to "examine further the doctrine of the Eldership, with a view to bringing to the next Assembly a definitive statement on the matter."

- 1967 CSL reported (p. 182) and reproduced part of a report from the Church of Scotland (CoS) establishing the origins of the eldership. That CoS report concluded that "*there is no clear Biblical evidence for the title 'Elder' as we know it today. This is not to say that there is no Biblical warrant for the office. There is evidence in the New Testament of officials of the Church who did just what our Elders do today. These were the Deacons. ... the best evidence for the Eldership is found in the teaching about Deacons.*"

The CSL report also asserted that "*although the Presbyterian Church of Australia has not explicitly approved the Westminster Form of Presbyterian Church Government, as has the Church of Scotland, it is quite clear that, in authorizing the use of its own Book of Common Order, in which is contained the Order for the Ordination and/or Induction of Elders, this Church has approved the doctrine of the Eldership set forth therein as being consistent with the Supreme Standard and the Subordinate Standard.*"

The CSL was (re)appointed with the following members: Rev. A. Smart (Convener), M.O. Fox, Prof. Crawford Miller, J.D. Moody, W.S. McPheat, R.M. Robinson, J. Thomson, Dr W.G. Kirchner, Dr A.R.M. Langley; Messrs R.F. Smart, A.G. Spalding, J.E. Sticpewich; Misses M. Chia, J. Humphreys, F. Whitlam; Mesdames C.R. Ford, J.F. McKay, J.R. Thorburn; and was instructed (Min. 58) to "continue its studies on the function of the Eldership and to report thereupon to the next Assembly;" "continue investigation of the question of women in the ministry;" and "examine the nature of the office of the deaconess in the Church ..."

Without further considering the issue of the eldership, the CSL presented an Overture (13) (p. 207) which asserted that the Church "holds the doctrine of the Eldership as set forth in the Westminster Form of Presbyterian (sic) Church Government, under the heading 'Other Church Governors'" and on that basis proposed that "the Eldership is a service within the Church which can be performed appropriately by men and women alike."

At Min. 131 the GAA adopted the recommendations of the SCL Overture and permitted women to be admitted to the eldership (without any input from state Assemblies or

Presbyteries under Barrier act procedure, which was quite contrary to its practice in 1959 (see above)).

- 1970 CSL discontinued consideration of the **doctrine** of the eldership (believing that that question had been resolved by the GAA in 1967 in terms of the Form of Presbyterian Church Government) and reported that “restatement and reinterpretation of the **function** of the eldership is one of the pressing problems facing the Church.” (p. 200)

Significantly, the SCL report said, “*we may spend our time in debating the historical roots. Or we can look to the future and try to make this form of ministry more effective. The Committee takes the point of view that the eldership in Australia should not have to be an exact imitation of what suited the Scottish scene, for instance. We ought to be reorienting our ideas of the eldership in accord with the outlook of Professor G.D. Henderson: ‘It is a great institution worth preserving, worth promoting, worth improving.’*”

At Min. 102, the GAA resolved (among other things) to:

3. Declare that the place of the elder in history and Scripture warrants the retention within the structure of the church of the function and title of elder.
4. Declare that the general function of the elder within the Presbyterian Church of Australia is:
 - (a) to join with the minister in oversight and government of the congregational life by a dedicated and sustained commitment to the work of the session,
 - (b) to set a personal example of leadership by active participation in worship and Christian fellowship and through the pastoral and teaching and mission programmes of the Church,
 - (c) to serve in the community as a Christian,
 - (d) to share responsibility in the government of the Church in Presbyteries, Synods and General Assembly when commissioned to do so.

The CSL was instructed to continue its consideration of the eldership (as it was, again, in 1974) but the formation of the Uniting Church saw no further consideration of this subject for some time.

- 1982 GAQ Overture seeking reversal of 1967 decision to admit women to the eldership (p. 67) was not sustained (66 for:80 against). A motion to appoint a committee to “study the whole question of the ministry of women within the PCA” was declared incompetent (Min. 73).
- 1997 Admission of women to the eldership was declared to be “an issue of government” reflecting “*the historic distinction in the Westminster Documents of doctrine, government, discipline and form or worship as referred to in the preamble to the Basis of Union, the issue is not one of the doctrine of the Church as found in the Westminster Confession of Faith (read in the light of the Declaratory Statement), but of government of the Church as found in the Form of Presbyterian (sic) Church Government.*” (Min. 59)

A GAV Overture seeking to have women excluded from the eldership (p. 116) was determined to be incompetent. (Min. 66)

An important speech by the Law Agent was inscribed in the minutes. (p. 138)

- 2001 GANSW Overture to permit elders in special pastoral appointments to administer sacraments (p. 77) was sustained and remitted under barrier act procedure. (Min. 42)
- 2004 CP&P amended to permit elders in special pastoral appointments to administer sacraments. (Min. 155(2))
- 2007 Overture from Presbytery of Sydney South to exclude women from eldership (p.81) was transmitted to the GAA by GANSW. It was stated, sustained, and remitted under barrier act procedure, with the Procurator asked to provide an opinion on the legitimacy of the overture to GAA in 2010. (Mins. 74, 82)
- 2010 Procurator advised (pp.129-140) that the 2007 overture was “incompetent and invalid and was invalidly sustained and remitted by GAA 2007.” Critically, it ignored the requirements for amending the Basis of Union, and it conflated two issues that should have been considered separately: a grant of power and the application of that power.

- Accordingly, the overture, when reconsidered in 2010, was dismissed. (Min. 18(1))
- 2016 Reference from GANSW (pp. 78-80) asking whether the GAA “finds any objection to the overture [which gave rise to, and was transmitted with the reference] due to inconsistencies with the doctrinal position of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.” At Min. 49, two statements of opinion from the Procurator on this matter and tendered to the GANSW 2016 were received by the GAA together with a third statement prepared for the GAA: (i) an original statement dated 29/6/16 (pp. 65-68); (ii) a supplementary statement also dated 29/6/16 (pp. 69-74); (iii) a further statement dated 5/7/16. (pp. 75-78) These expanded upon the Procurators advice dated 29/6/2009 and received by the GAA in 2010 as above.

BRUCE MELLER, Convener

COLLEGE

The College Committee is delegated by the General Assembly to monitor and enhance the course of training for candidates. The Principals and staff of our three theological colleges, the conveners of state committees and the Assembly officers represent a diversity of gifts and outlooks and work well together in implementing the tasks assigned to the Committee. The Committee has continued its pattern of meeting annually on the second Monday of May as this suits the busy schedules of college staff in February with the orientation of new students and the start of the academic year. The Committee does not oversee the managerial governance of our theological colleges. Such jurisdiction falls under the respective state assemblies. One of the major functions of the College Committee is to determine the Course of Training for ordination to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. It therefore oversees the respective state syllabi, it grades candidates and it grants exit certificates upon completion of the Course.

Composition of the College Committee

The composition of the College Committee was adjusted by the 2016 GAA (Minute 18), wherein the General Assembly determined that the College Committee would be comprised as follows:

- (a) A convener elected by and from the members of the Committee.
- (b) The Convener of the state committee on theological education from the assemblies in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia.
- (c) The principals of the theological colleges operated by the state assemblies of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria.
- (d) Two members of the faculty of each of the colleges listed in (c) who shall be elected by the relevant faculty.
- (e) The officers of the Assembly ex officio.

This streamlined committee is functioning effectively and continues to represent a range of interests and perspectives.

Candidates

Since the 2016 meeting of the GAA, 60 candidates for the ministry and one deaconess candidate have completed their courses of study. Details of ministry candidates exiting over the past triennium are as follows:

	NSW	Qld	SA	Tas	Vic	WA
2016	8	4	0	1	4	0
2017	9	2	0	0	8	0
2018	12	7	0	0	5	0

One deaconess candidate exited at the end of 2018.

There are currently (13 May 2019) 57 ministry candidates and 4 deaconess candidates in the course of training.

Exit Thesis

In the wake of the decision of the 2013 GAA (Minute 35) to delete Clause 10(b) from the College Committee regulations, thus removing the requirement for an exit thesis, the College Committee has acted to ensure that the training provided by each of the colleges includes at least one unit whereby all candidates (whether studying at masters or bachelors level) are required to study a project, capstone or tailored unit that has an integrative aspect.

Grading Sub Committee

The Grading Sub Committee of the College Committee looks at cross-credits for candidates who have done formal relevant study, prior to entering the Course of Training. Candidates who have previously studied at Moore Theological College or another institution within the Australian College of Theology can anticipate any cross-credits through the cross-credit forms that are on the websites of each of the PCA theological colleges. This form also outlines the syllabus for the Course of Training in each state. Any cross-credit for other candidates, or for Reception of Ministers candidates, is determined on a case-by-case basis by the Grading Sub-Committee.

Western Australia

The GAA has granted approval for candidates from Western Australia to undertake studies at Trinity Theological College, Perth, subject to the continued approval of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Western Australia and the annual approval of a full curriculum by the College Committee. This training is under the oversight of the Faculty of the Presbyterian Theological College of Victoria. These conditions continue to be met, and the Committee recommends a further approval. In the last triennium, there has been no candidate from Western Australia undertaking this path.

Since the 2016 GAA, the College Committee, through the Faculty of the Presbyterian Theological College of Victoria, has continued to sponsor visits to Western Australia as a means of encouragement and support to one of our struggling states.

Report to GAA on Paedocommunion

The 2016 GAA requested the College Committee to: (a) Survey all presbyteries in Australia as to how many of their congregation practice paedocommunion. (b) Investigate the position and policy of other Presbyterian Churches throughout the world. (c) Explore the biblical, theological, historical and pastoral implications of the issue. (d) Bring to the next GAA recommendations as to what our own policy and practice should be. It was resolved to appoint Wesley Redgen, Mark Baddeley and Andrew Bain (Convener) to bring a report including (a) a survey of all presbyteries in Australia as to how many of their congregation practice paedocommunion; (b) an investigation of the position and policy of other Presbyterian Churches throughout the world; and (c) an exploration of the biblical, theological, historical and pastoral implications of the issue. It was resolved to forward the full report, the recommendations and the survey of presbyteries to the GAA that includes suggested Assembly resolutions.

Report on Eschatology and the millennium

The 2016 GAA, at Min. 217(8), Reference (i) From the Presbytery of Western Australia asking the GAA to express an opinion on whether the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches or excludes particular views on eschatology and the millennium. The Rev. B.M. Meller moved: That the Assembly: Refer Reference (i) to the College Committee for consideration and report, with recommendations to be brought to the next meeting of the Assembly. It was resolved to appoint John McClean (Convener) and Jared Hood to bring a report on whether the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches or excludes particular views on eschatology and the millennium. It was resolved to forward the report to the GAA.

Deaconess training

It is pleasing to see an increase in women opting for deaconess training. It was resolved at the meeting of the College Committee in May 2019 to request the Christ College Faculty to report as to whether there should be national standard for Deaconess training, the best name for this role and a proposed course structure.

Online education

Due to concerns that online theological education would not adequately form candidates' studies for the ministry, it was resolved (May 2019) as follows:

1. In relation to the approved courses of study for candidates for the ministry, at least 50% of the total course of study must be delivered in weekly classroom mode.
2. In relation to the approved courses of study for candidates for the ministry, at least 85% of the total course of study must be taken in face-to-face mode.
3. Where a student enters the candidates' course having already completed a qualification for which they are eligible to be granted credit into the candidates' course, credit equivalent to no more than 50% of the candidates' course in total shall be granted for any studies completed online and/or in intensive mode. Whatever the amount of credit that is granted, at least 50% of the student's total four-year course (credit granted + further studies at a PCA College), is to be completed in weekly-attendance (classroom) mode (i.e. at least two years full-time, or part-time equivalent).
4. In relation to the situation above, the grading subcommittee be empowered to make exceptions on application by the candidate.
5. Christ College, PTCV, and QTC include the substance of the above four motions in their Candidates Course & Cross Credit Checklist Documents and take other reasonable steps to ensure that prospective candidates are aware of these requirements.

College Visitation

Each triennium, the College Committee undertakes a visitation of one of the three theological colleges of the PCA. During the present triennium, the College Committee conducted a (delayed) visitation to Christ College, Sydney in 2016. The visitation committee was comprised of the Rev. Dr Gary Millar (Principal, QTC), the Rev. Peter Hastie (Principal, PTC), and the Rev. Alistair Bain (Convener, TEC, Tasmania).

Theology Conferences

Following the successful theology conferences involving staff and students from our theological colleges in 2009 and 2013, another theology conference took place at QTC Brisbane on 12-14 September 2017 on the theme: "Beyond 500 - the future of Reformed Christianity in Australia". The next conference is scheduled for 2020 in Sydney.

The Whyte Trust

The Trustees in 2016 approved the distribution of the annual income of The Whyte Trust along with the corpus of the Capital over a period of ten years (Initial Capital amount being \$959,511.05). The distribution to each of the State Colleges is based on the number of candidates (including deaconesses) studying at each college as reported to the College Committee at its annual meeting.

Appendix: eschatology and the millennium in the WCF

The College Committee was directed by the GAA to report on the reference from the Presbytery of Western Australia asking the Assembly to express an opinion on whether the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches or excludes particular views on eschatology and the millennium.

The reference does not specify which views are of concern to the Presbytery, and there was no explanation given to the Assembly. So, the Committee has considered a range of possible views, relating mainly to the millennium.

The Committee has been asked to comment on the position of the Confession (and presumably the doctrinal position of the PCA). Hence, this report does not deal with the biblical basis for the Confessional position. We direct interested readers to the following for expositions of the biblical material which shows the basis for the confessional position.

- C. P. Venema, *The Promise of the Future* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000), 79 folio Bomberg edition of 1518 folio Bomberg edition of 1518 –109.
- K. Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

Definition

The Millennium is the 1000-year era in which Christ and the martyrs will reign on earth (Rev. 20:4). This may be interpreted quite literally as involving the physical presence of Christ and resurrected believers ruling for 1000 years, or as a period of triumph for the gospel and restoration of the church, or it may be understood as a description of the current age when Christ rules in heavenly session and believers share with him in that (Eph. 2:6).

The background to the WCF

Although some in the early church (Papias, Justin, the Montanists, Tertullian) held a millennial view, the majority view came to be that of Origen, Tyconius, and Augustine that the millennium is the reign of Christ through the Church between his first and second comings (*Civ. Dei* 20.6–7).¹⁹ In the medieval church, the millennial period was often taken to equate to the rise of Christianity, or of Christendom. This was the position inherited and affirmed by the magisterial Reformation.²⁰

However, Puritanism and Reformed thought on the Continent saw a rise of millenarianism. Jue suggests that this was due to an exegetical tension: the Reformers inherited the traditional historicist view that the millennium was the Christian era which had now passed (in AD 1000 or 1300), but also held that the papacy was the anti-Christ which had arisen during the millennial period. The religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries only increased this conviction. In 1627, the German Johann Heinrich Alsted, and Joseph Mede, a fellow at Christ's College Cambridge, both published works with a millenarian view, and these had a major influence on the eschatology of the Puritans.²¹

Hence the Westminster Assembly was written during a period of considerable eschatological speculation. The Scottish commissioner Robert Ballie (1599–1662) complained that many of the English members of Assembly were millenarians, especially Thomas Goodwin and Jeremiah Burroughes. The momentous events of British History in the 1640s encouraged this speculation. Goodwin wrote in his Exposition of Revelation that he expected the conversion of the Jews in 1650 or 1665, the fall of the Antichrist in 1666, and the physical resurrection of the saints before the millennium. Ballie himself looked forward to the 'repair of Zion' and thought that the 'day of vengeance upon the Antichrist' was not far off. George Gillespie preached to parliament in 1644 that the prophecy of the rebuilt temple in Ezekiel looked to an age of righteousness and 'later day glory'—and suggested that the fulfilment may be dated in 1643 (i.e. the calling of the Assembly!). Others in the Assembly, such as Alexander Henderson, opposed millennialism. There were also more radical eschatologies being espoused outside the bounds of the Assembly.

The Confession

It is notable that in this context the WCF is very restrained in its affirmations about eschatology. Gribben observes, 'Puritan confessions repeatedly refuse to endorse the radical eschatologies defended in the individual writings of some of the very theologians who composed them... puritan expositors showed themselves more open to rehabilitating the patristic millenarian tradition — but, remarkably, never in their confessions.'²²

The Confession presents a profoundly Christological exposition of salvation and hence of eschatology. Christ is the one in whom all God's purposes are worked out, especially those of redemption (8:1), so he is 'the Mediator' and 'the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Saviour of His Church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world'. The exposition of the historical work of Christ ends with the fact that he 'shall return, to judge men and angels, at the end of the world' (8:4). All the eschatology of the WCF is based on the person and work of Christ.

The Confession itself does not have any references to a millennial hope. Other Westminster documents — *The Directory of Public Worship* and the *Larger Catechism* —

¹⁹ The commonly repeated claim that the 431 Council of Ephesus condemned belief in an earthly millennium does not seem to be true. See M. J. Svigel, 'The phantom heresy: Did the council of Ephesus (431) condemn chiliasm?' *Trinity Journal* 24.1 (2003): 105–112.

²⁰ E.g. Calvin, *Inst* 3.25.5.

²¹ J. K. Jue, 'Puritan Millenarianism in Old and New England', *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, J. Coffey and P.C. H. Lim, eds (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 262.

²² C. Gribben, 'The Eschatology of the Puritan Confessions' *SBET* 20/1 (Spring, 2002): 78.

echo something of the content of the millennial hope in the context of prayer. *The Directory* advises that the prayer before the sermon should include petitions for 'the propagation of the gospel and kingdom of Christ to all nations... the conversion of the Jews, the fullness of the Gentiles, the fall of Antichrist... the deliverance of the distressed churches abroad from the tyranny of the antichristian faction, and from the cruel oppressions and blasphemies of the Turk' as well as 'the blessing of God upon the reformed churches, especially upon the churches and kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland'. Similarly, Q. 191 of *the Larger Catechism* considers that petition 'Thy kingdom come' as a plea that 'the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate: that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed, and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted: that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him forever'. These are prayers for the changes that many in the Assembly expected with the millennial reign of Christ and that they hoped were not far off. They do not, however, assert if or when these prayers would be answered; and the Confession itself has no parallel material.

It is worth noting the contrast with the 1658 Savoy Declaration, which is based on the Confession. It adds a section to Ch 26 on the church, which affirms an expectation that

... in the latter days, antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged, and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition than they have enjoyed.

The Confession takes up the return of Christ at the end and states that this will be the time of the general resurrection (32:2–3) and the day of judgement (33:1). Thus, the Confession does not posit any time gap between the return of Christ, the general resurrection and the final judgement. Indeed, it assumes that each of these events will take place on 'a day'. This contrasts with premillennial schema, which hold that the millennium (understood literally or metaphorically) intervenes between the return of Christ and the final judgement.

The Confession more clearly disagrees with a dispensational millennial view which holds to a rapture of believers before, during or after the tribulation, which is followed by period during which Israel is resorted. The Confession has no reference to a rapture and uses 1 Thessalonians 4:17 in reference to the resurrection at the return of Christ. More significantly, its covenant theology teaches there is one covenant of grace in varying administration and that Christ is held out 'with more fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles' (WCF 7.6). This precludes the idea of a return to an Israel period which is more like the Old Testament.

In summary:

- Assembly members held to a range of eschatological positions including those who entertained considerable millennial speculation, but the Confession neither gives any of this doctrinal status nor can it be presumed to rule them illegitimate;
- other Assembly documents express millennial hopes in prayer for a triumphant Gospel age, but no document makes this hope a matter of doctrine;
- the Confession does not give any indication of a period between the return of Christ and the final judgement, and does not seem to allow for any such time period, holding that all takes place on the 'Day';
- the Confession does not allow for a rapture separated from the return of Christ on the final day;
- the Confession rules out the dispensationalist notion of a period of the re-establishment of the state and worship of Israel.

The reference requests the Committee to report on the eschatological teaching of the Confession. It is important, however, to place this in the context of the Confession read in

the light of the Declaratory Statement.

The Declaratory Statement allows liberty of opinion on matters not essential to the doctrine of the confession. This must, at least, mean that officers of the PCA are able to hold views that are usually called 'post-millennial'. Many members of the Assembly held similar views and while they go beyond the Confession they do not contradict it. The Confession's view of the coincidence of the return of Christ and judgement disagrees with a 'historical premillennial' position, but this is a relatively minor point and does not conflict with the essentials of the Confession's doctrine.

The position of dispensational millennialism, however, differs from the Confession far more substantially. The problem lies not in the details of eschatological timing, but in its view of the relation of Israel to the covenant of grace and the church. The covenant theology of Chapter 7 of the WCF is essential to the whole Confession and if it is denied this leaves much of the Confession incoherent. The opinion of the Committee is that courts of the church should not grant liberty of opinion for officers to hold such a position.

The opening section of the Declaratory Statement also provides important direction in this matter. It highlights the 'objective supernatural historic facts' about Christ— 'especially the incarnation, the atoning life and death, and the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, and His bestowment of His Holy Spirit' as those which should have 'a chief place' in the message of the church. It is Christ and his work, not any particular eschatological schema, which should be the burden of the preaching of the church.

- Gribben, C. 'The Eschatology of the Puritan Confessions' *SBET* 20/1 (Spring, 2002): 51–78.
- Jue, J. K. 'Puritan Millenarianism in Old and New England', 259–76, in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds. (Cambridge: CUP, 2008).
- Thomas, D. 'The Eschatology of the Westminster Confession and Assembly', 307–79, in Ligon Duncan III (ed.) *The Westminster Confession into the 21st century*, Volume 2 (Fearn, Ross-shire: Mentor, 2004).
- Toon, P. ed. *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1970).
- van Dixhoorn, C. *Confessing the Faith: A Reader's Guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2014), 425–445.
- Venema, C. P. *The Promise of the Future* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000).
- Young, A. 'Counter Currents to Chiliasm at the Westminster Assembly: Cornelius Burges and the Second Coming of Christ', *WTJ* 73 (2011): 113–32.

Appendix: concerning paedocommunion

Background

At its 2016 meeting the GAA referred to the College Committee a matter from the Presbytery of Darling Downs regarding the practice and theology of paedocommunion, which had been raised by some practical questions emerging from a charge within that presbytery. The committee was requested to address three separate substantive questions:

1. Speak to whether the practice and theology of paedocommunion is consistent with the doctrine and worship of the Presbyterian church of Australia.
2. Undertake a survey of Presbyteries of the practice of paedocommunion in their location.
3. Enquire into the status of paedocommunion in sister reformed denominations overseas.

This report seeks to address these questions in turn, devoting primary attention to the first of these matters, while also responding to the Assembly's other requests.

The relevant minute from the 2016 General Assembly is as follows:

Minute 217:8 re. Reference from the Presbytery of Darling Downs concerning paedocommunion was laid on the table and received. The Rev. M. Powell moved: That the

Assembly: Request the College Committee to: (a) Survey all Presbyteries in Australia as to how many of their congregation practice paedocommunion. (b) Investigate the position and policy of other Presbyterian Churches throughout the world. (c) Explore the biblical, theological, historical and pastoral implications of the issue. (d) Bring to the next GAA recommendations as to what our own policy and practice should be.

What is the practice of paedocommunion?

There are three broad groupings of practices in common views that can potentially be described as paedocommunion and that roughly encompass most positions located under this label globally, noting that there will always be exceptions to this broad schema and other less-common manifestations of paedocommunion.

1. A Session which is prepared to have younger children than has traditionally been the case present themselves for a public confession of faith (and/or confession to a Session and/or its members appointed for the purpose), and upon that confession and assessment of their understanding and manner of life, authorises them to partake of the Lord's Supper.
2. A Session which does not actively require communicant members to make a public confession of faith, but leaves it to personal judgement and conscience of adults. Either in the service of the Lord's Supper, or more generally in the teaching surrounding it in the life of the charge, the requirements of worthy participation are expounded and people are encouraged to only communicate in a worthy fashion. This ministry of the Word in laying out the requirements is the primary expression of the Session's admitting people to the sacrament and where, if a person having heard such exhortations chooses to communicate, that choice to communicate is respected unless there are clear and manifest reasons to question their participation. In line with this approach, the Session leaves it to parents to determine the eligibility of minors under their responsibility to partake of the Lord's Supper upon private assessment of their faith, understanding, and manner of life.
3. A Session which encourages all people of any age who have received valid baptism to partake of the Lord's Supper, without the need for a public or private confession of faith or for any minimal threshold of understanding as to the mechanism at work in the sacrament.

Of these three internationally-common varieties of paedocommunion, it is the third that raises the largest questions for historic reformed theological understandings of the sacrament and its practice. Accordingly, this report will briefly address the other two possible ways the term could be applied, before focusing on the issues related to the third category of paedocommunion.

Another factor in the equation

There does exist another path to paedocommunion in practice, which is not an expression of any substantive theological or biblical convictions, or any concern of pastoral application. This is where the Session does not exercise *any* effective role in the admitting of participants to the Lord's Supper. This can be because the Session simply opts to not give any guidance to people in the congregation as to what is required for worthy participation of the Lord's Supper, or even that there is such a thing as worthy or unworthy participation of the sacrament. In such a situation some parents might oversee their children partaking for any reason. This path can also be taken where a family ignores or rejects the counsel and admonition of the Session as to the manner of worthy participation in this sacrament and takes it upon themselves to encourage their children to partake for their own reasons, often because they see this as a family matter, not a church matter.

In this instance, Sessions should be encouraged to exercise their role in admitting people to the Lord's Supper. Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 11 as to the conduct of the Lord's Supper do not envisage the sacrament to be partaken as family affair, with some households operating according to different norms than the church as a whole. Irrespective of what reading one takes of 1 Cor 11, such a manner of partaking that elevates the individual family over the gathered church as a whole guided by the officers that the Lord has installed, is much closer to the situation that Paul address than the one for which he advocates. The problem at Corinth was, among other problems, this kind of conduct of the sacrament

whereby partaking was undertaken on privately held grounds that meant that the church was divided in its practice of the sacrament when it gathered. Among other things, the sacrament is an expression of the visible nature of membership in the body of Christ, and is to be done in order under the oversight of the officers of the church responsible for its administration, which includes the exercise of admission and non-admission to the sacrament. Sessions should be encouraged to exercise this role, and families to submit to it. Who partakes of this sacrament is a matter for Sessions to exercise, not families within charges.

The two approaches to paedocommunion that are arguably compatible with the basis of union

It has been the historic practice of reformed churches for a Session to only allow children of church members to partake of the Lord's Supper upon baptism, followed by a public confession of faith somewhere from the beginning of their teenage years or afterwards, and a manner of life consistent with that profession.

Both the practice of younger children making professions of faith to a Session, or publicly, and of parents deciding on whether their own children are worthy participants in the sacraments are changes to historic practice. However, the question revolves around whether they are significant departures from the doctrine and worship of the church, such as to warrant a ruling from the GAA.

It is the conclusion and advice of the committee that these two forms of partaking in the Lord's Supper by minors do not meet the requirements for attention from the GAA.

This is particularly clear with regards the first practice—Sessions admitting minors to the Lord's Supper at a younger age than has historically been the case. In this instance, while there is a clear historic practice among Reformed churches since the Reformation of an older age threshold, there is nothing germane in the Confession that speaks to the precise age where someone may be permitted to partake. Given this absence of direct guidance on the subject, it is consistent with our polity and doctrine to leave this to the judgement of individual Sessions to decide when a child is capable of making a necessary profession of faith.

The second practice is a more complex matter. In its favour, the Confession is not explicit as to whether a participant needs specific authorization from a church officer before they can partake of the Lord's Supper, but against it the Confession does speak of church officers suspending people from this sacrament and does mention people being admitted to the sacrament. The three paragraphs which arguably speak most directly to this matter are reproduced below:

Chapter XXVII—On Sacraments

I. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him: as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His Word.

Chapter XXIX—The Lord's Supper

VIII. Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament; yet, they receive not the thing signified thereby; but, by their unworthy coming thereunto, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Wherefore, all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.

Chapter XXX—Church Censures

IV. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition; suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season; and by excommunication from the Church; according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person.

27.1 indicates that one of the purposes of the sacraments is to demonstrate a visible difference between those who belong to the Church and those who are outside. 29.8 speaks of how unworthy persons cannot partake *or be admitted* to the Lord's Supper without it being a great sin against Christ. 30.4, in addressing how church officers attain the ends intended for church censures, explicitly mentions suspension from the sacrament and excommunication from the Church as possible responses to notorious and persistent

offenders.

Taken together these three paragraphs are suggestive of an approach to the sacraments that is public rather than private, and undertaken under the authority of church officers in the prohibiting of people from partaking of the Lord's Supper and, most probably, also in authorizing them to partake. In sketching out the picture drawn from these three paragraphs, it should be noted that the discussion of suspending people from the sacrament is far more fully drawn than that regarding admission to the table. In the latter case, only the words 'or be admitted thereunto' are stated, with no mention of who or what is doing the admission. This does leave some small ambiguity in the Confession as to who does the admitting to the Lord's Supper, and the means by which that might be exercised. In speaking this way the Confession would appear to be reflecting the balance of Scripture: the biblical material doesn't give any direct instructions on admission to the Lord's Supper other than a) each Christian exercising self-regulation as per Paul's advice in 1 Cor 11, and b) the clear implication of exclusion from the Lord's Supper, from the biblical direction that those who wilfully sin after warnings be excluded from the church family.

Possibly in light of this relative silence on the mode of admission to the Lord's Supper in our Confession, and also no doubt as an expression of the tendency within contemporary evangelicalism to prioritize the subjective and individual over the objective and corporate, and the mobility of Christians (any given service could have members of other churches in attendance), it is at present a practice within the Presbyterian Church of Australia for Sessions to effectively leave it to the consciences of participants to decide whether or not they are worthy to partake at the Lord's table. While the Session may suspend someone from the sacrament as an expression of church discipline in notorious and persistent cases, the sacrament is not fenced as strictly under normal circumstances, and it is left to visible members of Christ's Church to assess themselves as suitable partakers. The Session exercises its role in the admitting of people to the sacrament by means of the ministry of the Word—in teaching on the nature of the sacrament, and what is the nature of worthy and unworthy participation in the Lord's Supper, and in exhorting and admonishing people in light of this teaching. It is left to the individual to then apply that teaching to their own situation, and where they partake that is taken to be a sign that they should partake, unless there are clear apparent reasons to question that self-assessment.

Where a Session leaves it to adults to exercise their own personal judgement and conscience then leaving the participation of minors to the personal judgement and conscience of their parents would seem to be a procedure consistent with that practice and to offer little theological or liturgical challenge beyond that already discerned in leaving it to adults to admit themselves to the table. While it is not unreasonable for someone to challenge this interpretation and application of the Confession as not the most natural way to thread together the picture drawn by the three paragraphs discussed earlier, the heart of the dispute involves the shift from church officers to personal conscience in admitting people to the Lord's Supper, not the move to allow parents to exercise judgement with regards to their children. Consequently, any possible challenge to the practice should, in the committee's opinion, focus on the prior practice of leaving admission to individual conscience, actively formed by the Word of God, rather than that of parental judgement. This practice of paedocommunion is arguably nothing more than applying a more general practice, of fencing by the Word shaping the conscience, to the specific case of minors.

Given the relative silence of the Confession regarding how people are to be admitted to partake of the Lord's Supper, and that this practice does not seem to fundamentally challenge the view of the sacrament as placing a visible difference between those of the Church and the rest of the world (while acknowledging that it would not be unreasonable to see this development as potentially weakening that function to some degree), it is the view of the committee that this practice really involves the interpretation of the implications of the Confession for appropriate liturgical practice, and does not involve substantive *theological* conflict with the teaching of the Confession. Accordingly, it is best left to Sessions to implement or otherwise, under the authority of their respective Presbyteries as the court of the church where such judgements are to be located.

Hence, it is the recommendation of the committee that the GAA leaves the matter of

the first and second forms of paedocommunion listed above to Presbyteries and Sessions to determine in relation to their congregations as they seek to faithfully conduct themselves in line with the worship and doctrine of the church in their location.

The approach to paedocommunion that is incompatible with the basis of union

As has been indicated, the third form of paedocommunion listed above would appear to present the most difficulties theologically and practically in terms of the worship and doctrine of the Church. With this approach, the baptized children of members of the church are (usually) considered to be full members of the Church and united to Christ Jesus, and as such should be admitted to the Lord's table along with adult members of the Church.

It would appear that there is a range of positions under this view of paedocommunion, and so a report of this nature is not going to be able to describe every permutation of how the case for this understanding and practice has been articulated. Nonetheless, the following is a good faith attempt to articulate the doctrine and practice of paedocommunion of this kind.

In summary, there are three basic dimensions to the case for this form of paedocommunion, each of which we will try to first summarize, and then briefly sketch out. Different proponents of this form of paedocommunion might 'weight' one of these strands more heavily than the others, and this will mean that some of the descriptions of some of the arguments might not be as germane to their form of this position.

- (1) A theological understanding of the sacraments whereby baptism is the sole qualifying criteria for being admitted to partake in the Lord's Supper, but where people can be subsequently disqualified by manifesting symptoms of apostasy. Part of this theological understanding also involves a prioritizing of covenantal membership over signs of regeneration for seeing baptized children as full members of the body of Christ.
- (2) A biblical-exegetical understanding of the Lord's Supper that sees the Passover as the matrix for the Lord's Supper and for participation in the Lord's Supper that leads to a different view of the concern in 1 Cor 11 that participants in the Lord's Supper recognize the body and examine themselves than has historically been the case in most reformed thinking.
- (3) An understanding of church history that sees paedocommunion as the normal practice in the early church and that it changed to credocommunion in the middle ages due to the theology of the Mass. The Reformers, and the Reformation tradition in general, maintained the medieval practice due to an insufficient reflection upon the implications of the covenantal nature of the sacraments.

A. Theology of children and sacraments

Description of the argument

First and foremost, this version of paedocommunion involves a very distinct understanding of the place of the sacraments in relation to regeneration and faith. Historically, the Reformed tradition has overwhelmingly practiced paedobaptism alongside credocommunion. In response to challenges from credobaptists, the mainstream reformed tradition has frequently offered a defence of the practice of baptizing the children of believers on covenantal grounds and has rejected the argument that faith is the precondition of baptism with regards to the children of believers. This has not been an isolated feature, but has shaped how the tradition has given pastoral care to grieving parents faced with death of a minor who had yet to show clear signs of faith (pointing them to the objective nature of God's promise to make the covenant with them and their children, and to the objective nature of the sign of baptism to give the parents assurance) and how it has approached the formation of the children of believers (with usually far less focus on evangelizing children, and far more focus on faith formation).

However, the mainstream reformed tradition has overwhelmingly agreed with credobaptists in practicing credocommunion. Hence, with regards to partaking in the Lord's Supper has not relied simply upon covenantal arguments, but has also considered regeneration, and clear evidences of saving faith, as also a precondition for participation in this sacrament, alongside baptism. As a consequence, baptized children have not been permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper until they have demonstrated positive evidence of regeneration and faith, most commonly by some kind of catechism, confession of faith, and nothing in their lives incompatible with that confession in the knowledge of their Session.

This has at times produced criticism from credobaptists as to inconsistency—that if it is recognized that the Lord’s Supper requires a pre-existing faith, that the parallel nature of the sacraments indicates that the same requirement for regeneration should be understood to be in play for baptism as well. One way of seeing the position of paedocommunion is that it identifies the same internal tension within historic Reformed thinking on the sacraments as credobaptists but that it runs the argument in the opposite direction. The mainstream reformed tradition was correct in seeing the covenantal nature of baptism, but has been inconsistent in not recognizing the covenantal nature of the Lord’s Supper, and instead making participation in the Lord’s Supper dependent upon regeneration and evidences of faith. The right way forward is to align its approach to the Lord’s Supper to its understanding of baptism, and so to appropriate a more thorough covenantal basis for the administration of this sacrament.

This concern takes two general forms.

First, is a concern to recognize the full covenant status and membership of the children of those in Christ. Advocates of this position take the evidence and arguments stressed by historic reformed theology in its debate with credobaptists and hold that the church should take this view of the status of children within the covenant that is on view in baptism more seriously and more consistently when it comes to admission to the Lord’s table. In particular, on the basis of passages such as Rom. 6, 1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:27 and Col. 2:12, proponents of paedocommunion argue that the children of members of the church are part of the covenant, have been ingrafted into Christ, have been justified, are holy, and have been adopted as children of the Father. These are not legal fictions, or covenantal positions that are merely external and lacking in spiritual substance, but weighty portrayals of the actual state of affairs for anyone rightly baptized. These realities are not also not capable of differentiation by degree, but are all-or-nothing status descriptors—you are either holy or you are not, you are either justified or you are not, you are either a child of God or you are not; there is no middle ground where you are partly one status and partly another. Not only the statuses, but also the rights, privileges, blessings and responsibilities that come with having that status in the covenant are also either-or realities. You are either a member of the covenant with all the privileges and responsibilities that go with that, or you are not a member of the covenant and so enjoy none of the privileges and responsibilities. The historic reformed position that sees baptized children as members of the covenant but not necessarily as united to Christ is seen to deny clear Scriptural teaching. As full members of Christ’s body, the Lord’s Supper is for baptized children just as much as it is for adults.

Second, is a concern to embrace the full strength of scriptural language for baptism. Passages such as Romans 6 and others, when taken in their natural sense, indicate that baptism is the point at which a person crosses from death to life, from being part of the domain of darkness and death to being ingrafted into Christ and made a member of the kingdom of light and life. The position that the Reformed tradition has historically held that faith is the sole instrument of our union with Christ is considered, by advocates of this strand of argument, to not do justice to the Scriptural teaching that the sacraments are not empty signs, but signs and seals of spiritual reality *that effectively communicate those realities so signified to the partaker*. Someone who is rightly baptized according to the terms of the covenant of grace has the sign of belonging to Christ, and by their baptism has been ingrafted into Christ. Advocates of this position will differ in how they conceptualize this—some will lean all the way in and really invest in the realist nature of Scriptural sacramental language and so have opened themselves up to the charge that they have recapitulated a more Catholic view of baptismal regeneration, others will distinguish between God’s knowledge of his elect and the signs to which we have access in order not to locate regeneration within baptism strictly, but to claim that where someone is validly baptized they should be treated as regenerate unless there are clear evidences that they are in a state of apostasy. Accordingly, paedocommunion advocates of the third kind listed previously can suggest that the historic Reformed practice of credocommunion wrongly excludes covenant children by denying them the ongoing sign and seal of their union with Christ and their place in the body of Christ.

The recognition of the genuine possibility of unregenerate covenant members is an

important one to grasp how this view grapples with the same issues that faces paedobaptism generally—how to understand the experience of unbelieving children of church members. This experience is one reason why the historic Reformed tradition has practised credocommunion only—as a child moves from minor to adult clear positive evidences of regeneration are looked for, and where they are absent the person is seen to be outside the body of the Christ. In its place paedocommunion advocates will generally stress that apostasy is possible among Christians of all ages, and where it can be seen it should be subject to church discipline, but that Scripture itself encourages us to see this as an unusual state of affairs under the conditions of the new covenant, and not to almost expect unbelief by withholding the Lord’s Supper until there is clear evidence that this path has been avoided. Instead, given the covenant promises regarding the children of covenant members and that they have the sign and seal of having been grafted into Christ, they should be seen to be worthy recipients until such time as they (against all expectation) show signs of substantial covenant unfaithfulness.

Reflection upon the argument

It is arguable that it is these theological convictions, rather than the next two strands of the argument (exegesis and historical practice), that has occasioned the ‘heat’ from defenders of the historic reformed practice and understanding towards this form of paedocommunion. The mainstream reformed tradition embraces tensions throughout its reading in Scripture—in the covenantal and organic natures of union with Christ, in human freedom and bondage, in the interrelationship of time and eternity, in justification apart from works but assurance at least in part through works, in the relationship of faith and repentance, in assurance coming both directly through Christ as the mirror of election but also some place for assurance from examination of one’s own good works, and in conceiving of salvation in both objective (covenantal) and subjective (regeneration and faith) terms. Faced with theological debates that seek to subordinate one strand of biblical evidence to the other and force Christians to choose one of two putatively incompatible options, the Reformed tradition has almost always refused to domesticate God’s word to the rationality of the human mind and has sought to understand how two apparently contradictory claims can both be true without embracing a hard paradox.

This is one of Reformed theology’s greatest strengths and weaknesses. It is a strength in that it seeks to be faithful to *everything* Scripture says on a topic, and not just half of it. It is a weakness in that it is always open to the charge of not being consistent by trying to have its cake and eat it too. In this case, the thrust of this version of paedocommunion’s argument is that only credobaptists and paedocommunionists are internally consistent, the historic reformed position is a compromise that falls between two stools. This may be the case, but such a judgement opens up the complementary diagnosis in return—that credobaptism and paedocommunion are two sides of the same coin, and in the way they either collapse covenant into faith (credobaptist) or faith into covenant (paedocommunion) they seek to inappropriately resolve a tension regarding the objective and subjective dimensions of incorporation into Christ that is there in the Scriptural evidence itself.

The other major point to note at this point, is that it is precisely these kinds of theological convictions that have generated the debate over the so-called ‘Federal Vision’ and which have meant that proponents of these kind of ideas have been seen to be recapitulating theological ground covered by N.T. Wright and the movement within New Testament studies known as the ‘new perspective on Paul.’ Two points on this line are worth noting. First, the *effect* of this constellation of theological ideas (even if not the intent of its proponents) is similar to that of which Wright has been accused by his Protestant critics on justification. That is, that baptism becomes the point of transfer from the domain of death to the kingdom of the Son. A person is saved by baptism, or at least by the promises given to them in baptism (which should be seen as being kept at the point they are given rather than at some interminable time in the future, according to most advocates of this set of views). Faith then becomes the evidence that the person has already been incorporated into Christ. The regeneration that has occurred in baptism will at some time bear fruit in conscious and evident faith. Hence the classical Reformational structure that faith justifies and good works are the evidence of a living faith is turned into a structure where baptism takes the place of

faith (it is the point of transfer) and faith takes the place of good works (it is evidence of a previously existing transfer). It is then difficult to perceive much difference in substance with Roman Catholicism in our view of salvation (although the formal principle of Scripture's authority still remains a point of contention).

It should be seen that this form of the argument for paedocommunion is a constellation of ideas that present a fundamental challenge to a raft of principles that are at the heart of the Reformed understanding of the gospel and which are written into our basis of union. It is not hard to find advocates of this strand of the argument for paedocommunion quite clearly and explicitly make precisely this point. For example, Peter Leithart, writes the following in *Daddy, Why Was I Excommunicated?*

The paedocommunion debate raises questions not only concerning the character of the sacraments and the relationship of the two sacraments, but also touches on such major areas of theology as the doctrine of the Church, the meaning of the covenant, the relationship of the covenant to eternal election, the doctrines of perseverance and assurance, the relationship of faith and the sacraments, the relationship of faith and understanding, the relationship of faith and works, and other questions of great theological significance. Hermeneutical questions, including the meta-issue of relating the OT and NT, are also implicated. For these reasons, in the PCA, where many have a less than Scriptural view of baptism, paedocommunion is rightly seen as a profound challenge to the prevailing thought and practice. If true, paedocommunion requires the contemporary Reformed churches to undergo a far-reaching theological repentance.

"If true, paedocommunion requires contemporary Reformed churches to undergo a *far-reaching theological repentance*," and Leithart lists the multiple theological areas which this covenantal vision of salvation touches, while indicating that that is not an exhaustive list. Unfortunately for those of us who seek catholicity, in this matter the sacraments continue to be as divisive as they historically and ironically have always been—debates over substantial sacramental practice (such as this) always entail broad-ranging and deep differences in how to read Scripture in a range of topics.

To offer one small example of what Leithart is gesturing at in this quote and to see the implications of these arguments for the theological understanding laid out in the Confession, and so the far-reaching theological repentance that this practice laid out would require, take the following paragraph from the Westminster Confession, regarding faith:

14.1 The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts; and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word: by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.

Here the confession quite clearly states that faith is normally wrought by the ministry of the Word, the preaching of the gospel. The sacraments are clearly distinguished as instruments which (along with the ministry of the Word and prayer) increase and strengthen faith, not produce it. But if the covenantal arguments outlined above are correct, then the relationship of sacrament and the ministry of the Word are reversed in the production and growth of faith. At least in the case of covenant children, faith will ordinarily be wrought by the sacrament of baptism and then increased and strengthened by the Lord's Supper and the ministry of the Word. Adoption of these arguments for the practice of paedocommunion (either explicitly, or because this form of paedocommunion cannot be adopted by Reformed churches without at least implicitly taking on some of these covenantal emphases) raises the prospect of not just amending a couple of clauses in the Confession regarding this one sacrament but possibly a larger number (especially if Leithart's analysis is taken as not guilty of hyperbole) touching on key aspects of the doctrine of salvation.

Ultimately, these kinds of theological differences tack back to their advocates' vision of God himself. Richard Lusk, in *For the Children's Sake*, writes:

But there is no question that, at the very least, paedocommunionists and anti-paedocommunionists have radically different views of God. At some deep level, our understandings of God's nature widely diverge. The anti-paedocommunionist

applies something of a hermeneutic of suspicion to God. He assumes God is more likely to curse than to bless. He assumes God does not want to feed our children at his table until they are old enough to understand various doctrines and so forth. He assumes ultra harsh judgments will be poured out upon our unsuspecting children if we allow them to partake of the sacred meal that Christ instituted for his people. He assumes that God either is not fully a Father to baptized children (which makes non-sense of the baptismal formula; cf. Mt. 28:19), or he is the sort of Father that does not feed his children until they have grown up big and strong (which is clearly absurd; cf. Mt. 7:9-11).

Here an advocate of this form of paedocommunion states clearly that paedocommunionists of this kind and credocommunionists have *radically* different views of God to one another—where the credocommunionist position is seen to entail a mean-spirited and curse-prone God who is not truly Father to the children of believers.

It should be apparent that, putting to one side the genuine desires of people to live in harmony across differences, these theological differences are at least of the order of the kind that divided Luther from Zwingli, and Calvin from both. As a *set of ideas that must be expressed in symbolic practice* they are not likely to coexist easily with the doctrine and worship laid out in the Westminster Confession of Faith, unless the ties that bind the PCA together are loosened further.

B. Exegetical argument regarding the Passover as the matrix for understanding the Lord's Supper and a different reading of 1 Cor. 11

For some people the previous theological argument is less decisive and their approach to this practice is grounded more strongly on the following exegetical case. The second kind of argument is that the OT parallel to the Lord's Supper is the Passover feast, and that as such the right way to understand the Lord's Supper, and who should partake of it, is patterned off the Passover, and that in the Passover covenant children partook. We will briefly sketch out each of these three steps of the argument.

The first step of the argument is that the Passover is the backdrop for the Lord's Supper. In the same way that circumcision was the OT form of the sacrament of baptism, the Passover was the OT form of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Evidence for this can be seen from the way in which the Gospels draw a link between the Lord's Supper and the Passover. The Gospels make this connection in various ways. One example is the way that the Last Supper is clearly presented as occurring in the context of a celebration of the Passover. Another example is how the words of institution recorded in the Gospels explicitly identify the element of the bread of the Passover feast as Christ's own body and this element is carried over into the NT sacrament. These narrative features in the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper encourage the reader to connect the Passover and the Last Supper, to use the former to help understand the meaning and significance of the latter.

The second step of this argument is that this OT ordinance is the correct matrix for understanding the NT sacrament. The Lord's Supper has the nature and operating norms of the Passover because this sacrament is the fulfilment of the Passover feast. As the fulfilment of its OT type, the OT type (the Passover) must act as *the* matrix for interpreting what the Lord's Supper is, and hence how it is to be partaken. There must be a fundamental continuity between a type and its anti-type, and so the relative lack of NT material on the Lord's Supper is not a problem for a developed theology and practice of the sacrament because the Passover feast provides the fundamental structure. The Lord's Supper (the anti-type) fulfils, but does not overturn, its OT type (the Passover).

The third step of the argument is that nature of the Passover, and the conditions of its celebration, is significantly different from historic Reformed practice of the Lord's Supper. Rather than being a highly introspective, deeply penitential and cognitively heavy ritual where the individual is to consider the health of their own spiritual life and to be capable of a sophisticated grasp of a theology of the sacrament, the Passover was a family meal that made few strenuous moral and theological demands on its participants and at which minors were full participants. The credocommunion practice of the sacrament, where it is reserved only for spiritually healthy and theologically adept partakers of mature years, and which promotes a mystical communion between the partaker and the risen Lord cannot be mapped

onto the matrix of the Passover. For at least some proponents of this position, rather than partaking of Christ himself, the centre of the Lord's Supper, like the Passover, focuses more on a publicly acted symbolic remembrance of the redemption by the Mediator, than a participation in the Mediator himself. (Although it would seem that proponents who also invest highly in theological principles of the previous strand of argument often *also* see 1 Cor. 10:1-4 as having a more direct significance for our understanding of the Lord's Supper and so can have an almost sacerdotal view of this sacrament rather than a memorialist one.)

The importance of this argument for interpreting the Lord's Supper through the lens of the Passover feast can be observed in the way that it supports a significantly different reading of 1 Cor. 11 than what has been characteristic historically for Reformed readings of that passage.

Historically, 1 Cor. 11 has been read as articulating a universal and fundamental framework for partaking in the Lord's Supper. The instructions contained in this part of Scripture are not simply troubleshooting the problems occurring in Corinth but enunciating general principles with wide and direct application to other circumstances, without the need to be filtered through a historical reconstruction of the situation that Paul was addressing. Paul's words in vv27-32:

²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

Calling on the Corinthians to examine themselves and only then partake of the sacrament, and the suggestion that unworthy participation in the sacrament could potentially lead to guilt for Christ's body and blood, as well as illness and death, has encouraged a cautious approach where participants need to be able to examine themselves to establish their regeneration and to be able to discern the ascended body of Christ through the instrument of the sacrament. This has led to an introspective reflection and a spiritually and morally earnest self-examination in and around the reception of the elements as hallmarks of a historic Reformed practice of this sacrament. This can be seen in the language of some of the answers in the Westminster Larger Catechism:

Q. 171. How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it?

A. They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong; of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

Q. 173. May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, be kept from it?

A. Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament, by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.

Q. 174. What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in the time of the administration of it?

A. It is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, that, during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings, and thereby stir up

themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces; in judging themselves, and sorrowing for sin; in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fullness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace; in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.

Q. 175. What is the duty of Christians, after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper?

A. The duty of Christians, after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's supper, is seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what success; if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfill their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance: but if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at, the sacrament; in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time: but, if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterwards with more care and diligence.

Q. 177. Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ?

A. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants; whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.

It would seem that the pattern of sacramental piety set out in these articles is the rationale for the explicit statement in answer to Q177 that one of the ways baptism and the Lord's Supper are to be distinguished is that baptism is to be administered 'even to infants' whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered 'only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves', which has historically been understood to indicate that children are incapable of the examination necessary for worthy participation.

In place of this historic reading of 1 Cor. 11, and the spiritual practices associated with it, advocates of this version of paedocommunion offer a more contextual reading of Paul's exhortations and warnings to the Corinthians that they argue is better grounded exegetically in the flow of argument of the letter and better reflects the Passover background to the Lord's Supper. On this reading Paul is not indicating in v28 that there is a universal requirement to examine oneself (or that this self-examination should range widely over all aspects of the faithfulness of one's walk as entertained by the language of the Larger Catechism quoted above) in the partaking of the sacrament whenever it is taken, or in v29 that there is a need to be able to theologically and spiritually discern Christ's physical and ascended body in the reception of the bread and wine.

Instead, Paul is addressing the particular situation in Corinth where the strong members of the congregation (the wealthy) effectively exclude the weak ones (the poor) from a family meal that is intended to express the unity of the people of God that has been forged in the gospel event of the cross. Just as the Passover was a family meal intended to set forth the common identity and unity of God's people established by the saving acts of the Passover, so too the Lord's Supper is intended to do likewise, except that it replaces the type of the Passover with its greater anti-type in the fulfilment of the Passover in the events of Cavalry.

In this particular situation arising in Corinth, where there are clear and objective transgressions against the nature of the sacrament to unite Christ's people in the common fellowship established by the common cup, the Corinthians should examine themselves, make the necessary amendments, and only then take their place at the Lord's Supper again. In context, Paul's instruction in v28 to examine oneself and only then eat and drink, is not a wide-ranging practice of almost unlimited subjective introspection for any possible blemish

in our Christian life. Instead it is a specific instruction relating to an objective transgression—creating disunity within the people of God in the practice of a sacrament that is intended to display and promote unity—that can be identified with a relative minimum of effort and amended. The requirement to examine oneself and only then to partake of the sacrament is not a requirement for every and all receptions of the Lord's Supper, but only for situations analogous to that on view in 1 Cor. 11—where there are clear and objective sins against the integrity of the people of God. Paul's instructions in this passage are far closer to the dominical teaching in Mt. 5:23-24 than the kind of piety entertained by the Larger Catechism.

Similarly, proponents will often argue that the need to discern the body in v29 is, in context, at least as likely a reference to the unity of the Church as the body of Christ as it is to the ascended body of Christ. In the previous chapter Paul has already made the connection between the church and the body of Christ in 10:17 in the context of this sacrament:

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Similarly, Paul's instructions in 1 Cor. 12-14 regarding orderly corporate worship will also be shaped by category of 'body' for the nature of the church in 12:12-13, and 27:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

In both of these locations the integrity of the church as a single entity, the way in which all who belong to Christ have been joined together into a single body, is in view. This is the overarching trajectory of Paul's thought within chapters 10-14, and so should control how Paul's language of discerning the body is to be understood within chapter 11. This instruction is not laying down an obligation that the partaker must be able to undertake a complicated theological and spiritual exercise of simultaneously distinguishing the sign from the thing signified while at the same time uniting sign and signified so as to be able to discern the thing signified through the act of eating and drinking. Instead it is asking for something far more concrete and straightforward—that the person receiving the sacrament recognize that the people around them are also part of the same body of Christ of which they are part and to act in such a way and treat them in such a fashion as to recognize their position as the body of Christ. It is a practical and ethical judgement, not a mystical and intellectual discernment, that is on view.

Consequently, far from instituting a practice of self-reflection and theological discernment that automatically excludes young children, Paul is in fact addressing a distinctly adult pattern of covenant unfaithfulness and his words have little direct significance for the question of whether young children may receive this sacrament. In fact, as some proponents of this version of paedocommunion have noted, given their reading of what Paul is actually addressing in this chapter, the irony in the credocommunion approach is that it runs the risk of committing the very sin that Paul is confronting—the strong (adults) exclude the weak (children) from the table and so break the unity of the Church and fail to discern the one body of Christ. It is arguable that in this kind of reading of 1 Cor. 11 against the matrix of the Passover feast reading, children are almost incapable of falling under the judgement envisaged in 11:27, 29ff, for they are incapable of acts of disunity against the integrity of the gathered people of God as they lack the authority and agency to conduct them. Far from Paul's instructions necessitating the exclusion of children from this sacrament, they are potentially the one demographic whose partaking in the sacrament runs no risk of the unworthy reception envisaged in Paul's words.

Reflections

None of these exegetical arguments are founded on strained or irresponsible ways to read the Scriptures. Quite the contrary, they follow principles of Bible interpretation that are regularly utilized in reading the Scriptures and which do not cause controversy when applied to other passages. These are not arguments that should be dismissed in a cavalier fashion but should be considered seriously. Advocates of this family of readings (for this has been

an attempt to try and outline the general shape of how most proponents would argue the case exegetically, but there will be variations in exegesis among specific advocates) are presenting a plausible and reasonable argument based on practices of grammatico-historical exegesis in light of how the two Testaments relate to each other.

This is not to say that the argument be accepted uncritically, or even at all. Among critics of this version of paedocommunion all three steps of the argument have been contested. Critics have argued that the Passover is not the matrix for understanding the Lord's Supper (usually because the Lord's Supper has connections to more OT types than the Passover alone), that the Passover is not determinative for our understanding of the nature and conditions of the Lord's Supper (usually because the fulfilment of the OT sacrament introduces new features, just like the Lord's Supper is no longer celebrated annually in Jerusalem), and even arguments that it is not at all clear that children did partake in the Passover feast. The wholesale rereading of 1 Cor. 11 is also contested.

For example, in his report to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of America on this matter, Peter Lillback responded to the exegetical arguments outlined above in a brief but wide-ranging fashion that, if accepted at most points, neutralizes the entire exegetical case for this practice of paedocommunion:

C. The Passover and Lord's Supper Parallel

1. It is true that Jesus established his Supper at the occasion of the Passover. Hence, there is an inseparable connection between the two. But this connection is not a connection of absolute identification. Contrary to the Passover of the OT, Jesus did not eat this meal with his physical family, but with his spiritual family. The meal added wine which was not part of the initial Passover. The meal was during the Passover as well as after the Passover. Hence, it cannot simply be identified with the Passover.

2. Jesus appealed to other Old Testament feasts besides the Passover in his inauguration of the Supper, such as in the words of institution, "this is the new covenant in my blood," which harks back to the covenant made with Israel in Exodus 24 in which only the elders partook of the covenantal meal. Hence, in the same Supper one could argue for the inclusion of children on the basis of the Passover, or their exclusion on the basis of Jesus' reference of his Supper to Exodus 24.

3. Moreover, the inclusion of weaned children in the Passover is not explicitly stated in Exodus 12. Their inclusion was granted by rabbinical authority, but such cannot be equated with the authority of Scripture. Consequently, many interpreters agree with Calvin in saying that the time of inclusion in the meal was meant to be taken from the children's question at the Passover meal, "Why do we do these things?"

D. The Continuity and Discontinuity of the Covenant

1. While it is possible that it can be properly inferred from the OT Scriptures that weaned children were granted the privilege of eating the Passover meal, this, in itself, does not constitute proof that weaned children are privileged in eating the meal of the New Covenant.

2. It is clear from Jer. 31 that the New Covenant has a far more inward and spiritual character than that of the Old. While the covenant is clearly the same in substance, it is not the same in administration. The covenant is different in administration in that it is far broader. There is no longer any male nor female, bond nor free, Jew nor Gentile in Christ (Gal. 3:26–29). Hence, the Gentiles and the women are included in baptism. But while the covenant is broader in admission, it is more stringent in appropriation. Hence, there is a greater judgment for covenant-breaking (Heb. 10:26–31), a greater glory in covenantal experience (II Cor. 3:7–18), and a more spiritual and directly personal experience of God (Heb. 8:1–13, Jn 14:21–23; 15:15). Such changes in covenant administration are fully understandable in light of the incarnation of the Messiah. These factors readily explain the necessity of faith for participation in the Lord's Supper.

3. It is argued that I Cor. 10:1ff. shows that Christ was eaten and drunk by the Old Testament fathers and their families, so why should now the covenantal children be excluded? The answer to this is found in a careful comparison of Jesus' teaching upon the manna in John 6 and Paul's discussion of it in 1 Cor. 10. Paul elevates the experience, while Christ diminishes it. Why so? This is because Paul's point is to establish that the Corinthians

were liable for judgment just as the Israelites were when there is spiritual rebellion. Both groups had a true fellowship in Christ. So if the first could be judged, so could the second. Jesus' purpose is to show that the bare external eating of manna did not, however, produce life. The fathers ate and died. Jesus' food of his body will give life. This life is for his elect and called people who eat with faith in his Word produced by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 6:37, 44, 63–65). Now it is nearly impossible to evade the sacramental implications of John 6. Should this be granted, it is clear from Jesus' exposition of the fathers' eating that those who eat the new manna are to be believers, even though many in the wilderness congregation ate as unbelievers.

E. I Corinthians 11 and Its Implications for Paedocommunion

1. The argument of paedocommunionists concerning 1 Cor. 11 is that it does not have any reference to children. But the passage is addressed to the whole church. How can children be excluded?

2. Further, the passage addresses "whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup." Certainly, if paedocommunion is correct, these children who eat must be considered as among those who "eat the bread."

3. But it is argued that they eat, but they do not eat unworthily since they are unable to discern the Lord's body. Hence, they are not liable for this judgment. But did not the children of the Old Covenant perish with their parents' sins as mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:1ff.? (Cf. Num. 16:23–35) Does not the Lord teach that ignorance is culpable and is no excuse for not doing his will? (Lk 12:48). If children were liable for judgment in the Old Covenant, and the New has even more severe judgments for the violation of the covenant, it must not be lightly assumed that our children are not able to be recipients of God's judgment.

4. It is objected that "discerning his body" has reference to the church and hence has to do with the sin of schism, which is a sin that a child cannot commit. But it must be noted, that the "body" of the church is inseparable from the "body of Christ," as seen in 1 Cor. 12. Hence, discerning the body so that one does not become schismatic, first entails having a faith in Christ so that one can discern the body of his Saviour. Hence, this objection has no force, since faith in Christ the Head of his body the church is still the point.

5. One can readily understand then why Calvin spoke of giving "poison" to our undiscerning children when we bring them to the Lord's table, in light of God's warnings for partaking without discerning.

6. Finally, there are scriptural examples of the requirement of maturity for participation in covenant privileges such as marriage, ordination, and service in the tabernacle.

7. In light of God's warnings, the covenant's high demands, the necessity of saving faith for a participation in the real presence of Christ, and the administration of the keys of the kingdom by the elders (Mt. 18:18), it is in keeping with the good order and decency of Christ's church (I Cor. 14:40) that the elders keep watch over the participants at the Lord's table (Heb. 13:17). Moreover, since Jesus insists upon the public profession of his name before men and the bearing of his cross (Mt. 10:32, 33; Mk 8:34–38), it is entirely appropriate that the Session of Christ's church expect that the children of the church profess the name of Christ before coming to his table.

Three lines of argument outlined here by Lillback are especially worthy of further reflection, because each of them touches on a potential weak point in the structure of the paedocommunion exegetical case.

First, that the argument from the Passover is less securely founded than is ideal to support such a wide-ranging challenge to our worship and doctrine. It is not certain that young children did actually partake of the Passover feast. Even if they did, it is not certain that the nexus between the Lord's Supper and the Passover is so exclusive as to exclude implications from other ceremonial types in the OT for the nature and practice of the NT sacrament. Even if that is the case it is not clear that the fulfilment of the type might not involve some significant differences in how the covenant of grace is administered in the gospel era that would mean that reflection on the Passover cannot simply establish the meaning of the NT sacrament and the norms for participation in it. It might be more analogous to other areas where the relation between type and anti-type is more dynamic and symmetrical, and that the type helps create a framework for understanding its fulfilment even as the fulfilment enables us to better

understand the true spiritual and redemptive meaning of its OT shadow. At each of these three points, proponents of this version of paedocommunion need to establish a case for their position at that point and indicate the likely probability of their proposal when each of the three stages of the argument required is taken into account. They cannot simply assume their answer for each component of their case that the Passover is broadly determinative for our understanding of the Lord's Supper.

Second, discerning the body in 11:29 is a central issue. Almost the whole case for the entire practice for both the historic Reformed practice and the new paedocommunion practice hangs upon the meaning of this one verse. It is not immediately clear what the referent for this term is in its context. As has been noted a case can be made for the referent being solely or primarily the church as the body of Christ. However, it is arguable that the inverse, that the referent is solely or primarily Christ's resurrected and ascended body, is at least as plausible. 'Body' is a surprisingly frequent recurring term in 1 Corinthians. Along with the occurrences already mentioned, it also features in 6:12-20 where an individual believer's physical body is a member of Christ in the context of sexual immorality, 7:4 where it is in the context of sexual faithfulness, 9:27 in the context of disciplining the physical body as part of the self-control needed to use one's freedom in Christ to become a slave of all for the sake of the gospel, and in chapter 15 in the context of the resurrection of the body. In light of this, it is not immediately obvious that its usage in chapters 10 and 12ff would necessarily control its usage in chapter 11. While there is continuity of subject matter across these chapters, that is arguably also present in some of the other occurrences of 'body' in the book as well. This exegetical conundrum is only exacerbated if one moves from simply appearances of the term 'body' to locations where the idea might be present, for this could potentially add even more passages into the mix. It is arguable that the theme of the body in 1 Corinthians is of some importance to the scope and message of the book as a whole, and that its import for how we read the term in 11:29 might be more complicated than how it is being used in the adjacent chapters.

Even more problematically for the exegetical case for this version of paedocommunion, there is a usage of 'body' that is much closer to 11:29 than either chapter 10 or 12. This is its usage in 11:24:

...and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

Given that this occurs only a few sentences earlier and is on the same topic, it is quite probable that when Paul mentions discerning the body, without any further qualification or indication as to what body he is referring, it is the body that is already on view in this material, namely Christ's physical body given for his people in his sacrificial death, which is an integral part of what is being remembered in the sacrament. Arguably such a usage is *more* probable than the idea that Paul passes over his usage in the immediately preceding verses to reintroduce a usage used only once in the book to this point, in the preceding chapter. The idea that the sacrament is about an enacted remembrance of Christ's physical body sacrificed for sin, but that the body that is to be judged rightly in the partaking of that remembrance is the church, is not as intuitive as some of its proponents seem to consider.

Third, that membership in the covenant does not automatically grant all covenant privileges. At least part of the force of this version of paedocommunion appears to come from the way in which it wishes to tie the two sacraments even more closely together than the historic reformed thinking has generally done, such that baptism creates a right and expectation to partake of the Lord's table. In response it is important to note that in both the OT and the NT, covenant membership does not entail participation in all covenant activities. There are restrictions within the people of God when it comes to some covenant activities, and maturity can be a salient factor. The language of Gal. 3:28 and Col. 3:11 that is possibly echoed in 1 Cor. 11:13 and which indicate the levelling of social categories in Christ does not include the social categories of young, mature and/or aged, even though these categories are invoked elsewhere in the NT when they are relevant to the corporate life of God's people. Nowhere does Scripture say 'there is neither young or old in Christ' in the way in which it does say that for other social categories, and it is worth considering the potential implications of that silence. It is possible that chronological age is a more significant factor in this question

than this version of paedocommunion seems to assume.

While this paper has outlined some of the exegetical case for and against this version of paedocommunion, it is not the place of this report to the Assembly to rule upon this exegetical debate. It should be obvious that both the family of historical Reformed readings and the new family of paedocommunion readings are plausible on their own terms, and that the issues are unlikely to be settled simply on exegetical grounds as this kind of reading also involves views on how the OT and NT relate to each other in the promise-fulfilment schema of the Scriptures, as well as broader theological questions (again, note the observation by Leithart). For this reason, it is unlikely that either side is going to convince broad groupings of adherents of the other side in the short term simply on the exegetical case. Persuasion will most likely involve both exegetical and theological arguments, and will likely not convince everyone given previous Christian experience of theological disagreements of this nature.

Third Argument – Historical Practice and Development

The third argument is a supporting one to the previous two. It seeks to demonstrate that paedocommunion was likely the ubiquitous practice in the early church and that it only changed to credocommunion in the early Middle Ages, most likely due to the sacrament developing into the Mass. The Reformers (with one exception) simply continued the tradition on this sacrament that they received and did not carefully apply the insights of their theological revolution to their practice in this matter. The Reformed tradition has then continued the practice either without reflection or with very minimal arguments given for its position.

Again, as with the other arguments, almost every part of this reading of history can be observed to be contested by critics of paedocommunion. As the historical argument is supplementary to the question of the teaching of Scripture, and the position of our subordinate standard, and this report is already long, this debate will be noted but not entered into in detail.

Two more factors that might be significant for this question

A. Cultural change around the family

In the longer term it is worth people, whatever their position on paedocommunion, taking the time to consider the possible ways in which changes in our broader society might be creating conditions that these developments (opening this sacrament to younger children) are seeking to answer. There are trajectories in our society legally, culturally, economically and technologically that are diminishing the status and integrity of children.

It is possible that in this context, the various attempts to secure a place for children in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a way of securing the *inherent* dignity and sanctity of children—their intrinsic right and place in the people of God apart from any subjection to the will of human beings (theirs or their parents). Rather than seeking to counter these pressures on children and families using theological resources such as the image of God or the nature of family, these liturgical changes are seeking to symbolically establish the full humanity and dignity of children in their own right, and not simply as a product of the will of their parents, by means of the cluster of theological ideas surrounding this sacrament. Advocates may not be tacitly aware that this is occurring—but part of the appetite for these changes to historic practice might be in part due to a sense that there is a need to secure the position of children (and possibly the family) in our time on a basis other than that offered by our society. Few things will do that for the church as much as participation in this sacrament, due to the way in which public symbolic actions function.

B. Sacrament and ecclesiology in light of union with Christ

The other factor that might be worth considering in the long term is the issue of union with Christ. It is possible that the theological and exegetical dimensions of the case for this form of paedocommunion reflect and embody distinctive departures from the kind of understanding of union with Christ that is present in the Confession and has been expounded historically by Reformed divines beginning with figures such as Calvin and Vermigli, and in more recent times championed by people such as John Murray and Sinclair Ferguson.

Implicit in the theological case for this kind of paedocommunion is a tendency to understand the believer's union with Christ primarily in covenantal terms. Within the argument that baptism is the entry point to the people of God, and that where someone is

validly baptised regeneration should be assumed, and so admission to the Lord's Supper is right and proper, is a trajectory that places almost all weight on covenantal categories for ecclesiology and the sacraments. It is more than likely that where this is the case, one of the underlying theological causes will be a conception of believers' union with Christ that is also overwhelmingly covenantal. Where the argument rests more on memorialist understandings of the sacrament it is possible that this is a symptom of an underdeveloped doctrine of union with Christ, where it has little substantial role in soteriology, and hence only a minimal influence upon ecclesiology and the sacraments.

If there is any truth to a diagnosis along these lines, then it is possible that debate over paedocommunion can only be resolved in the longer term by a renewed consideration of the nature and function of union with Christ for our soteriology, and hence our ecclesiology and sacraments. As the Confession's position on the Lord's Supper is simply an application of a particular approach to union with Christ being applied to the question of ecclesiology and then from there to the sacraments, arguments against paedocommunion are likely to lack potency unless they are combined with a positive case for, and reappropriation of, the view of union with Christ that is needed to make sense of the Confession's teaching on the Lord's Supper.

The following is offered as a brief indication of the kind of theological approach to the sacrament in view. The Westminster Confession sides with Calvin and Luther, and against Zwingli and memorialist theories of the sacrament in general, as to the presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament for the believer, and that Christ is truly received and fed upon by worthy receivers, as shown in 29.7.

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

While the Confession (and Calvin before it) clearly rejects Luther's view as to the mode of Christ's presence in the sacrament (consubstantiation), it is nonetheless clear that Christ himself, and his human body and blood, is *really* present (in a spiritual fashion) to believers' faith. Similarly, the Confession is clear that in this sacrament worthy receivers do 'really and indeed' receive and feed upon Christ crucified although, again, in a spiritual manner, not 'carnally and corporally'. What is on view here is a genuine reception of Christ himself and a feeding upon him, that encompasses his physical body and blood, and that is undertaken in a spiritual fashion by faith rather than in a physical fashion. This is neither a mere memorial nor a merely covenantal exercise in its nature—the spiritual and real presence of Christ point in a different direction than either of these alternatives.

This view of the sacrament, whereby the sacrament is a genuine partaking of, and communion with, Christ, reflects the ecclesiology of Confession, as seen in 29.1 and 26.1.

Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in his Church unto the end of the world; for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death, the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body. (29.1)

All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as to conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. (26.1)

29.1 reinforces the fact that the confession does not have a memorialist view of the Lord's Supper. It lists a perpetual reminder of our Lord Jesus' sacrifice of himself in his death

as the first reason or purpose of the sacrament, but then goes on to mention four more beyond that, including 'the sealing of all benefits thereof unto true believers', 'their spiritual nourishment and growth in him', and 'to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other'. These extra items extend the purpose of the sacrament beyond mere memorialism into something that offers a genuine spiritual benefit to believers—sealing the benefits of Christ's sacrifice to them and nourishing them in Christ (most likely because, as we have seen, they do really feed on Christ including his body and blood). It is not primarily a human act of remembrance, but a divine act of sealing, nourishing and pledging that is on view in this sacrament.

It is the mention of the Lord's Supper being a bond and pledge 'of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body' that point to the ecclesiological basis for this view of the Lord's Supper, arising from the impact of union with Christ upon the Confession's doctrine of the church. This is most immediately seen in the last three words 'his mystical body'. This cuts against primarily covenantal (or organic) understandings of the nature of the church. The church really is Christ's body, such language is not simply a metaphor. However, it is not Christ's physical body (or an extension of his incarnation on earth), but it is his *mystical* body. Mystical here does not denote mysticism, but rather the idea that this is a trans-rational reality, ultimately beyond our capacity to grasp or comprehend.

This language of 'his mystical body' is introduced in order to ground the final purpose of the sacrament's institution: that it would be a bond and pledge of true believers' communion with our Lord Jesus and with each other, as members of his mystical body. It is because true believers are members of Christ's mystical body that the sacrament is to be a pledge of their communion with the Lord Jesus and with each other. In other words, there is a genuine communion that believers have with Christ and with one another because they are members of Christ's mystical body. This is the ecclesiological reality. The sacrament is then a bond, a pledge, of that communion they have with Christ and one another due to their membership in Christ's mystical body. Here, union with Christ is driving the Confession's ecclesiology, which in turn is shaping the teaching on the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is simply the pledge of the abiding reality that characterizes the life of the Church—communion with Christ.

The notions of communion and a mystical body present in 29.1 allude back to chapter 26, which is on the communion of the saints. This idea of the communion of the saints in the mystical body of Christ is defined in 26.1 (quoted above). There it is stated that all saints are united to Christ, who is their head, and that the Spirit and faith are the bond of the union. This union with Christ results in fellowship with Christ's benefits (graces, suffering, death, resurrection, glory). They are also united to each other through this union with their head, and love is the bond of that union, and this in turn leads to a communion in each other's gifts and graces. In this key location, union with Christ is determinative for key features of ecclesiology. The doctrine of the church is taking its shape from a soteriology driven by union with Christ.

While brief, this quick survey of some key sections of the Confession should make it clear that the question of paedocommunion in the Lord's Supper is connected to ecclesiology, and that both are connected to the nature and significance of the believer's union with Christ. Where someone struggles with the Confession's stress on the reality of believer's communion with Christ in the sacrament, it is worth considering the possibility whether this is because they also struggle with the reality of the believers' communion with Christ and one another as members of his mystical body, and that this is because they also struggle with the mystical union with Christ that is the basis for our fellowship with Christ's death, resurrection and glory, and hence our salvation. They perceive salvation as coming by means of Christ, but possibly not as clearly that salvation is in Christ. They see Christ as means, but not as the end, the giver but not the gift as well. While someone can have a memorialist view of the sacrament and be opposed to paedocommunion at least some people at present seem to be drawn to the practice because of their memorialist views, and the relatively minor role union with Christ has in their soteriology and ecclesiology.

Similarly, the tendency to see inconsistency between the Confession's position in 25.1,

that baptism is for the purpose of admitting someone to the visible Church, and that of 25.6, that one cannot simply assume that a baptised person is regenerate, says less about problems with the Confession's ecclesiology, and more about a failure to grasp the mystical nature of the body of Christ arising out of the mystical nature of union with Christ. The church, and church membership, will have both covenantal and organic features, but cannot be reduced down to either as its fundamental nature for it is a mystical reality. On some questions the organic aspects will be more salient, for others the covenantal, but ultimately the church, the sacraments, and salvation itself are the mystery of Christ, and there are going to be areas where we have to live with some tensions and not try to resolve them by either exchanging the mystery for something relatively easy to comprehend (such as covenantal categories) or pulling back from a substantial doctrine of union with Christ in our soteriology, ecclesiology and sacraments.

Again, this argument has been briefly rehearsed to raise the possibility that it is discussions such as these about the nature of union with Christ, and its import for ecclesiology and the sacraments, that might be required as a positive aspect of discussions alongside the negative task of critiquing exegetical and theological cases for and against the practice of paedocommunion if there is to be any hope of achieving substantial catholicity on this issue.

Is this view compatible with the historic doctrine and worship of the church?

In the view of the committee this version of paedocommunion is clearly not compatible with historic Reformed doctrine and worship as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. *The critical section for this question is from Chapter 29:*

VII. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

VIII. Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament, yet they receive not the thing signified thereby; but by their unworthy coming thereunto are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Wherefore all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and can not, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.

In these two paragraphs there is a clear and explicit contrast between worthy and unworthy reception of the elements. Worthy reception requires faith. Unworthy coming to the sacrament involves either wickedness or ignorance. Consequently, for a person to be admitted to the Lord's table there needs to be positive evidence of evangelical faith and good reason to see the partaker as neither wicked nor ignorant.

Two of these requirements, faith and a lack of ignorance, are difficult to reconcile comfortably with baptized children partaking without any need for signs of faith.

A view that quite explicitly rejects the need for there to be evidence of faith for there to be worthy participation in the sacrament cuts against the grain of the Confession's language. If the argument is that faith is not required, because of the parallel with the Passover, then that clearly contradicts 29.7 that worthy reception of the elements requires faith. If the argument is that baptized children should be simply presumed to be regenerate without the need for positive evidence, then that cuts against the explicit stress in chapter 28 paragraphs 5 and 6 that not all who are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated and that the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment in time where in it is administered but that it is conferred to those appointed to receive it in God's appointed time. Putting those paragraphs together from those two chapters, the confession clearly points in the direction of not treating baptized children as automatically fulfilling the need for faith for worthy participation in the sacrament simply on covenantal and baptismal grounds and also explicitly emphasizes the need for

faith for worthy partaking of the sacrament.

Similarly, the condition that unworthy participants of the sacrament are characterized by ignorance is a difficult one for young children to avoid. This is contested by some advocates of this version of paedocommunion, who argue that young children in a faithful Christian home would have sufficient knowledge of Christ and the meaning of what the sacrament signifies to clear this hurdle as they hold, on the grounds of their reading of Scripture, that if such a hurdle exists it is much lower than historical Reformed thinking has placed it. While a coherent argument, it applies an anachronistic understanding of what the term 'ignorant' meant in its historical and theological context. One of the defining features of the Reformation was its rejection of the Catholic notion of implicit faith, which was a faith that could exist with a very low level of knowledge of the object of faith, but where one looked to outside authority to have the knowledge that the individual possessing implicit faith lacked (in the case of Catholicism, the Church). The notion and practice of implicit faith is explicitly rejected in the Confession in 20.2 as something that destroys liberty of conscience and reason. Seeking to define the language of ignorance in paragraph 7 so that young children are able to avoid its force threatens to reintroduce the notion of implicit faith back into our theological bloodstream, albeit with parents taking the place of the institutional church. It is a permissible thing for people to seek to *amend* the Confession on this point because of a view, on the basis of a reading of Scripture and of experience, that the Reformers were wrong to define faith with such a strongly cognitive dimension to it and to concede that Catholicism has been correct on this question. It is less suitable to simply import that change of view into the wording of the Confession.

Taking these matters into account, it is the view of the committee that this form of paedocommunion is quite clearly in the purview of the GAA as it involves a change in worship due to a change in theology, and in matters on which the confession clearly addresses and where the changes are clearly incompatible to the position of the confession.

Is paedocommunion without signs of explicit faith a matter in which the GAA can offer liberty of conscience?

Our advice is that there is no simple and quick path to freedom of conscience on this issue, and it may not be possible to offer it at all.

The issue here is that, as a confessional church, the PCA has established more than a minimal and lowest common denominator theological form of unity. Evangelicalism more broadly is able to recognize anyone as an evangelical who is reasonably clear on the biblical gospel and the doctrines that most directly bear upon that gospel, and can put all other theological differences to one side as not gospel matters. That creates a certain path to catholicity—one that is quite broad, but quite diffuse. Evangelicals can recognize one another as such, but still cannot join together into partnerships or wholeheartedly encourage believers to attend each others' churches. The formation of more narrow partnerships such as TGC, AFES, Geneva Push, Acts 29 and the like are all testimony of the relative inability of evangelical catholicity to take shape in thick forms—in order to accomplish close ministry partnerships, evangelicals have to produce bodies that pull together subgroups of evangelicals around a broader set of theological agreements than just the gospel narrowly defined. Invariably these groups also produce a confessional document that lays out where that body stands on a wide-ranging set of theological and public worship questions. "Is this a gospel issue?" is a necessary and important question, but it is not a sufficient question unless you are satisfied with a relatively diffuse and thin catholicity that cannot form a basis for close enduring partnerships.

The PCA, much like the Westminster Assembly that produced our Confession, has chosen another strategy for pursuing catholicity—a thick but chartered catholicity, where the theological and methodological agreement is on more than just first order theological issues but where there is some liberty to differ from the Confession on matters that are tangential to its primary teaching. This is a theological strategy that arguably mirrors our ecclesial strategy of federalism and Presbyterianism—a thick enough catholicity for unity of action, and enough freedom for individuation. This aims to enable a chartered freedom of conscience, and a chartered freedom of action for the local Session, while also providing for thicker bonds of partnership than is possible when churches are independent and where there is no

confessional standard, but also restraining that from being able to completely centralize all authority to itself. Both unity and freedom, agreement and conscience are checked against each other.

Freedom of conscience on this form of paedocommunion would likely push the needle too far in the direction of loosening the ties that bind us together for the following reasons.

First, there is a sense in which the GAA has already answered the question of whether liberty of conscience can be given on a matter that is not a first order theological issue that touches on the understanding and practice of a sacrament. It has, in recent years, notwithstanding that credobaptism is not a first order theological issue, stated that paedobaptism is the position of the Confession and that all ministers and elders must adhere to that position. The Confession unambiguously teaches paedobaptism and credocommunion. It is somewhat arbitrary to offer liberty of conscience for paedocommunionists while denying it to credobaptists. Neither issue is a first order theological issue, and both issues are roughly equal to each other as the magnitude of their departure from the position of the Confession on the sacraments. Liberty of conscience from the teaching of the Confession for paedocommunion without explicit faith and self-examination would really suggest the need to offer a similar liberty for credobaptism or to open up the charge of a selective inconsistency. There is no reason *within the terms of the Confession itself* to treat the paedobaptist position of the confession as more critical or central than its credocommunion position. What is good for the goose is good for the gander in this matter. This will likely be an unsatisfactory point for those sympathetic to the argument that covenantal factors should be weighted more highly than regeneration and faith, because for them personally paedobaptism is a critical issue. However, in terms of the teaching of the Confession, covenantal dominance for baptism and regeneration dominance for the Lord's Supper would appear of equal import. If anything, at least some of those facing this matter in the U.S. would seem to consider Reformed Baptists to be more compatible with the teaching of the Westminster Confession than the theological arguments for paedocommunion without explicit faith.

Second, the reading of 1 Cor. 11 that appears to be intrinsic to all versions of this form of paedocommunion has a clear implication (which some proponents have made explicit) that the practice taught by the Confession, of exclusion of baptized children until there is clear evidence of faith, is guilty of the sin of dividing the body of Christ precisely in the ordinance that is intended to unite the body. For its part, the Confession envisages that a baptized child partaking of the Lord's Supper before they understand clearly what is occurring and partaking without evidences of faith is 'a great sin against Christ' both for the child and whoever admitted them to partake. That difference of judgement is not a salvation issue. But those are two paths through the woods on this matter that are unlikely to coexist peacefully in the long term. Anyone who follows the logic of the Westminster Confession and agrees with it will likely see this form of paedocommunion as very problematic at some level. Anyone who follows the logic of this form of paedocommunion's reading of 1 Cor. 11 will likely draw the same conclusion for the form of worship taught in the confession. Individual adherents of those two views can avoid this—either due to warmth of personal relationships across this bridge, a lack of passion over sacramental questions and the like, but the theological framework of the positions themselves will continue to nudge people against manifestations of the other view. Making a choice to allow both approaches to simply run within our church will save us from conflict in the short term, but it is far from clear that we would necessarily avoid a steep cost in the breakdown of catholicity in the future, when the second generation heirs of both positions have to relate to people spiritually formed by an approach to this sacrament that they consider to be guilty of significant disobedience in light of the understanding of the practice that shaped their own relationship with the risen Lord.

Third, as the report has already noted, advocates of this position themselves do not see it as a small issue, that doesn't amount to much. Instead they see this view as symbolic of a much deeper problem across multiple important doctrinal topics. While not a first order theological issue, it is seen by its advocates as the tip of a larger and quite important iceberg. Reformed critics of this position have generally agreed with this self-assessment and also see it as a practical expression of a different theological understanding, not just on the

sacraments, but on a range of issues. There is no reason to think that the leaders on both sides of this debate have misunderstood the stakes in question, and those of us who would value unity over precision in this matter have the better sense of the import of the difference.

This leads us to the final point, the symbolic nature of the Lord's Supper. One of the reasons why the prominent advocates on both sides have taken the position mentioned in the third point above, is because that is the nature of public symbolic actions. They encode and express concretely very distinct understandings of reality and of the moral order. This is why public symbolic actions are invariably very divisive, ironical as that is in the case of the sacraments which were given in part to help bind the church together. Marrying two people of the same sex or denying marriage to two people of the same sex, permitting or forbidding marriage across racial lines, allowing or forbidding the marriage of clergy, standing or kneeling at the national anthem, burning a country's flag, baptizing or not baptizing infants, including or not including young children to partake in the Lord's Supper—in differing ways these are actions that do nothing by virtue of the act itself (even in marriage—two actors in a play can say the words of a marriage ceremony and not be married) but yet has enormous symbolic meaning for the way it expresses unequivocally, and with no possibility of misunderstanding (once the symbolic code is deciphered), a particular view of the thing under question. The Lord's Supper divided Catholic from Protestant, Magisterial from Anabaptist, Luther from Zwingli, and Lutheran from Reformed. It was the elevation of an openly gay man to Bishop that finally made any unity impossible for the Anglican Communion. Publicly symbolic actions embody into the life of a community a vision of reality and of human flourishing. Sacraments as a particular kind of symbolic action, unite those who are united by that vision of that sacrament, and divides that group from those who cannot unite around that understanding of the sacrament. There is a certain amount of wishful thinking to imagine that we would be one of the rare bodies to avoid what Augustine and the Donatists, the Reformers, and paedobaptists and credobaptists have discovered through the ages—it is very hard for a body to maintain its catholic integrity with two antithetical sacramental practices.

The sacraments embody into the life of a congregation a particular vision of how the grace of God is offered and received by the way in which they are administered, and faithful partaking of them is one of the key ways in which involvement in the church's public worship spiritually forms people. Public worship shapes people's faith and Christian walk in ways that preaching struggles to access. Allowing for divergence of this order will not just instantiate two antithetical theological views, but also two antithetical forms of worship that will likely produce two antithetical sets of spiritually formed church members.

This is arguably the case even for those who want to practice this kind of paedocommunion simply on exegetical grounds, being convinced by the argument from the parallel from the Passover and the rereading of 1 Cor. 11, and feeling quite cool on the theological convictions generally associated with the Federal Vision. Often people with this position will have what is often called a 'low' view of this sacrament—seeing it is a memorial meal, and uncomfortable with language of participation in Christ by means of the sacrament. Even for this group, however, there must be *some* theological substance and understanding of the practice, and not just a content-less ritual done simply because it has to be done. Arguably, the removal of the requirement that there be evidences of faith will, in the majority of cases, tend towards something along the lines of one of the following four broad options for those who try to theologically reflect upon the meaning of the symbolic action their church does:

1. The Lord's Supper does not provide communion with Christ and/or his benefits
2. The Lord's Supper does provide communion with Christ and/or his benefits and this can be enjoyed without faith
3. Under normal conditions very young children of believers are regenerate by the time they partake, most likely having either been born regenerate or being regenerated in their baptism
4. The Lord's Supper is a converting instrument, not simply a nourishing instrument, for baptized children. It is designed to bring them to faith, not simply help sustain and strengthen a faith that is already present. So, much like with listening to the preaching

of the gospel, faith is not a requirement for admission, rather it will be the outcome of admission

As indicated in the earlier sections of this paper, none of the above positions is a desirable option to be encouraged and supported within the PCA, in relation to the brief on which the College Committee has been asked to report.

For these reasons, the Committee's advice is that a simple and immediate decision to offer unrestricted liberty of practice across the Presbyterian Church of Australia is an unwise path forward, as much as the individual members feel personally the attraction of avoiding needless theological and liturgical conflicts.

Views of other reformed bodies

The issue of paedocommunion without signs of explicit faith was faced by conservative U.S. Presbyterian and reformed bodies in the 1980s and they have overwhelmingly judged it as outside the bounds of reformed doctrine and practice irrespective of which historic reformed creed they have for their confession. For example, in 1988 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, after having majority and minority reports on the matter presented, adopted the position that:

The PCA continue the practice defined in our standards and administer the Lord's Supper "only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves."

And

That those ruling and teaching elders who by conscience of conviction are in support of the minority report concerning paedocommunion [those in favour of paedocommunion, of the third kind outlined above in this College Committee paper] be notified by this Assembly of their responsibility to make known to their Presbyteries and Sessions the changes of their views since their ordination vows.

Similarly in 1988, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, after receiving majority and minority reports took the action:

On motion the General Assembly determined to advise Kidane-Hiwot and the Sessions of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church that the requirement of the Scriptures and our subordinate standards for meaningful participation in the Lord's Supper is not age, but a faith that confesses, discerns, remembers, and proclaims the body of Christ while partaking.

There are few self-consciously reformed denominations internationally that have either endorsed this form of paedocommunion or even allowed liberty of conscience regarding it. Those who have are small. There is one American reformed denomination of six churches, the Federation of Reformed Churches, that practices paedocommunion throughout its churches. There are two small (by U.S. standards) reformed denominations, Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches and Covenant Presbyterian Church, that leave it to individual congregations to decide whether or not to practice paedocommunion.

Recommendations

- (1) Affirm the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith that in the Lord's Supper "worthy receivers ... inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death", which implies that a person must exercise faith in order to receive the Supper in a worthy manner.
- (2) Determine that, because of necessity of faith, and in accord with the mainstream of the Reformed tradition, as expressed in the Larger Catechism, the Supper should only be offered to those who "are of years and ability to examine themselves" and who have made a profession of faith and who are baptized.
- (3) Affirm that there is no set age at which a person is able to examine themselves and make a profession of faith.
- (4) Remind Sessions that they have a responsibility for admission to the Lord's table, as well as suspension from it, and that admission to the Table should not be left entirely

- to the decision of individuals or families.
- (5) The responsibility of a Session with regard to admission to the Lord's Table is discharged by the preaching of the word and may also be by means of admonition, course of instruction and other mechanisms.
 - (6) Instruct Sessions which wish to provide for children to receive the Lord's Supper to ensure that children are instructed in the faith and about the nature of the sacrament and that children have either made a public profession of faith, or that the Session has confirmed in consultation with their believing parent/s or guardians that they have made a credible profession of faith.
 - (7) Encourage Sessions to clarify their understanding of the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper, including admission to the Supper; and communicate this clearly to the congregation.
 - (8) Encourage Sessions to deal carefully and charitably with members who transfer to their congregation and have been used to a different pattern of admission to the Lord's Supper.
 - (9) Request the state assemblies to ensure that their codes are structured in conformity to the decisions of the GAA.

Survey of Presbyteries: Practices Regarding Paedocommunion

Data Collected by the GAA College Committee for the 2019 GAA

Presbytery	Congregations Practicing Paedocommunion	Congregations <i>not</i> Practicing Paedocommunion
NSW		
Canberra	8	6
Central Coast	4	0
Central Tablelands	7	1
Hawkesbury	10	2
Hunter	4	0
Mid-North Coast	9	0
Northern Rivers	10	1
North West NSW	5	2
Riverina	4	0
Sydney North	5	5
South Sydney	7	7
Wagga	8	3
VIC		
Ballarat	1	14
Geelong	1	4
Maroondah	0	9
Melbourne North	0	12
Melbourne West	1	1
North West Victoria	1	7
South West Victoria	0	12
QLD		
Brisbane	2	4
Central Qld	3	3
Darling Downs	7	4
Moreton Bay	1	4
Mowbray	11	5
North Qld	3	4

South Australia	0	3
TAS		
Bass	2	7
Totals	114	120

Note: where no response was received from a Presbytery, they are not listed above. A small number of presbyteries who did respond indicated that the numbers supplied were incomplete as some Charges did not supply a response to the member of the Presbytery collecting the data for Presbytery. The above data was supplied by Presbyteries to the College Committee between March 2018 and March 2019.

I.K. SMITH, Convener.

DEFENCE FORCE CHAPLAINCY COMMITTEE

Introduction

In accordance with its regulations, the Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee administers the authority of the General Assembly in respect of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). In cooperation with Defence, the Committee nominates, discharges and controls chaplains in the ADF, both at home, or abroad.

The convener of the Committee is also the PCA nominee for appointment by the relevant Minister to the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services (RACS), a Federal Government committee which provides religious support, including advice, to Defence to ensure that the religious, spiritual and pastoral needs of ADF members are appropriately maintained. RACS is constituted by a Memorandum of Association (MOA) between the Commonwealth (represented by the Chief of Defence) and the participating civilian Religious Institutions. The objects of RACS include the provision of a direct link between chaplains, Defence, and the civilian Religious Institutions such as the PCA which are signatories to the MOA.

Presbyterian ADF Chaplains are ministers of the Church who have been approved by the Committee for nomination to Defence through RACS for appointment by Defence as chaplains. Chaplaincy may be either on a full-time or a part-time (Reserve) basis.

PCA ministers with a desire to serve in the ADF as chaplains are interviewed by the Convener with, if possible, two other persons, a member of the Committee and a serving Chaplain. The Convener reports this interview to the Committee meeting according to the GAA email protocol with a recommendation to either approve or disapprove. Applicants that are approved are nominated by the Convener through RACS for appointment as ADF Chaplains. Defence Recruiting then takes the matter in hand, and if all goes well, the applicant is enlisted, appointed and posted.

Revision of RACS Memorandum of Association

The new MOA mentioned in this Committee's 2016 report has been completed; at its meeting of the 31st of January 2018 the Committee authorised the Convener to sign the new MOA on behalf of the PCA; the signing took place on the 5th of December 2018, when the Chief of Defence signed on behalf of the Commonwealth and representatives of some of the participating Religious Institutions, including the Convener, with the others to sign later.

The new MOA is essentially a revision and update of the previous MOA. One improvement is the separation of the responsibilities of RACS members (both collective and individual) into a single sheet appendix. The major change has been the inclusion of Religious Institutions outside the Jewish and Christian traditions, so that the signatories to the new MOA are as follows:

1. The Anglican Church of Australia
2. The Associated Protestant Churches Chaplaincy Board, comprising:

- Australian Baptist Ministries
 - The Lutheran Church of Australia
 - The Churches of Christ in Australia
 - The Salvation Army Australia
 - The Australian Christian Churches, and
 - The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia
3. The Australian National Imams Council
 4. The Catholic Military Ordinariate of Australia
 5. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry
 6. The National Sikh Council of Australia
 7. The Presbyterian Church of Australia
 8. The Australian Sangha Association (Buddhist)
 9. The Uniting Church in Australia
 10. The Vishna Hindu Parishad of Australia

A new era of multi-faith ADF chaplaincy is dawning; only time will tell whether Presbyterian Chaplains, committed to the confessional standard of our church, that 'Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to him alone: not to angels, saints, or any other creature: and since the Fall, not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone' (WCF 21.II) will be able in good conscience to continue as ADF Chaplains.

PCA ADF Chaplains

As at the preparation of this report, PCA ADF Chaplains are as follows:

Australian Army

<p>Bouzanquet, Joshua — full-time 16 Air Land Regiment Woodside Barracks, Inverbrackie, SA</p> <p>de Pyle, Martin — full-time RMC-A, Canberra</p> <p>Hammonds, Bruce — part-time Sydney University Regiment and Trainee Rehabilitation Wing Holsworthy</p> <p>McKinlay, Neil — full-time 7 Combat Service Support Battalion (7 CSSB) Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera, Queensland</p> <p>ten Brooke, Chris Inactive while suspended pending Code of Discipline proceedings</p>	<p>Cassidy, Daniel — full-time Regional Support Chaplain – Sydney Holsworthy Barracks NSW</p> <p>Ee, Kyung Rae — part-time Army School of Ordnance South Bandiana</p> <p>Hassan, David – full-time 6 Engineer Support Regiment Amberley</p> <p>Robinson, Andrew – full-time DCOMD CHAP, FORCOMD Victoria Barracks, Sydney</p> <p>Tucker, Ross William — part-time Army HQ, Canberra</p>
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Royal Australian Navy

<p>Fagan, Miles — part-time HMAS Cerberus</p> <p>Lee, Kyu Bum (Paul) — part-time HMAS Cerberus</p> <p>Porter, Barry — part-time HMAS Cerberus</p>	<p>Quadrio, Richard J – full-time CHAP, RAN HMAS Cairns</p> <p>Walker, Max — full-time HMAS Creswell</p>
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Royal Australian Air Force

Bigg, Daniel – full-time
RAAF Amberley

Phone: (07) 536 18375

Boyd, Michael — part-time
RAAF Amberley

Fraser, Murray— part-time
RAAF Williamtown

Hooper, Garry — full-time
COMMAND CHAPLAIN HQJOC
Kings Highway, Bungendore NSW

Owen, Peter — part-time
RAAF Williams

Tegart, Matthew — full-time
RAAF Williamtown

Also serving under the umbrella of the PCA:

Bosshard, Daniel (a minister of the Westminster Presbyterian Church)

9th Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment

Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera

Changes

- Josh Bouzanquet has commenced full-time service
- David Hassan has transferred from part-time to full-time service
- Ross Tucker has transferred from full-time service to part-time (CRA)
- Barry Porter has transferred from full-time service to part-time (CRA)
- Dan Bigg has commenced full-time service
- Murray Fraser has transferred from full-time service to part-time (CRA)
- Matthew Tegart has transferred from part-time to full-time service
- Roger Marsh has resigned from full-time service and has accepted a call to North Pine Presbyterian Church, Petrie, Queensland.

The Committee is grateful for Roger's faithful service to Defence Chaplaincy over many years.

Awards and honours

While all of the active PCA Chaplains have served with distinction during the past three years, the following are worthy of special mention:

Chaplain Martin de Pyle was identified by the Deputy Chief of Army to present an academic paper and to represent the Australian Army at the 2018 International Military Ethics Symposium. The Symposium was conducted at the Eisenhower Hall at the National Defence University in Washington DC. Martin spoke on the topic; "The Links and Limitations of a Values Based Ethic in the Modern Defence Force." His paper has been subsequently published.

Chaplain Joshua Bouzanquet was awarded the inaugural 414 Award. This annual award recognises the Chaplain who has made an outstanding contribution to the Core Business, Culture and Future Capability of Army Chaplaincy and the award is given by the Director General of Army Chaplaincy. Joshua received the award in recognition of his mentoring of other 'New to Service' chaplains, the success of his recruiting video and for writing a practical "how to" one-on-one Bible reading program.

Chaplain Daniel Cassidy was awarded the United States Defence Meritorious Service medal in 2018. On the award that accompanied his medal presentation, Chaplain Cassidy was described as having provided exceptionally meritorious service as the Camp Taji Senior Chaplain, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation INHERENT RESOLVE, Iraq. Among his many notable accomplishments while deployed was the growth in the number of Service Members attending chapel services, growth in the number of after-hours religious studies and highly successful combined services during key festive periods.

Chaplain Andrew Robinson was deployed to the Middle East at the end of 2018 to work for six months as the Senior Chaplain in the deployed Joint Task Force Headquarters. Andrew coordinated the tri-service Chaplaincy capability in all the deployed areas of operations in the Middle East and was at times also required to go forward to provide surge support. In recognition of his work, Andrew was awarded the Operational Service Medal.

Recruiting

Chaplaincy is vital to Defence capability and an opportunity for Christian ministry of

presence and word, and there is a need for ministers of our Church to serve as ADF Chaplains, both Full-Time and Reserve. The Committee has been encouraging recruiting by making these opportunities known at the Theological Colleges and at the State Church Assemblies.

Ministers with good health and a desire to serve in a ministry of presence and word are encouraged to consider whether the Lord may be calling them to serve as Chaplains in the ADF, either full-time or part-time, and to take active steps to investigate the matter by speaking to the Convener or a serving Chaplain or any member of the Committee, or Defence Recruiting.

Since the 2016 General Assembly five ministers have been interviewed for service as ADF Chaplains; three excellent candidates were approved, but of these two failed to proceed due to health issues not apparent at the time; one was not approved by the Committee and his application did not proceed, one proceeded to full-time chaplaincy and the other application is yet to be processed.

Given the ADF's desire to recruit women chaplains the Committee investigated the possibility of asking the General Assembly to change its regulations to permit it to nominate unordained women (possibly Deaconesses) for appointment as ADF Chaplains. However, while Defence can accept unordained persons nominated for appointment as Chaplains, ADF Chaplains must be able to carry out a full range of chaplaincy duties, including preaching and the administration of the sacraments, and so it is not possible given our Church's convictions about these matters for the Committee to nominate women as ADF Chaplains, and the Committee is not taking the matter further.

In Service / Undergraduate Trainees

Josh Bouzanquet (Army) Following ordination and two years pastoral experience at Eltham Presbyterian Church at the end of 2016, Josh was posted to 8/12 Med Regiment, Robertson Barracks, Holtze NT, where he has satisfactorily completed his probation.

Nathan Runham (RAAF) Following ordination Nathan is completing the two-year pastoral placement required for appointment as a chaplain at Point Cook Presbyterian Church; it is expected that he will complete this at the end of 2019, qualifying him for appointment as a chaplain.

Bryce Wiengandt (RAAF) Bryce is completing his theological studies at PTC Melbourne; it is expected that upon satisfactory completion of his studies at the end of 2019 he will be appointed to a Presbyterian Church in the greater Melbourne area for two years of pastoral experience so as to be qualified for appointment as a chaplain.

Jun Young (Joseph) Hwang It is expected that Joseph will have completed his theological studies at Christ College Burwood at the end of 2019 ready for appointment to a Presbyterian Church in the Sydney area for two years pastoral experience to complete his qualification for appointment as a chaplain.

David Hastie (RAN) It is expected that by the end of 2019 David will have satisfactorily completed the second of his four years theological studies at Christ College, Burwood, to be followed by two years of pastoral experience.

Proposed Change to the Committee's Regulations

From time to time ministers of other Presbyterian Churches who are not signatories to the MOA ask the Committee to approve their nomination to Defence for service as Presbyterian Chaplains.

Other Churches who are signatories to the MOA act in the same way; for example, the Anglicans do the same for the Greek or Russian Orthodox.

About 2007 the Committee took advice from the Law Agent before approving the applications of two such ministers; the advice was to the effect that such ministers, if approved and enlisted as ADF Chaplains would always refer to themselves as Presbyterian, and agreed that they would be responsible to the Presbyterian RACS member in the same way as PCA Chaplains.

The Committee now has another such application, but the declaration approved by the Law Agent cannot be found. Uncertain about the way forward, the Committee has sought fresh advice from the Law Agent, and his executive summary of his advice is appended to this report.

The Committee has accepted his advice that “it would be desirable to formalise more expressly the process and to secure approval of the General Assembly to the underlying policy of appointment of chaplains of ministers who are not ministers of the Presbyterian Church,” and submits the following proposed amendment to its regulations for approval by the Assembly:

- "8. The Presbyterian Member, with the prior approval of the Committee, may nominate a minister of the Word and Sacraments of a denomination other than the Presbyterian Church of Australia for appointment as a chaplain provided that the minister concerned and, if required by the Committee, the denomination to which he belongs, enters into such declaration of faith or statements or agreements as may be required by the Committee so that the person appointed will be subject to the exercise of appropriate supervision by the Church as referred to in the Memorandum of Arrangements between the Commonwealth of Australia represented by the Chief of Defence Force and the nominated denominations including the Church."

Committee membership

Rev. Martin de Pyle, who has many years of experience in both parish ministry and in senior ADF Chaplaincy, retires from full-time Army chaplaincy at the end of 2019 and is willing to accept nomination as Convener.

The Committee is confident that Martin’s experience in the Church and in Defence fits him well for service as Convener and as the Presbyterian RACS member.

The Committee proposes the following membership for the next triennium:

Convener	Martin de Pyle (from 1 January 2020)	
Assembly Officers	Ex officio	
New South Wales	3 members	Paul Harris, Garry Hooper, Richard
Quadrio		
Queensland	2 members	Daniel Cassidy, John Nicol
Victoria	2 members	Peter Owen, Barry Porter
South Australia	1 member	Joshua Bouzanquet
Tasmania	1 member	Ian McKendrick
Western Australia	1 member	Ross Fraser

P.W. PHILLIPS, Convener.

FINANCE

Balance Sheets and Statements of Income and Expenditure

In accordance with arrangements previously approved by the Finance Committee and reported to the General Assembly, financial statements for the years ended 31 December 2016, 2017 and 2018 duly audited have been included in the White Book.

The Finance Committee recommends that the General Assembly –

- (1) Receive the Financial Statements for the years ended 31 December 2016, 2017 and 2018.
- (2) Receive the Audit Reports from –
 - (a) Ernst & Young, on the accounts of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.
 - (b) Robert J Nixon & Associates, on the accounts of the Presbyterian Inland Mission (2016 only).
- (3) Appoint the Official Auditor of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales to audit the accounts of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Cost of the General Assembly

The Forty-Ninth Session of the General Assembly held in Sydney in September 2016 cost \$97,482 (2013 \$105,913; 2010 \$91,518) comprising the following items:

2016	2013	2010
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Travelling Expenses, Accommodation, Meals	79,581	89,668	79,175
Honoraria to Assembly Officers	6,850	4,100	4,517
White Book/Blue Book/Other	11,051	12,145	7,826
	<u>\$97,482</u>	<u>\$105,913</u>	<u>\$91,518</u>

The Finance Committee recommends that the General Assembly:

- (4) (a) Authorise the Finance Committee to pay the accommodation costs of Commissioners not resident in the city in which the General Assembly is held.
- (b) Request the Secretary of the Finance Committee and the Clerk of the Assembly to secure advantageous accommodation rates for lodging Commissioners during the General Assembly.
- (c) Authorise the Finance Committee to pay the accommodation costs of the Moderator, Clerks and Business Convener during the course of the General Assembly.
- (d) Approve the reimbursement of the actual expenses incurred for Commissioners travelling to the General Assembly (excluding the Presbyteries of The Central Coast, Hawkesbury, Sydney East, Sydney Inner West, Sydney North and Sydney South) on the following basis:
- Commissioners who travel more than 750km - return airfares at a rate authorised by the Clerk.
 - Commissioners who travel 750km or less - return fares by train (or coach, where a train does not run).
 - Commissioners using their own car - a payment of 32 cents/km (maximum 1500 km).

Moderators Expenses and Honoraria to Officers of the General Assembly

The Finance Committee recommends that the General Assembly -

- (5) (a) Approve payment of the following Honoraria until such time as the General Assembly determines otherwise –
- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Clerk of Assembly | <i>See Below</i> |
| Deputy Clerk | \$850 for each General Assembly |
| Assistance to Clerks | \$400 for each General Assembly |
| Business Convener | \$1,000 for each General Assembly |
- and authorise the Finance Committee to pay appropriate Honoraria to one or more persons acting in the positions listed above.
- (b) Approve the remuneration for the Clerk being amended from the former payment of an honorarium to become a stipend plus travel allowance and that the payment will be equivalent to one day per fortnight on the stipend amount.
- (6) (a) Approve the following provisions for the Moderator assuming office in September 2019 and for succeeding Moderators until such time as the General Assembly determines otherwise:
- (i) An allowance of up to \$48,000 to cover costs of travel, accommodation, telephone, postage, stationery plus an honorarium of \$2,500 per annum;
 - (ii) An allowance sufficient to cover the cost of moderatorial dress, and;
 - (iii) Costs of pulpit supply during Moderator's absence on moderatorial duty.
- (b) Declare that when the Moderator is invited to special congregational and institutional functions the parties concerned should as a general rule meet all relevant moderatorial expenses.
- (c) Authorise the Finance Committee to approve any necessary additional expenditure in respect of the Moderator.

PCA Website and Communications

In 2016, the Assembly directed the Finance Committee to bring a report to the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly regarding "its communication strategy, any personnel appointed pursuant to these resolutions and the relevant terms of any and all such appointments." The Committee has not yet concluded its work in this area, however it can be reported that the Rev. Michael Wharton has been reappointed as the PCA Webmaster and that he has kindly volunteered his time to undertake that work without charge. Ongoing

website maintenance costs will continue, however this very generous provision of time and expertise from Mr Wharton is acknowledged with thanks. Recommendations are included in the Deliverance.

Expenditure by GAA

The Forty-Ninth General Assembly approved the following expenditure statement for the 2017-2019 triennium:

	2017	2018	2019	Triennium total
	Actual	Actual	Outlook	Actual
Code Committee	1,593	1,269	1,600	4,462
Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee	636	0	1,600	2,236
Reception Of Ministers Committee	2,493	2,970	3,700	9,163
Church Planting Task Force	4,449		3,000	7,449
Mission to Australia			3,500	3,500
Church & Nation Committee	16,624	25,497	3,100	45,221
College Committee	19,412	3,725	8,080	31,217
Presbyterian Inland Mission	3,354	0	2,500	5,854
Relations with other Churches Committee	728	13,514	8,100	22,342
National Journal Committee	34,000	35,500	37,000	106,500
Total Expenses Committees	83,289	82,475	72,180	237,944
NSW Historical Records & Library C'tee (GA archives)	5,000	7,000	6,500	18,500
Website Maintenance	12,000	12,000	12,000	36,000
Procurator's Retainer	500	500	500	1,500
Moderator's Expenses (incl Honoraria)	18,469	18,851	17,500	54,820
General Expenses	45,746	132,572	29,410	207,728
Office Services	10,273	10,273	10,273	30,819
Grants - Parra Hills	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
PresAid Administration	0	0	2,000	2,000
500th Anniversary	7,263	0		7,263
Assembly Costs	0	0	100,000	100,000
Honoraria/allowance*	5,000	0	2,250	7,250
Total expenses Other	114,251	191,196	190,433	495,880
Total GAA Expenditure	197,540	273,671	262,613	733,824

The Forty-Ninth General Assembly also approved the reimbursement of travelling expenses by members of Committees to attend Committee meetings at the rate determined for meetings of the GAA with incidental expenses as determined by each Committee.

The Finance Committee recommends that the General Assembly -

(7) (a) Approve the following expenditure for the 2020-2022 triennium:

	2020	2021	2022	Triennium Total
	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
Code Committee	1,405	1,415	1,440	4,260
Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee	1,600	1,600	1,600	4,800
Reception of Ministers Committee	3,700	3,700	3,700	11,100
Mission to Australia	830	845	865	2,540
Church & Nation Committee	16,500	16,500	16,500	49,500
College Committee	12,250	12,250	12,250	36,750
Presbyterian Inland Mission ⁱ	0	0	0	0

Relations with other Churches Committee ⁱⁱ	8,500	8,500	8,500	25,500
National Journal Committee	12,500	13,000	13,500	39,000
Total Expenses Committees	57,285	57,810	58,355	173,450
NSW Historical Records & Library Committee (GA archives)	7,500	7,500	7,500	22,500
Website Maintenance	12,000	12,000	12,000	36,000
Procurator's Retainer	500	500	500	1,500
Moderator's Expenses (incl Honoraria)	18,500	18,500	18,500	55,500
General Expenses	25,000	25,000	25,000	75,000
Office Services	10,273	10,273	10,273	30,819
Grants – contingency ⁱⁱⁱ	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
PresAid Administration	2,000	2,000	2,000	6,000
Assembly Costs	0	0	105,000	105,000
Honoraria/allowance*	8,250	8,460	8,676	25,386
Total expenses Other	94,023	94,233	199,449	387,705
Total GAA Expenditure	151,308	152,043	257,804	561,155

Notes accompanying budget

- i. **Church & Nation- Freedom for Faith:** *The Church and Nation Committee's budget includes its request to the GAA for funding of Freedom For Faith up to \$15,000pa in the 2020-2022 triennium.*
 - ii. **RWOC:** *RWOC budget includes an annual \$4,500 contribution to WRF.*
 - iii. **Grants Contingency** *is a provision for grants, requests for which can be submitted to the Committee throughout the triennium.*
- (b) Approve the reimbursement of travelling expenses incurred by members of Committees attending Committee meetings on the same basis as determined for meetings of the General Assembly of Australia with incidental expenses as determined by each Committee.
 - (c) Authorise the Finance Committee to approve additional expenditure that may arise, after consultation with any Committee, reporting details to State Finance (or equivalent) Committees.
 - (d) Authorise the Finance Committee to approve payment of audit fees, office service charges and other necessary administrative expenses and include such costs with Committee expenses to be recovered from State Assemblies.
 - (e) Request the State Assemblies, when called upon to do so, to reimburse the Finance Committee without delay expenditure in connection with the holding of the 2019 General Assembly of Australia, the expenses of Committees of the General Assembly of Australia and expenditure of the Moderator, in the proportion set out in the Finance Committee regulations.
 - (f) Request the NSW Trustees to finance expenditure authorised by the Finance Committee pending reimbursement by State Finance (or equivalent) Committees.

Expressions of Appreciation

Appreciation is extended to the National Journal Committee for the regular production of the Year Book and Church Directory and to Rev. Mike Wharton for his work in maintaining the PCA Website.

Committee Membership

The Finance Committee nominates the following for election by the General Assembly in 2019; Mr Jeof R Falls, Ms Margaret Mackenzie and Rev. John Irvin to fill the three vacancies on the Committee.

The current membership of the Finance Committee is as follows –

- New South Wales: Rev. John Irvin, Mr John Rolland (Deputy Convener), (*One Casual Vacancy*)
- Queensland: Mr Greg Rodgers, (*One casual vacancy*)

South Australia: *No appointment (One standing vacancy)*
 Tasmania: Mr Graeme K Roberts
 Victoria: Mr Andrew Letcher, Rev. Richard O'Brien
 Western Australia: Mr Chris Woonings
 Ex-officio: *Assembly Officers*
 Convener: The Chairman of Trustees (Rev. John Seaton)

J. SEATON, Convener.

MISSION TO AUSTRALIA

Mission to Australia

The Mission to Australia Committee was established by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in 2013. In that act of establishment, the GAA recognised the mission of planting, revitalising, and nurturing local churches was being carried out by State Assemblies through their Home Mission Committees (or equivalents), Presbyteries, and local Congregations. Mission to Australia's role is not to be another body carrying out that primary mission, but rather is an expression of the GAA's desire to intentionally encourage those bodies by sharing information for mutual edification, encouragement, and prayer. Mission to Australia also exists to inform the General Assembly about matters relating to the establishment, health, and growth of the congregations of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and the support and care of its pastoral workers.

The Presbyterian Church of Australia

On the basis of reports provided from the State Churches, the Presbyterian Church of Australia has some 534 worshipping congregations. These congregations are part of 389 charges. The figures below change frequently, but as most were current at the most recent reporting points of the various state churches they serve as an accurate indication of the state of the PCA nationally.

State	Congregations	Charges	Members	Attendance
NSW/ACT	254	183	7,000+	10,000+
QLD/NT	108	77	6,375	7,518
SA	12	6	526	354
TAS	15	12	675	800
VIC	136	102	6,402	7,048
WA	9	9	400+	500+
TOTAL	534	389	21,378+	26,220+

The Committee notes:

- Average attendances are higher than official membership. The effects, if any, of this situation, and whether it has any impacts on the level of commitment that non-member attendees have for the mission and ministry of the congregation they attend, remain to be assessed.

State	Charges with inducted ministers		Charges with appointed ministers		Inducted/ Appointed ministers
	Settled	Vacant	Settled	Vacant	
NSW/ACT	106	19	45	13	188
QLD/NT	47	3	26	11	81
SA	1	0	2	3	4
TAS	8	0	2	2	10
VIC	49	8	17	9	85
WA	5	1	2	1	7

- Total figure for inducted/appointed ministers includes those serving outside charges in other denominational positions, and in some cases includes home missionaries.
- Significant numbers of vacant charges are challenged with structural vacancy, the situation of not being able to sustain settled ministry.
- The development of charges that contain more than one congregation as a mission and ministry choice, rather than a necessity dictated solely by the lack of viability of the constituent congregations.
- Numbers of inducted/appointed workers are serving in multi-staff situations

Church Planting and Church Revitalisation

Works that are identified as church plants or church revitalisations are taking place in all mainland states.

New South Wales currently have ten church plants, with seven having commenced during the last three years: Cornerstone – Homebush; Redemption Hill - Green Square; Hornsby; Auburn (replant); Scots Church Sydney (replant); Southern Cross – Goonellabah; and Albury – Thurgoona. One officially recognised revitalisation project is taking place, with two other congregations applying for official recognition of that status.

Queensland/Northern Territory sees the congregation in Darwin having been transferred to the Queensland Assembly by the PIM. Darwin has undergone a time of consolidation and growth with a full-time home missionary having been appointed in 2019, and a local session and committee of management being put in place under the guidance of the North Queensland Presbytery. Other identified revitalisation works are taking place at Gladstone, Goondiwindi, Gympie, Logan, and Warwick. Church planting continues in the suburbs of Moorooka and Redland Bay, and in the regional locations of Bargara, Emerald, and Aura.

South Australia is in the third year of the Adelaide revitalisation project and has benefitted hugely from financial support provided by the General Assemblies of New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria. Six local congregations are consolidating with a unified identity as the Adelaide Presbyterian Church in six locations with a pastoral staff of three. Planning is underway to consider options to reorganise parish structures in the south-east of the state.

In **Victoria** the Church Planting Committee has supported six church plants since 2011: Valley Presbyterian Church (Doreen); Darebin Presbyterian Church; Reforming Presbyterian Church (Bendigo); Point Cook Presbyterian Church; and Warragul Presbyterian Church; with the Officer Presbyterian Church having commenced in 2018. Four of the first five church plants have grown to the point where they are making budget, with the fifth progressing encouragingly. Only a couple have property, and challenges include supporting the acquisition of suitable properties and identifying workers to begin new works. Another church plant is being supported within home missions.

West Australia has one mission church in Connolly, with another in a planning phase in the Rockingham/Baldivis area.

Mission to Australia maintains contact with the Presbyterian Inland Mission. In the last three years PIM has redirected its focus to Patrol Ministry and the mission churches which were under its jurisdiction have been transferred to other jurisdictions (Darwin, Mt Magnet) or closed (Alice Springs). The ongoing intersection between PIM and this committee will probably diminish as a result.

Moderator-General's Church Planting Task Force

Mission to Australia is aware of the proposal within the report of the Moderator-General's Church Planting Task Force for the task-force to be discharged and for Mission to Australia to assume the task force's responsibilities. This Committee is supportive of the proposal and willing to receive the responsibilities involved, which are primarily those of monitoring and sharing information, in the case of the Adelaide revitalisation.

Support and care for pastoral workers

In response to an increase of burnout among its ministry workers, Ministry & Mission NSW sought input from the other states about their experience of burnout. M&M has recruited a staff member to deal specifically with issues relating to ministerial burnout and failure.

Mission to Australia will seek to facilitate the sharing of data, strategies, and resources among the relevant bodies, and particularly inform the smaller state assemblies of any support processes that are available to support pastoral workers in distress.

The Ministry Resourcing Committee in Queensland has utilised the services of Church2Church with an initial allocation of grants to support five workers undertaking mentoring and training in mentoring.

The Committee notes the ongoing operation in three states of Renewal Retreat Groups both for pastoral workers and spouses.

Classification of charges

Most states have two classifications for charges. A charge will consist of one or more congregations. Financial viability is the most usual criteria for the distinction in classification; with some form of temporary or ongoing need for support either from Presbytery or the relevant Assembly Committee in the area of pastoral governance being another reason that a charge may not have the status that authorises them to call a minister.

New South Wales: Pastoral charge; Home Mission Station. Ministers can be called and inducted into a pastoral charge; ministers or pastoral workers can be appointed into a home mission station.

Queensland/South Australia/NT: Calling Charge; Appointment Charge. Ministers can be called and inducted into a calling charge; ministers or pastoral workers can be appointed into an appointment charge.

Tasmania: Charge; Special Charge. Ministers can be called and inducted into a charge; ministers or pastoral workers can be appointed into a special charge.

Victoria: Pastoral Charge; Appointment Charge; Home Mission Charge; Church Plant Charge. Ministers can be called and inducted into a pastoral charge; ministers may be appointed to an appointment charge; ministers or pastoral workers can be appointed to a home mission charge; ministers or pastoral workers can be appointed to a church plant charge.

Western Australia: Pastoral Charge; Mission Church; Special Interest Church. Ministers can be called and inducted, or appointed by Presbytery to a pastoral charge (which may be self-funding or in receipt of grant funding); a minister or home missionary be appointed to a mission church (with grant funding); while arrangements for ministry to special interest churches would be dependent on their particular constitution '...a single ethnic group or linked by a special interest.' There are none of the latter category in the PCWA presently.

There is some similarity in the designation of the first category of charges, which are financially viable and able to call a minister. The various other designations seem designed to clearly demarcate the lines through which denominational support for the dependent charges would ordinarily flow.

Given the similarities between the distinguishing criteria for charges, despite the varying names, the state churches could be requested to consider adopting more consistent titles when in the process of reviewing their rules.

The Articles of Agreement authorise State Assemblies and Presbyteries to elect representatives to the General Assembly of Australia solely on the basis of the number of what it terms 'Sanctioned Charges', being the equivalent of those charges in the various state churches that have the status by which they can call and induct a minister. It can be observed that this situation is leaving increasingly larger numbers of congregations effectively not included in the calculations by which this Assembly is constituted. This provision of the Articles of Agreement should be examined to determine if it is still appropriate in the contemporary context of the denomination.

Membership

This is the second triennium of Mission to Australia's formal existence, and, for a variety of reasons, the active functions of the Committee that were identified in its regulations have not been significantly advanced. The less active functions, such as networking and information exchange are in development.

As an expression of the GAA's desire to monitor and support the mission of the church, this lower level of activity need not be seen as detrimental or that the existence of the committee is unwarranted. The committee exists to serve and support, not to add complexity

or undue demands to existing workloads.

It should be noted that both the Superintendent of the NSW Mission and Ministry Department and the Director of the Victorian Home Mission have retired, with their successors coming into office during this time. The previous Convener of this Committee had a significant workload as Clerk of the GAA through the triennium (in addition to his retirement from M& M). It is understandable that, with turnover in the roles of many who are members of this committee, their priority has been settling themselves into the primary work of their new positions.

The Committee believe that the functions assigned to it are desirable, beneficial, and worthy of further exploration. No formal meeting of the Committee occurred in 2018, but attendances in 2017 and 2019 are reported in the following table:

State	Committee	Office	Person	2017	2019	
NSW	Ministry & Mission	Convener	J. Read	A		
		Superintendent	B. Meller 2017	Y		
		Superintendent	M. Oates 2019		Y	
		Assoc. Super.	J. Irvin	Y	Y	
QLD	Ministry Resourcing	Convener	A. Richardson	Y		
		Director	P. Barson	Y	A	
SA	Under CMR/QLD	by association	G. Ware	Y	Y	
TAS	Church Extension	Convener	G. Roberts	Y	A	
VIC	Ministry Development	Convener	I. Hutton	A		
		Director	R. Carner 2017	A		
		Director	C. Siriweera 2019		Y	
WA	Theological Education	Convener	S. Bonnington	Y	Y	
GAA	PIM	Convener	L. Fowler	Y	Y	
		CEO	A. Letcher	Y	Y	
		Assembly Officer	Mod. General	J. Wilson	Y	Y
		Assembly Officer	Clerk	B. Meller	Y	Y
		Assembly Officer	Dep. Clerk	L. Hall	Y	Y

G. WARE, Convener.

MODERATOR GENERAL (RETIRING)

There's no instruction book for this role. There are a few older wise-heads who have given themselves wholeheartedly and faithfully to it and I've observed the way of my seniors Messrs Cook, Jones, Thomas, Benn, Harman, Christian, Knapp and Gardner and learnt from them and hoped to follow their example. At the end of the day, despite encouragement, prayer and emails ... there's still no book to follow.

In prayer to God for daily guidance, I set out three years ago to chair all meetings of the General Assembly and in between to represent the church through visits in the most fitting way I could imagine. Here are some highlights:

PCA General Assemblies:

- ✓ 3 PCV (of course)
- ✓ 3 PCQ
- ✓ 2 PCNSW
- ✓ 3 PCT
- ✓ 2 PCWA

Overseas partner churches, where I represented the Presbyterian Church of Australia during their annual General Assembly or partnership meeting:

- ✓ CCAP Zambia Synod

- ✓ CCAP Blantyre Synod
- ✓ Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
- ✓ Free Church of Scotland
- ✓ Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, National Synod
- ✓ Presbyterian Church in Japan
- ✓ Reformed Presbyterian Church of India
- ✓ Presbyterian Church in America
- ✓ Other bodies where I represented the church:
- ✓ Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Dehradun, India (twice)
- ✓ World Reformed Fellowship Assembly, Jakarta, Indonesia
- ✓ The PCA Reformation Tour (2017)

Without making a law out of it, I observed the very sensible principle that churches celebrating anniversaries and milestones are better served by inviting their state moderator to officiate. For the most part, this seemed to be what happens, but of course there are times when he is not available and so I have been blessed by visits to congregations in Darwin, Canberra (St Andrews), Balmain (150th) and also to help open new school premises for Scots, Sydney.

Like it or not, your moderator is constantly contacted by public media reps for statements on an issue-of-the-day. It's inevitable that these news hounds track you down eventually. Your moderator has to promptly decide what option to take:

- decline to comment;
- ring the convener of the Church and Nation Committee for help and then respond with an agreed statement;
- fire off a response that's in-line with a previous resolution of the General Assembly.

My reflection is that this is the most difficult area of a moderator's life, but that may simply be that for me it's an area of leadership I struggle with personally. For another, it might be like a duck taking to water. Two substantial reasons for the difficulty:

1. The regulations relating to making public statements on behalf of the church and the process required are not abundantly clear and I think they need re-writing. Nevertheless, I thank John McClean (convener, Church and Nation Committee) because he has been ever reliable and always ready to give sound advice. There was never a moment when John was not ready to respond to my urgent plea for advice.
2. The moderator never gets it right. I was criticised by some for making public statements, and criticised by others for not speaking up for the Church. I didn't take any of that criticism personally and was happy to speak with those who thought I was speaking too much and with those who wondered why their Moderator was silent.

Further, your Moderator is now, more often than before, being contacted for consultation by government. Not that it puts me in the Cabinet Room, but I've certainly noticed that the Lib/Nats coalition seeks the churches advice more than previously. This is a welcome change.

Without a doubt, the last three years have been the most enjoyable years in service of Christ and his church. Not for a moment has this added role been a burden. It's been an unexpected and unimaginable privilege to serve you in this way. There are numerous helpers, encouragers and prayerful supporters who have made it possible. These are the ones I know about for sure:

- Peter Phillips especially, but also others in the PCV such as my admin assistant Siew Teng who have taken up the slack when I've had to often be away.
- Chaplains: Stuart Bonnington, Dean Carroll, Ian Schoonwater, Matt Viney, Gary Ware and Greg Munroe who were always on standby to give me advice and who I suspect prayed for me often.
- Bruce Meller as Clerk, but also others in PCA leadership roles, who assisted me on several occasions – particularly for the Clerk who liberally provided wisdom on church procedures and expectations.

- My own pastor Andrew Vines, and the elders and church members at Reservoir (Melb) who prayed constantly, and consistently encouraged me to keep going.
- And not the least, for my dear life-companion Paula – a faithful and godly woman of prayer. I couldn't have completed this three-year term without her unconditional support and love ("He who finds a wife, finds a good thing."). Paula was content to pray for and support me while I was on PCA moderatorial duty, and never once uttered a whisper of complaint for the times it took me away from home.

We are part of a good church. In 1977 a great work of God took place in the PCA. The more theologically liberal ministers and members of the church left to join the Uniting Church. Those who chose to stay out of the union continued as the Presbyterian Church of Australia, sometimes with church property, but sometimes not. In many places they had to start all over again. God has graciously sustained us over those 42 years. Today we are a solid Bible-believing church.

The PCA is now a growing denomination of 650 congregations gathered together under 39 presbyteries in all six states and the two territories. That's 650 places of Sunday worship where the Bible's teaching is central and the Bible is recognised as God's inspired and inerrant word. 650 congregations that meet for God-honouring worship governed by reformed principles with people keen to take the gospel to the unsaved both at home and abroad.

The PCA is the *only* denomination I know of in the English-speaking world that's had such an astonishing spiritual resurrection. The turn-around defies natural explanation. It was a great privilege this year, when I was invited to attend the General Assembly of our sister denomination, the (evangelical and reformed denomination) Presbyterian Church in America, to address with their leaders decades of misunderstanding around the true nature of our denomination.

Thank you for electing me as moderator. I loved every minute of it. I'd do it again if there was a need. Peter Barnes, may the Lord give you every blessing for the next three years.

J P WILSON, Retiring Moderator-General

MODERATOR-GENERAL'S CHURCH PLANTING TASK FORCE

The Moderator General's Church Planting Taskforce was set up at the GAA in 2010 in response to a "Macedonian Cry" from the church in South Australia. It was tasked particularly with the job of revitalising the Church in Adelaide. Recognizing that churches plant churches, not committees or denominations, the task force went looking for an 'Antioch type church' with resources and vision to help turn things around in Adelaide. Creek Road in Brisbane was willing to take on this task, with Rev. Phil Strong as project manager, and they have done a most admirable job.

The former Presbyteries of Flinders and Torrens were amalgamated to form the Presbytery of South Australia which has substantially relieved the administrative work of the S.A. church.

Where we are at in Adelaide.

We are beginning to see cooperation across the Church, with approximately 200 people across 6 sites. There is also evidence of new growth, with 35 people joining in 2018.

Where we are going in Adelaide.

Embracing the multisite model, the aim is to consolidate and repurpose the work at two sites which will allow for church plants in northern and southern growth corridors. Then we hope to expand to 3 sites served by a network of growth groups to build community and allow for spiritual growth.

Bearing in mind the level of spiritual and relational sickness that has been around for more than 40 years, we believe this is a significant step forward and marks a change in the

culture of the denomination in Adelaide. There is of course a very long way to go before the church is strong and healthy again. Thanks are due to the Queensland Assembly for lifting the administrative burden from the South Australian Church to allow room for growth. Most particular thanks are due to Rev. John Langbridge and Rev. John Gilmour for serving as intentional transition ministers, to Rev. Peter Barson for his advocacy and advice as an assessor on the presbytery and the Session, and to Rev. Phil Strong for project managing this bold new plan for Adelaide.

The New South Wales church allowed Davo Gunning to take up an exit appointment to Adelaide and we have been very pleased by the way that both he and the Adelaide congregations have responded to the opportunities before them. Davo has since been inducted as the Moderator of the pastoral charge of Adelaide and Damien Carson has taken the position of Assistant there while continuing to be based at Para Hills.

D. JONES, Convener

MODERATOR-GENERAL'S NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The following nominations were received from State assemblies for Moderator-General of the 2019 General Assembly of Australia:

- Rev. Dr P.E. Barnes, New South Wales
- Mr W. MacRae, Western Australia

Upon the names being circulated to the members of the Moderator's Nominating Committee, the Rev. Dr P.E. Barnes received an absolute majority of votes and Dr Barnes is therefore Moderator-General Nominate of the 2019 General Assembly of Australia.

B. MELLER, Convener

NATIONAL JOURNAL

Introduction

Since the 2016 GAA, the team at Australian Presbyterian continued to produce an internationally recognised magazine (printed until the end of 2018, then electronic from February 2019) marked by quality content, attractive presentation and timely delivery. The team are now all volunteers, and all are committed to advancing the cause of the Gospel through the written word.

Reach and Function of the Printed AP Magazine

Commissioners to the GAA might remember that following the relaunch of AP Magazine at the start of 2012, AP moved from being a monthly, mostly-black-and-white 32-page subscription magazine (circulation 2,250) to a quarterly, high-gloss 24-page magazine that was free to readers, with a circulation of just under 20,000 reaching into a range of evangelical denominations throughout Australia and New Zealand. This was a result of merging the mailing lists of AP Magazine and Reformers Bookshop (to remove duplication and minimize postage costs) and piggybacking the Reformers quarterly mailout. (Reformers is a joint-venture Presbyterian/Reformed Baptist ministry that is overseen by the PCNSW).

As in earlier years, we continued to have repeat advertisements from non-Presbyterian sources including SMBC, Trinity Theological College, Reformation Heritage, Ligonier Ministries (Reformation Trust), Katoomba Convention, Compassion, TEAR, Barnabas Fund, Sanders Noonan, RTC Geelong and AIFC.

The printed magazine was mailed to over 9,000 separate addresses, eventually reaching an estimated 6,000 Presbyterian households and 12,000 other households (as well as 200 e-subscribers). As part of the increased reach, AP was sent to the staff of 270 Christian mission organizations, university Christian unions (AFES, EU, CU etc), radio stations, campsites and conferences centres. It was also posted to the staff of 260 parent-

controlled Christian schools and Presbyterian schools, several evangelical Anglican schools and pastors of evangelical churches in New Zealand.

Digital Format from February 2019

The 2018 year began strongly from a business point of view. From August on, there was a noticeable shift (a sea-change) in the industry, with several of AP's major advertisers moving towards solely digital advertising, as they had found that the digital format was now a stable, sufficiently mature and less expensive form of fundraising. These advertisers included: TEAR, Barnabas Fund, KCC and Compassion. (KCC now runs its own advertising, more and more via its website, Facebook, online video and a KCC app. Another regular advertiser, Christ College moved to digital advertising some months earlier, wanting to focus on NSW rather than Australia-wide.)

Consequently, despite the Business Manager's efforts, it became apparent that the return in print medium was no longer there and that we should cease the print edition after 2018. The way forward was for AP to go solely online, at a much reduced cost to the PCA (with the GAA Allocation dropping from \$37,000 pa to \$12,500 pa) which should also allow an increase of AP's reach into the public square. While there are other online sites, there has been a strong need in Australia for a contemporary, content-rich, confessional, reformed website that is promoted by a well-thought-out social media strategy. TGCA does this but they are not confessional; the Thinking of God website (confessional, content-producing site) is no longer active, and we have seen little confessional sites pop up every now and again which then disappear.

From Magazine Production to Content Production

Hence, there was a gap in the online market that AP could fill. AP's advantages are that we have a keen Editor who is well known and solid; a strong, supportive editorial sub-committee and a name with a long history respected both here and overseas. Reformers Bookshop (confessional, as is AP Magazine) offered to help AP with its marketing - using a variety of social media forms of advertising that reach up to 44,000 people online and which have boosted Reformers' (already strong) sales by 65% over the past 18 months. Using Reformers' expertise together with the editorial and theological input of the Editor and NJC members, we relaunched AP Magazine in February this year in a digital format at a much lower cost to the PCA (as noted above).

As soon as you go digital, the emphasis changes from magazine production to content production, with a goal of a content-rich website that people regularly go to. This also meant we no longer required a paid Production Editor or paid Business Manager.

Next Steps

The new AP website at ap.org.au had only been running for 5 months at the time of writing this report. We intend to ramp up social media advertising (within budget) to increase the reach in the public square (e.g. page views). Reformers will also cross-link to AP to promote AP throughout its own audience more frequently. Furthermore, the old AP website had a wealth of archived articles (in 180 issues of the magazine, each with multiple articles and interviews) that can be updated and shortened as needed to an appropriate length for today's online readers. They will be gradually uploaded as a bank of good resources. We also plan to load more short and long videos and book reviews as well as articles and interviews.

Interviews, Articles and Blog Posts

AP plays a vital function in the life of the church in terms of communicating ideas. As I noted in 2016, we live in an era of culture wars and we are conscious that religion should be lived in the Public Square, as Christianity is civilizational as well as redemptive in its effects. At the same time, to face the world's challenges, encouragement to seek holiness, prayer and reading of the Word is critically important. Hearing of the faithfulness of the Lord in the challenges other believers face (human interest stories) also encourages us to persevere.

Since the 2016 General Assembly, the National Journal Committee produced nine printed editions of AP magazine before launching the new website in February 2019. We continue to seek authoritative opinion leaders as our interviewees, regardless of where they live in the world, as it is important that our national magazine has links with a broader spectrum of reformed evangelical thought. A broad variety of subjects were covered over the

past three years, as can be seen from the list of *recent* interviews and articles below.

Some Recent Interviews

- Ethical Issues: Sacred/Secular Divide – Professor Scott Rae (Apr 2019)
- The God With Whom we Have to Do: Knowing Christ – Rev. Dr Mark Jones (Jan 2019)
- On the Precipice – Rev. David Robertson (Nov 2018)
- Evangelicals Unchained (Evangelical Christians Profoundly Influenced Australia) – Stuart Piggin (Aug 2018)
- Technology, Today's Idol – Tim Challies (May 2018)

Some of the Recent Articles and Blog Posts

- Justice and Truth in the Public Square – Peter Barnes
- A Day in the Life of an Assembly Junkie – John Wilson
- More on Forgiveness – Ron Norman
- What the Ear Reveals About the Creator – Prof Andy McIntosh
- Some Research on Preaching in the PCVIC – David Cook
- Lending to the Lord – John Wilson
- Husbands and Wives, Talk! – Tom Eglinton
- Three Points of Meditation Upon the Resurrection of Christ – Peter Barnes
- Abraham Kuyper and the Stone Lectures – Steven Yu
- Desiring Man – Tom Eglinton
- The Antioch Principle: Missionary Support and Sending – Donald Geddes
- I'm Sick – Should I Call the Elders? (James 5:13-16) – Keith Weeks
- Civil Days and Holy Days – Peter Barnes
- Good Friday, Not Just Good But Glorious – John Wilson
- Three Things I've Learned from John Allen Chau – Mark Powell
- Passion in Preaching – Mark Lawson
- When God Interrupted my Day: Lessons I've Learned About Personal Evangelism – Madeline Turner
- A Cord of Three Strands or a Rope of Sand – John Wilson
- Sliding into Heresy (Revoice Conference) – Dr Peter Jones
- Singing Theology – Angus Gibb
- Banning the Holy Spirit and Chaining the Word (Gay Conversion Therapy) – Peter Barnes
- A Tale of Two Lives – John Wilson
- A Surprising Hunger: How Systematic Theology Classes have Blessed a Tasmanian Congregation – Campbell Markham
- Forgiveness Requires Repentance: Unconditional Forgiveness Risks Treading Underfoot the Justice of God – Ron Norman

Some Recent Book Reviews

- Competing Spectacles (Tony Reinke)
- That Hideous Strength: How the West Was Lost (Melvin Tinker)
- How We Got the Bible (Greg Lanier)
- Duties of Christian Fellowship (John Owen)
- Can Science Explain Everything (John C Lennox)
- The Ten Commandments (Kevin DeYoung)
- Can We Trust the Gospels (Peter J Williams)
- The Westminster Confession (BoT, 2018)
- Being Sam (Morag Zwartz)
- Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (John Bunyan)

Staff

All activities are conducted in a frugal manner. AP is blessed by a team of volunteer writers who provide reliable and professional service to the magazine. Rev. Dr Peter Barnes performs the role as an unpaid Editor in addition to everything else he does for the Lord. Barney Zwartz did an excellent job as production editor of the printed magazine and continues as an unpaid member of the NJC with the launch of the online format. The

appearance of the printed magazine and its overall journalistic quality reflected his skill and professionalism. The content and theological thrust of our journal were often the subject of favourable comment, at home and overseas and from inside and outside the PCA. With respect to the layout of the printed magazine: our thanks go to Mr Graham Wye of Sydney Design Studios, who was generous with his time and expertise.

We express our appreciation to Messrs Mike Timmins and Walter Bruining in their respective roles as Yearbook Editor and Minute Secretary. Mike has run a surplus each year with the Yearbook and also provides business and accounting support for AP.

Our thanks also go to Rev. Mike Wharton for all his work for the AP website ap.org.au over the years to late 2018. The Committee also expresses its thanks to Rosie Timmins (our volunteer social media co-ordinator) for setting up and maintaining a blog site apmagonline.org from mid-2015 to late 2018.

Other Role Changes

- After many years of faithful service, first as Business Manager and then as Minute Secretary, Mr Walter Bruining is retiring from the NJC and will not be standing for re-election at the GAA. May the Lord bless him and his family in the years ahead.
- Mr Gordon Fay (Business Manager) resigned in December 2018 after repeated bouts of ill health. Our best wishes go to him and his family. (N.b. his position is no longer required after the move to online.)

Nominations

With the exception of Walter Bruining (who is retiring as stated above), the NJC nominates all existing members for re-election to the NJC. The NJC also nominates Rev. Dr John Wilson (Moderator-General and Clerk of GAV) to fill the vacancy created by Walter's retirement. In addition, the NJC nominates Rev. Mark Powell (former Moderator of PCNSW and a regular writer for Quadrant, Spectator and other publications) to fill the remaining vacancy. Mr Powell and Dr Wilson have indicated their willingness to stand for election to the NJC. Thus the nominations are:

- **NSW:** Rt Rev. David Cook; Rev. Mark Powell
- **QLD:** Rev. Andrew Clarke, Guido Kettmiss, Mr Neville Taylor
- **TAS:** Rev. Jason Summers
- **VIC:** Rev. Peter Hastie, Rev. Dr John Wilson, Rev. Barney Zwartz
- **WA:** Stuart Bonnington (WA)
- **Convener:** Roger Duncan Parker

R.D. PARKER, Convener

NATIONAL SAFE MINISTRY FRAMEWORK

On Tuesday, 4 September 2018, the Commission of Assembly met within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church and, among other things, resolved to:

Request the Clerk to progress, in conjunction with State churches, the production so far as is possible of a uniform set of child protection procedures and practices within those State churches. (Min. 96)

Since that date, the leaders of the child protection units of the Presbyterian churches in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria have laboured as a task force to develop the material required by the above resolution. Their work has been submitted from time to time to a working party comprised of the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk and the Business Convener. Generous assistance has also been provided by the Law Agent and the Procurator to whom the working party expresses its gratitude.

The fruit of the above labour is now submitted to the Assembly as a three-part document entitled the National Safe Ministry Framework (the Framework). This document sets out principles, policies and procedures that, in the opinion of the above persons, ought to be adopted for use within the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Likewise, State churches should be encouraged to adopt the Framework as their own in order that there might be the highest level of consistency in matters pertaining to child protection across all parts of the

Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The **principles** applying to the protection of children should not vary from one State to another. Neither should the **policies** that flow from those principles. **Procedures**, likewise, should be largely consistent across the State churches. However, variations in secular legislation applying in the several States of Australia require that the State churches have the opportunity to vary their individual procedures in line with legislative requirements to which, as matter of civil government, they must be subject.

Experience in using the Framework may reveal areas where it could be improved. It is therefore recommended that the Assembly request the leaders of the child protection units within the State churches to liaise closely with one another and with the Assembly Clerk with a view to proposing, to the next meeting of the Assembly, improvements to the Framework.

It is also possible that some changes to the Framework might require wider consideration before the next meeting of the Assembly and it is therefore recommended that the Commission of Assembly be empowered to consider and approve recommendations for change that might be brought forth by the leaders of the child protection units in consultation with the Clerk.

The National Safe Ministry Framework is now appended to this report.

B MELLER, Assembly Clerk

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA NATIONAL SAFE MINISTRY FRAMEWORK

This document is a national Statement of approach – in principles, policies, practices and procedures – that seeks to achieve so far as possible the uniform protection against abuse of children by or within the Church’s organisations. It is to be read as working within, subject to, interpreted by, and administered in accordance with, the laws of the relevant State or Territory of the Commonwealth and the laws of the Church. It is not itself a law of the Church and does not of its own force override or modify the laws of the Church or laws of the relevant State or Territory in which it is being administered. Church organisations must be familiar with and act in accordance with those relevant secular and Church laws including the Church’s national Code of Discipline (which itself is subject to secular laws). Church organisations in each State and Territory undertake to conform so far as possible to this statement in their particular principles, policies and practices and procedures, taking into account differences in secular and Church law in different States and Territories.

Some State churches cover in their jurisdiction one or more of the Territories of the Commonwealth. Although a reference to Territory is not specifically mentioned each time secular law of a State is referred to, those State churches will need to be careful in the appropriate presbyteries or charges of the Church to abide by Territory law if it differs from that of the State. There may in due course be Commonwealth secular law that needs to be followed as well.

Introduction

The Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA) is a national church formed by the federation of six formerly colonial churches in 1901. The national church was given powers legislative, administrative and judicial. These were supreme in relation to specified matters including doctrine, worship and discipline. Otherwise, they were concurrent with the State assemblies’ powers.

The maintenance of safe ministry practices rests, generally, with the State churches but behaviour that is contrary to the Standards of the Church or an obligation imposed on a minister or member of the Church by the word of God or a law of the Church is also subject to consideration under the Code of Discipline. Careful management of these overlapping domains is as necessary as it is challenging. It is expressly recognised in rule 1.13(b) of the

Code of Discipline that child protection policies are congruent with the ends of discipline expressed in rule 1.02. This is because putting in place proper measures to protect children and to forestall an alleged offender against his or her alleged propensity is for “the glory of God, the purity of the Church and the spiritual good of the alleged offender”.

Additionally, Commonwealth and State governments are entitled to, and do, enact legislation that impacts on the Church in various ways, including in the area of child protection. It is therefore necessary for the State churches to be cognisant of legislation and regulations applicable in their State, and to determine particular procedures to ensure compliance with their State-specific obligations.

To assist the Church in its attention to these matters, it is both desirable and necessary that a uniform and consistent approach to the protection of children be adopted within the PCA and across all of the State churches. At the request of the GAA, the persons appointed to manage these matters by the State Assemblies in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria have worked with Assembly Officers to prepare this Framework which is offered to the Church with the prayer that it might advance God’s glory, protect children from harm, help the Church to maintain a good reputation with outsiders, and guide potential offenders away from the destructive paths of sin.

This Safe Ministry Framework is presented in three parts: principles, policy and procedures. The Safe Ministry Principles are the high-level ideals to which the PCA is committed. The Safe Ministry Policy particularises the Church’s commitments and sets out the mechanism by which the Church’s pursuit of its principles is governed. The Safe Ministry Procedures then set out specific steps and actions to be taken in the implementation of the Safe Ministry Policy. All three parts belong together and none can be separated from the others.

Part I: National Safe Ministry Principles

Fundamental Conviction

We remember at all times that we are representing the Lord Jesus Christ in all our conduct and we will, accordingly, strive to refrain from any action that is contrary to Scripture or a law of the land consistent with Scripture or which violates the requirements of biblical ethics, striving to ensure that all our conduct is motivated by love for God and a desire to commend him and to promote his glory.

Statement of Commitment

The Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA) is committed to ensuring that a safe environment is established and maintained for all persons associated with the Church and for those accessing its services, especially children. The Church requires all paid employees and all volunteers serving within it to create an environment that will help people flourish and cause no harm particularly harm arising from emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; or neglect.

The Presbyterian Church of Australia recognises its obligation to

1. Ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children (being persons under the age of 18) involved in its activities.
2. Implement policies and procedures to safeguard children from child abuse or harm including emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or neglect.
3. Refuse to tolerate any behaviour that might result in child abuse or harm.

Values

Love and compassion The Presbyterian Church of Australia, and its State Churches, is bound by the example of the love and compassion of Jesus Christ in his ministry.

Service to others The unique nature of servanthood, which Jesus Christ demonstrated to his disciples and which they then encouraged Christians to display, is the foundation of the Safe Ministry Principles.

Humility Jesus spoke of himself as being a servant of others and not one who came to be served. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, encourages us not to live with a selfish purpose, but with humility, thinking of others as better than ourselves. As people chosen by God to serve him in obedience, we are to live as those who watch out for what is good for

others rather than watching out for our own good.

Gentleness Paul urges the early Church to let their gentleness show in their treatment of all people.

Nurture and protection As a Church we are to nurture and protect children. This responsibility rests on everyone involved in church life.

Respect The Safe Ministry Principles seek to inform the Church and create a culture which promotes respectful relationships and maintains an ongoing safe environment free of abuse of children. Whilst this responsibility rests immediately with leaders and those involved in ministry to children, it is also a shared responsibility of the whole Church.

Christian faith and practice Those serving in leadership and working directly with children and young people, accept a position of trust which places on them a commitment to carry out their role in accord with the Doctrine and Christian values of the Church.

Consistency and integrity Breaches of the Safe Ministry Protocols by any person, regardless of position, are taken seriously and may result in the questioning of that persons' capacity to continue to serve, as well as the implementation of boundaries deemed necessary to protect children.

Accountability The Church can be one of the few places where an Offender or Person of Concern, as a recipient of God's love and grace, can find a Christian welcome, Scriptural teaching and encouragement to grow in Christ. However, participation in the life of a Christian church or organisation is not a guarantee of Christlike behaviour nor a guarantee against repeating past sinful behaviour that has been abusive and caused harm. Therefore, the Church must communicate clear expectations and firm boundaries with transparency and accountability in relation to an Offender or Person of Concern who participates in the life of the Church. This helps to ensure that the Church is safe for children.

Foundational Principles

In our aim to create a safe environment and in our quest to ensure that children are protected from abuse and harm, the following principles must guide the behaviour expected of all persons involved in ministry-related activities:

- Become familiar with and act in accordance with the National Safe Ministry Framework (including its Principles, Policy, and Procedures) and any Code of Conduct and specific Procedures established by the relevant State Church
- Understand that perpetration of any physical, psychological or emotional harm or neglect, or sexual abuse or exploitation is unacceptable, that it will be treated seriously and sensitively, and that it must be reported in accordance with the Church's Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures
- In all aspects of personal life and relationships and at all times, strive to act according to the highest standards, demonstrating courtesy, consideration and good judgement
- Treat all people with respect and dignity regardless of age, culture, gender, religious affiliation, personal circumstances or any other point of differentiation
- Accept and exercise the duty of care appropriate for each and all participants
- In accord with Scripture, engage only in lawful activity and never assist persons engaged in illegal activities
- Strive to carry out all relevant roles in accordance with the doctrines and values of the Presbyterian Church of Australia
- Respect the authority of leaders and act in accordance with reasonable directions
- Only engage in actions and activities that are appropriate for children where ministry-related activities involve children
- Complete any and all training required by the Church in relation to ministry roles; and
- Create and maintain appropriate resources for use and training in ministry.

As the application of these National Principles in specific situations requires interpretation, those involved in ministry must seek advice if placed in a position of

uncertainty.

Part II: National Safe Ministry Policy

Governance: Roles and Responsibilities

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (GAA) has supreme authority within all parts of the Church in matters covered by Article 2.1 of the Articles of Agreement. Its responsibility in relation to discipline (Article 2.1((c)) obligates it to seek the fullest possible uniformity between Church-based policies and procedures in the several States, and secular laws applying in the relevant State.

The GAA approves and adopts this Framework and encourages State Assemblies to adopt this statement of Principles, Policy and Procedures, and put in place safe ministry practices that are in line with this statement and with legislative requirements of the relevant State.

The GAA affirms the adoption across the PCA of the Child Safe Standards identified by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) as follows:

1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
5. People working with children are suitable and supported
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child-focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

The Clerk of the GAA is responsible to oversee and co-ordinate the maintenance of a National Register which contains limited but sufficient information to assist affiliated institutions to identify and respond to any risks to children that may be posed by people in ministry. The Clerk of the GAA is also responsible to ensure effective liaison between the State churches so that any risks that may be posed by people in ministry are identified and receive an appropriate response.

Within its area of jurisdiction, each State Assembly is responsible for:

- Governing the implementation of this Policy and associated procedures and Code of Conduct for interacting with children;
- Initiating, developing and amending child protection procedures under their State structures which must accord with any mandatory specific requirements of secular State legislation and any associated requirements applicable in their State.
- Ensuring that appropriate information, training, instruction, supervision, monitoring, auditing and resourcing is available to maintain an environment that is safe for all persons, particularly children;
- Ensuring that an appropriate person or body is appointed to oversee the implementation of this Policy and associated procedures including the Code of Conduct (if any) enacted by the State Assembly; and procedures mandated within secular law applicable within its area of jurisdiction;
- Ensuring that all ministers, licentiates, deaconesses and other ministry workers remain compliant with State-based Working with Children Check or equivalent legislation;
- Establishing a mechanism by which the State church ensures that it is reliably informed on issues of child sexual abuse and child safety including prevention, policies and procedures and complaint handling; and

- Providing mechanisms whereby all allegations of child sexual abuse will be referred to the person or body appointed by the State Assembly to provide oversight of any such allegation and any perceived or real conflicts of interest that may arise from individuals responding to complaints of child sexual abuse in the investigative, judicial or pastoral processes.

Within their bounds, Presbyteries have oversight of Sessions and must strive to ensure that each and every Session is compliant with the Safe Ministry Framework, relevant secular legislation, and the Code of Conduct (if any) and statement of procedures established by the relevant State church.

Sessions have oversight of all ministries operated within their congregations and must annually review all ministries conducted within the Charge and, without limiting their responsibility, minute:

- Approval of proposed programs, activities, and the people authorised to lead them; and
- Their commitment to the Safe Ministry Framework, relevant secular legislation, and the Code of Conduct (if any) and statement of procedures established by the relevant State church.

Assembly Committees with oversight of children's ministry and activities are considered to have the same responsibilities as Sessions.

All instructions of the Church to be faithfully observed

Any body or person within the Church with responsibility for the employment or appointment of another person (the appointee) to a role that includes oversight or interaction with children is responsible to ensure that all instructions of the Church are observed faithfully, regardless of whether the appointee's role is performed on a paid or voluntary basis.

Liberty to report

Any person has the liberty to report directly to external agencies and supervising bodies within the Church any allegations or matters of suspicion of risk of sexual abuse or harm, noting that the purpose of reporting to the Church is to ensure that the Church can take action promptly to protect children.

An adult who claims to have been a victim of child sexual abuse but who does not want to press charges or to be involved in a criminal complaint will be advised that the person or body appointed by the relevant State Church to receive such allegations will report the matter to State Police for information without disclosing that adult's name. If the State Police advise that the matter will not proceed, the person or body appointed by the relevant State Church to receive such allegations will initiate action to determine the plausibility of the allegation always in accordance with procedural fairness and to take such action as may be necessary to protect children from harm.

Obligations of State Churches

Within its area of jurisdiction, and in the provision of children's ministry, each State church will demonstrate commitment to, capability for, and consistency in:

- Adhering to this Policy governing the interaction of adults with children;
- Implementing State-based procedures in accordance with this Policy in pursuit of the highest levels of safety and care;
- Educating and training all those involved in ministry in their duties and responsibilities in a determined endeavour to ensure that all persons involved in children's ministry are familiar with this Policy and any State-based procedures made in accordance with this Policy, whether those persons are engaged on a paid or voluntary basis;
- Selecting, recruiting, training and managing persons engaged or to be engaged in children's ministry within the Church;
- Supporting those involved in ministry as they carry out their roles;
- Providing management systems to ensure compliance with:
- the relevant State's laws and its Working with Children Check or equivalent,
- this Policy and

- any State-based procedures established in accordance with this Policy;
- Requiring all Ministers, Elders, Managers, employees and children's ministry volunteers to hold a current Working with Children Check or equivalent clearance and to agree to adhere to this Policy and any State-based procedures established in accordance with this Policy, and to undertake Safe Ministry training before working with children within the Church and at such other times as may be required by the responsible body.
- Overseeing risk management of activities and implementing management plans for high-risk activities and special events to ensure the safety of children;
- Implementing appropriate steps to manage persons known to pose a risk to children, in order to create an abuse-prevention and response framework which prioritizes the safety of children;
- Offering pastoral care and support to victims of sexual abuse and those impacted by that abuse;
- Offering pastoral care and support to any member of the Church known or alleged to have offended against a child; and
- Adequately insuring approved programs, events and activities to the extent such insurance is reasonably available.

Disclosure, investigation and responsible action

To ensure effective disclosure and investigation of suspicions of abuse and harm, and consistency in the management of breaches of this Policy, the following obligations are established throughout the Church:

- Any allegation, or reasonable suspicion of risk of harm of a child, is to be referred to the person or body appointed by the relevant State church to receive such allegations or suspicions in order to facilitate consultation with the State Police Service or Child Protection Agency without delay and to take appropriate steps to manage the risk to children.
- Any allegation of sexual abuse made against a person involved in ministry or leadership within the Church (being ministers, elders, managers, or other roles whether paid or unpaid), is to be reported immediately to the person or body appointed by the relevant State church to receive such allegations in order to facilitate consultation with the State Police Service or Child Protection Agency without delay and to obtain guidance therefrom concerning investigative needs, and (in accordance with the Code of Discipline), the appropriate Court of the Church will promptly consider and determine whether the person concerned should be suspended from working with children and any other ministry or leadership function until the matter has been investigated by Police.
- If, in respect of an inducted minister, a positive Working with Children Check or equivalent is withdrawn, suspended, barred or revoked, the fact must be reported without delay to the relevant Presbytery and the Presbytery will urgently consider the need to sever the pastoral tie as an administrative action separate from the Code of Discipline or to take other action to remove the minister from child-related activities and will monitor whether such action remains sufficient and take further administrative action as required. Subsequent action may be taken under the Code of Discipline.
- If, in respect of an employee of the Church, a positive Working with Children Check or equivalent is withdrawn, suspended, barred or revoked, the fact must be reported without delay to the relevant employer and the employer will urgently consider the need to terminate that person's employment as an administrative action separate from the Code of Discipline or to take other action (if possible) such as removal from child-related activities and will monitor whether such action remains sufficient and take further administrative action as required. Subsequent action may be taken under the Code of Discipline.
- If a minister is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse or is convicted of child sexual abuse, the censure to be applied by the Presbytery

in accordance with the Code of Discipline will be deposition from the ministry or the censure under the Code of Discipline appropriate to the nature of the offence found.

- If an elder is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse or is convicted of child sexual abuse, the censure to be applied by the Session in accordance with the Code of Discipline will be deposition from the eldership or the censure under the Code of Discipline appropriate to the nature of the offence found.
- If any other person is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse, or is convicted of child sexual abuse, or their Working with Children Check or equivalent is withdrawn, suspended, barred or revoked, the fact must be reported without delay to the body holding jurisdiction within the Church and that body will urgently consider the need to remove that person forthwith from the exercise of all or some ministry functions and from participation in any leadership roles within the Church including membership of any committee at any level of the Church's operation .
- Although the appropriate Court of the Church may instigate Disciplinary proceedings against a member under the provisions of the Code of Discipline at any time, rule 1.13(g) of the Code of Discipline requires that disciplinary proceedings must "not prejudice investigations and prosecution procedures under State law".
- Where a Court of the Church becomes aware that any person attending any of its services or activities:
 - is the subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse,
 - has been convicted of an offence relating to child sexual abuse,
 - has been denied a positive *Working with Children Check* or equivalent, or whose *Positive Working with Children Check* or equivalent has been withdrawn, suspended, barred or revoked, or
 - poses a reasonably-known risk to children,the Court will assess the level of risk posed to children by that person's ongoing involvement in church activities and take appropriate steps to manage that risk, which may include the implementation of a behavioural agreement.

Managing Breaches of the Safe Ministry Framework

Overview All people are sinners and breaches of the Safe Ministry Framework, secular and Church law and procedures will occur, whether by mistake or deliberate intent. Managing breaches requires a high level of judgement and discernment in order to maintain the safety of children and restore the person committing the breach to the expected standard of behaviour, if possible. The overriding consideration must always be the safety of children and the risk to them of an ongoing or repeated breach.

Types of Breaches Breaches might be non-criminal behaviours which do not meet the standards to be maintained by people working with children. Breaches may also be criminal behaviours. As breaches may differ, so do their consequences. Some may require no more than guidance on correct procedure. Some may require immediate removal from ministry (paid or unpaid).

Action Action in response to a perceived breach is taken in accord with secular and Church law including the Code of Discipline if applicable and will involve the following steps:

1. **Recognise** the perceived breach
2. **Report** the perceived breach
3. **Record** the perceived breach
4. **Remedy** the perceived breach

Options for responding to a person who is perceived to have breached the Safe Ministry Framework include (without limitation):

- Immediate removal from Children's ministry (and, potentially, other ministries);
- Advice from a leader on the correct procedures;

- Further training;
- Working with a more experienced person;
- Restoration to a position of responsibility when the Session is satisfied that the person comprehends and demonstrates the standard of behaviour expected of people in ministry.

Seek the advice of the person or body appointed by the relevant State Church.

Reporting Breaches Any breach by a paid or volunteer employee is to be reported to the leader or coordinator of the relevant ministry or the Moderator of the relevant supervising body as soon as possible and to the person or body appointed by the relevant State church. The person or body appointed by the relevant State church will ensure that the breach is documented.

Part III: National Safe Ministry Procedures

Contents

Purpose

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Training

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Retention and Disposal of Records and Privacy

Support

Purpose

The purpose of these national procedures is to guide decision makers and those involved in ministry as they provide and develop a safe environment and ensure compliance with legislation protecting children from harm and abuse.

These Procedures apply throughout the PCA.

Application of the National Procedures within State churches

To allow for differences between legislative frameworks within the several States of Australia, State churches may establish Codes of Conduct and additional procedures to prevent the abuse of children. State-based decisions and provisions must respect and adhere to all relevant State legislation or other enactments as also to the procedures set forth in this document as augmented or amended from time to time by the GAA or the relevant State Assembly. In the event that there is any inconsistency between procedures determined within the Church and particular State legislation, then State legislation prevails and must be followed.

State churches to define additional procedures for Safe Ministry with Children

State-based procedures will include procedure for conducting Safe Ministry with Children including but not limited to, the following ministry practices:

- Recruitment and management of paid and volunteer employees working with children
- Transport
- Food safety and allergies
- Camps and off-site activities
- Consent to take and use images of people in church
- Toileting children

- Physical contact in ministry
- Child-leader ratios
- Electronic communications including via smart phone and online – particularly in relation to children

Delegations of Authority

Each state Assembly will delegate authority for implementation of the Safe Ministry Framework and any Code of Conduct and statement of procedures established by the relevant State church to the person or body appointed by the relevant State church.

Recruitment and Management of Paid and Volunteer Employees working with children

Due to the variance in State legislative requirements, State-based procedures apply to the recruitment of paid and volunteer employees working with children in the church. The following elements must be implemented in State-based procedure and every applicant must:

- Hold a Positive Working with Children Check (or equivalent)
- Undertake an interview
- Answer screening questions relating to past behaviour via completion of a form
- Supply referees as required
- Sign their agreement to adhere to the Safe Ministry with Children Policy, National Principles and Procedures and State-based legislation and procedures (including the applicable State-based Code of Conduct, if any).
- Be provided with a role description
- Complete Safe ministry with Children training within the State-based training procedure.

Interview Process

All persons desirous of undertaking Children's ministry must undergo an interview to determine their suitability. The most appropriate time for this to occur is during the verification of details at the time of completing a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) Application when warnings are required under legislation. The interview or conversation should be structured to focus on behaviour traits and values. A suggested approach is to explore:

- The person's reason for wishing to be engaged in Children's ministry;
- Their experience in working with children;
- Value based/behaviour questions (e.g. what they consider to be inappropriate actions or conduct with a child);
- Their willingness to comply with the expectations, reasonable directions and decisions of the Session or Committee or higher Court of the Church in regards to their ongoing suitability to work with children in the Church.

National Register

The PCA National Register records information that assists the Church to identify and respond to any risks posed to children by people in ministry. Information is provided for the register by the person or body appointed by the relevant State church.

The names of all persons who:

- apply for a Working with Children Check (or equivalent)
- are Ministers
- are missionaries endorsed by APWM
- are paid employees or volunteer ministry workers of the Church.
- require a clearance via a check of the Church National Register by the relevant State-based Safe Ministry with Children Unit **before** they may be admitted to any new role or ministry.

The National Register includes information about persons who have been involved in the life of the Church, and are or have been:

- Charged with or convicted of an offence or offences against the person – including sexual offences;
- Had a Working with Children Check (or equivalent) clearance withdrawn, suspended, barred or revoked;

- The subject of a substantiated complaint of child sexual abuse;
- Listed on the Sex Offenders Register; and
- Subject to a risk management plan or party to a relevant behavioural agreement under the authority of a relevant Court of the Church.

The Working with Children Check (or equivalent)

Ministers and elders (and, in some States, managers) are required by secular legislation and/or Church decisions to hold a positive Working with Children Check (or equivalent) to qualify for their role within the congregation.

No minister, elder or (where required) manager may commence work in a new role until they hold a positive Working with Children Check (or equivalent) according to the requirements of the State in which they work or seek to work.

State-based procedure enabling compliance with the relevant Working with Children (or equivalent) legislation must be adhered to by each Court of the Church and all Committees at all levels of the Church's operation.

Training

All people involved in ministry must undergo State-based Safe Ministry with Children training. As a minimum, state-based training must educate participants to:

- Champion a culture that prioritises the safety of children from abuse and harm in the Church;
- Understand their responsibilities and obligations under Commonwealth, State or Territory legislation, the Church's laws including the Code of Discipline, the State or Territory Code of Conduct, and this Safe Ministry Framework;
- Recognise physical and behavioural indicators of child sexual abuse and harm;
- Identify, assess and minimise risks of harm to children;
- Manage disclosures or suspicions of child sexual abuse, harm, and inappropriate behaviour in relation to both children;
- Follow reporting procedure;
- Conduct ministry with children that is safe for leaders and participants;
- Understand the necessity to undertake risk management in relation to both ministry and people;
- Understand and conform to the behaviour expected of team members;
- Understand and protect their personal safety.

Handling disclosures or suspicions of harm

The Church requires the immediate reporting of all disclosures of child sexual abuse or suspicions of harm of children and is intentionally victim-focused.

A suspicion of harm exists when someone has a reasonable suspicion that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is at an unacceptable risk of suffering significant harm. A suspicion of harm can arise from:

- A child telling a person they have been have harmed;
- Someone else, for example another child, a parent, employee or volunteer telling a person that harm has or is likely to occur;
- A child telling a person that they know someone who has been harmed;
- A person is concerned about significant changes in the behaviour of a child, or the presence of unexplained injuries; or
- A person sees harm happening.

If a disclosure of child sexual abuse or suspicion of harm relates to a person whom the concerned person would normally report the matter to, the matter is to be reported according to state-based reporting procedure.

In all instances involving disclosures of child sexual abuse or suspicion of harm to a child the parent is to be advised, unless the parent is the person to whom the disclosure relates. This advice is to occur according to the relevant State-based procedures.

The relevant sections of the Safe Ministry Framework must be adhered to in regards to reporting, in addition to any State-based procedures.

The person or body appointed by the relevant State church will ensure that the matter is documented.

Confidentiality

All disclosures of child sexual abuse or suspicions of harm are to remain confidential between the parties required under State-based procedures for reporting the matter.

Child-Focussed Complaints Handling

The Church does not inform the person against whom an allegation of child sexual abuse or suspicion of harm has been made until advised to do so by Police and/or the responding governmental agency or as required by secular law. The manner and content of such advice and the taking of steps such as suspension from ministry involving contact with children will be governed by State or Territory-based procedures and where applicable the Code of Discipline and other Church law and in consultation with Police and/or the responding governmental agency.

Family Violence

Family violence involves violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour carried out by a partner, carer or family member to control, dominate or instil fear. This includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial or other types of abuse.

If a person has an immediate concern that a child is exposed to or subject to family violence, an urgent report must be made to the Police and the State or Territory child protection agency and State/Territory-based reporting procedure must then be followed.

In the case of family violence against an adult where there are no children in the home, any mandatory reporting requirements in State/Territory legislation must be followed and the victim should be asked if he or she wants the Police notified (unless notification is already mandatory). Appropriate pastoral care and support should be offered including encouragement to contact, and assistance if required to contact, welfare and support agencies such as shelters.

Offenders and Persons of Concern

When dealing with an Offender or a person who has been properly designated as a Person of Concern, the Session (having due regard to the Code of Discipline 1.13(f)) will implement a management plan which must incorporate the following elements:

- Pastoral support for the Offender or Person of Concern;
- Accountability for the Offender or Person of Concern via regular, consistent and direct supervision;
- Clear boundaries for the participation of the Person of Concern;
- Prioritization of the safety of children in the church.

The boundaries may include, without limitation, that the person must not:

- be alone with children;
- engage with children by electronic, digital or social media platforms;
- be offered any leadership role involving contact with children;
- participate in any activity or groups directed mainly toward children.

In accordance with the obligation of the Session (and all other courts of the Church) to prioritise the safety of children in the Church, the Session may enact a management plan via means including but not limited to:

- Requiring the person to sign a behavioural agreement as a condition of their ongoing participation in the life and activities of the church;
- Allowing a person who refuses to sign a behavioural agreement to still participate in specific aspects of the church's life provided that they observe the conditions set out in the proposed agreement. The Session, with assistance from the person or body appointed by the relevant State church, will develop a management plan to monitor the person's conduct, with any unsatisfactory deviation from the plan result in the person being barred from participation in the life of the church, regardless of their membership status. Where a person who refuses to sign a behavioural agreement is a communicant or adherent member of the congregation, they will be informed of their rights under the Code of Discipline;
- Instructing a person who is neither a communicant nor an adherent member of the Church and who refuses to enter into a behavioural agreement to leave the

Church and to stay away from it until they can credibly demonstrate their willingness to submit to the authority of the Session;

- Providing spiritual and pastoral care via direct ministry to the person, outside of church services and activities.

Retention and Disposal of Records and Privacy

Each State Church has an approved Privacy Policy which is to be followed by those involved in ministry.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that the average age of abuse was ten years for males and nine years for females and that victims took an average of 22 years to disclose the abuse to which they were subjected. For this reason, it is imperative that records are maintained of all leaders and participants in children's ministry.

All records pertaining to children's ministry are to be retained, including parental permissions, children's information and the names of those involved in children's ministry programs, activities and events. Records may be maintained in paper or digital format. Records must be maintained for a period of 50 years or as otherwise determined by State-based procedure regarding location and retention of records.

Support

The person or body appointed by the relevant State church resources the State church in Safe Ministry with children and offers support and assistance to those involved in ministry on child protection concerns and disclosures, behaviour management issues, breaches of the Safe Ministry Framework, secular legislation and procedures established by that State church, risk management and safe standards when conducting ministry.

OVERSEAS AID AND DEVELOPMENT (PRESAID)

PresAID ('Presbyterians Assisting In Development') is the operating name for the Overseas Aid and Development Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. It works in co-operation with Australian Presbyterian World Mission, and under the patronage of the Moderator General. PresAID seeks to facilitate the church in her desire to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ as 'He had compassion on them' and 'went about doing good'. It raises funds by asking all PCA congregations to donate their Good Friday and Christmas Day collections to PresAID for application to two or three worthy causes selected in consultation with receiving churches and APWM.

We give thanks to God for the way in which He has moved His people in our church to increasing generosity. Donations received in each appeal since Easter 2017 have exceeded \$60,000 which at times has enabled us to exceed expectations. This triennium saw donations to PresAID pass the \$1,000,000 mark. This is an exceptional blessing from our congregations to those around the world less fortunate than ourselves. Up to Christmas 2018 over \$1.3 million has been raised, \$440,720 since the last General Assembly as detailed in the following table. At the time of writing over \$37,000 has come in towards the Easter 2019 Appeal.

Date	Received by...	Amount (\$)
	Total distributed to Christmas 2015:	893,601
Easter 2016	Malawi - CCAP Prison Ministry Dehra Dun (India) - for student scholarships.	39,341
Christmas 2016	Malawi - Water Tank and Bore for ORBUS Orphanage Dehra Dun (India) - Theological Lecturer Salary	15,000 42,213
Easter 2017	Uganda - Primary School for girls Zambia - Chasefu Theological College classrooms	34,319 34,319
Christmas 2017	Ethiopia - Relief supplies for South Sudanese refugees Zimbabwe - Library and Study Centre for the Ministry Training College, Harare	22,009 45,000

Easter 2018	Kenya - Samburu ministry facilities (APWM Associate Mick Alley)	23,000
	South Africa - Dumisani Theological Institute and Bible School project	17,293
	South Sudan/Ethiopia - Nuer Bibles for refugees in Ethiopian camps	17,293
Christmas 2018	Ethiopia – Bore well for Saweted community	27,000
	Timor Leste – Bible translation work into Tetun	50,158
Easter 2019 (Intended donations)	Timor Leste – Bible translation work into Tetun (completion of project funding)	(3,842)
	Zambia – Synod Offices ablution facilities	(15,000)
	Malawi – Bore well and infrastructure at Ntcheu Prison	(32,000)
	Total:	\$1,334,321

Since the retirement of the previous convener, the General Assembly has graciously provided up to \$2,000 per annum to cover expenses. These funds have enabled the current convener to travel to each State Assembly to thank the PCA more personally for its support of the PresAID appeals and to encourage others to participate. The disbursement of funds has continued to be handled by the Office of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, still at no charge to PresAID. For this we are most grateful, especially to Mr John Vandenberg of the PCV Office who expertly handles all of the incoming and outgoing monies. Committee members have actively participated in the work of the committee (including participating in some meetings electronically), and the committee is especially grateful to Miss Geraldine Goswell for her work as secretary, and the Rev. John Wilson and Rev. Kevin Murray whose connections with overseas churches and missionaries has been particularly helpful in choosing the beneficiaries of each appeal.

The committee is very grateful to successive Moderators General for the wholehearted support and encouragement they have given to the committee as its Patron. The committee particularly thanks the members of the many congregations throughout the church for their generous financial contributions, and the ministers and elders who have encouraged them. Further, the committee thanks retiring member Len Pearce who has served it well for the last six years.

The committee has continued to follow up on the projects for which funds have been dispersed and has received numerous expressions of thanks from recipients of funds, so that your committee is well satisfied that the funds raised have been used for the designated purposes. Many expressions of thanks are not merely to 'PresAID', but to the people of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

In our report to the 2016 GAA it was noted that churches in 13 countries had been assisted to date. This total is now 16 countries due to projects supported in South Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia, but the committee is always on the lookout for projects to assist in new areas and appreciates receiving suggestions. The committee would particularly appreciate receiving suggestions for projects which would assist PCA missionaries in their respective work locations. The notable example of doing this recently was to assist the work of Mick Alley amongst the Samburu by providing funds from the Easter 2018 Appeal to build ministry facilities. Please pray for Mick as he ministers to these people in northern Kenya.

The committee has met twice each year to determine the recipients of the appeals, and at its AGM has also considered various issues. As a result of a discussion on the definition of 'aid and development' at our 2018 AGM the following motion was approved: "that as a committee of a Christian Church we have a broader definition of aid and development than, for example, the government/academia does, such that projects that are gospel oriented are legitimate candidates for our appeals, as has been the case from the inception of this committee".

The committee has also sought to improve the way we 'advertise' each appeal, having trialled mailing posters to congregations who previously supported appeals, but it seems the most effective way is to directly email congregations. If you would like to participate in the future, please pass on the most appropriate email address of your congregation to the

convener or another member of the committee. Notifications of the forthcoming Appeal are placed on the website (<https://presaid.org.au>) and the PCA Facebook page, and emails are sent to every Presbytery Clerk, and the committee thanks all of those who pass these emails on to their members, mission committees, Session clerks etc.

In addition to the above, due to the large number of committee members and the rationalisation of the GAA Standing Committees arising from the 2016 General Assembly, the committee submitted a suggestion to the Code Committee which, if approved, would:

- reduce the number of people on the Overseas Aid and Development Committee (PresAID);
- broaden its base; and
- maintain the unique nature of this committee.

Clause 4 addresses the committee's suggested new composition. The committee hopes that this suggestion will find favour with the Assembly as this new composition will be quite adequate to enable the committee to continue the work entrusted to it. On the assumption that Clause 4 is approved, the committee nominates the following people under the new structure:

Convener: Dean Carroll
NSW: Bill Thompson
Qld: Trevor Cheetham
SA: Gary Ware
Tas: Philip Simmonds
Vic: Geraldine Goswell
WA: Stuart Bonnington

D. CARROLL, Convener

PRESBYTERIAN INLAND MISSION "Worth Driving For"

The Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee believes that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is "Worth Driving For". Accordingly, over the past three years we have worked hard to pursue effective ways to see the Gospel proclaimed in the remote and sparsely populated areas of our nation.

As we present this report many positive things are happening under the banner of Presbyterian Inland Mission. We are thankful to our God for the blessings and opportunities he has given us in this very important ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Refocus on Ministry Direction

Since the previous General Assembly in 2016 the PIM Committee made an intentional decision to refocus the ministry of our teams. We believe this is bearing fruit.

Instead of having our ministry teams covering large areas of the inland assigned to them, we have now purposely reduced the size of the areas assigned to them so that they can focus more deeply on a smaller number of people. PIM Ministry Teams are now working in more intentional ways, focusing on evangelism and discipling ministries amongst the people with whom they work.

This refocusing has meant that we have revamped our training, planning and reporting processes to help equip our teams to apply this strategy. We praise God that the ministry teams have embraced this direction and they are seeing more intentional conversations developing because they are building deeper relationships with people they are visiting more frequently.

PIM Committee

During this triennium, the Committee has also developed governance policies and practices to enable it better to discharge its duties in an effective manner. The Committee now meets four times per year and directs its focus towards thoughtfully considering matters of organisational purpose and effectiveness, strategy, long term viability and stewardship. A

number of Committee members have undertaken governance training to further equip them for their roles.

Since our last report, Mrs Heather Ross, Rev. Derek Bullen and Rev. Alan Clarkson have resigned from the committee. Mrs Evelyn Mill has decided not to stand for re-election to the committee. The deliverance contains separate clauses to thank these long-term members for the ministry they have contributed to the work of the committee.

This has resulted in a casual vacancy in Queensland and the committee has filled this vacancy with Rev. Andrew Clausen. The casual vacancy in NSW has been filled with Rev. Peter Barber who has moved from Queensland to NSW. Following Rev. Peter Barber's move to NSW this has now created a vacancy in Queensland. The casual vacancy in South Australia has been filled by Rev. Josh Bouzanquet.

List of current committee members is as follows;

NSW	Rev. Peter Barber, Rev. Sam Smith, Mrs Evelyn Mill
QLD	Rev. Andrew Clausen, Vacant
SA	Rev. Josh Bouzanquet
TAS	Rev. Peter Williamson
VIC	Rev. Martin de Pyle, Mr Dennis Wright
WA	Rev. Ross Fraser
Convener	Rev. Les Fowler

All of the committee members and the convener, with the exception of Mrs Evelyn Mill are nominated by the committee for election to the committee. The committee hopes to bring two further nominations to fill the two vacant positions on the committee in New South Wales and Queensland.

Ministry Teams

At this time we have ministry teams working in the following areas;

Mount Magnet WA	Rev. Surendra and Mrs Ma'yan Wesley
Darling Patrol NSW	Mr David and Mrs Gae McDonald
Mungo Patrol NSW	Mr Colin and Mrs Alison Morrow P/T
South Patrol QLD	Mr Greg and Mrs Janet Cripps P/T
Leichardt Patrol QLD	Rev. Laurie and Mrs Gwen Peake P/T
Regional Patrol TAS	Rev. Kim Jaeger
St George QLD	Mr Doug and Mrs Marcia Walker P/T

During the previous 3 years Roger and Margaret Crane retired from PIM and Kim Jaeger and Doug and Marcia Walker joined the team.

In addition to our workers on the ground:

Andrew Letcher (CEO) continues to provide important leadership for our workers and in supporting the work of the Committee.

Dennis Rayson works 1 day per week developing "Congregation Connect"

Natalie Miller has joined us in the recently created part-time role of Communications Officer, to help us better communicate with our supporters, and the wider church.

Our team is small when compared to the Gospel opportunities that are before us, and so we continue to pray that the Lord will raise up workers for His harvest field. Throughout the last 3 years we have sought out more workers and have been blessed to be able to appoint Kim Jaeger in Tasmania and Doug and Marcia Walker in Qld. Generally, though, recruitment of suitably skilled people has remained very difficult.

In February 2019, we gave thanks to God for the thirty years of service given by Laurie and Gwen Peake. The Peakes have worked in three different PIM ministries and have shared the Good News of Jesus with countless isolated people.

Support from the Church

We are very grateful to the wider church for its ongoing support of the ministry of PIM both from individuals, congregations and PWA branches. PIM is always looking for ways to encourage more support from the whole church. Most of all we would actively seek your continued prayer support for this is the key element of all that happens with PIM.

In the past couple of years we have been actively reviewing our supporter base and we now have a much better understanding of who is providing financial support. We are developing better and more cost effective ways of communicating with our supporters.

Support for the Church

Our ministry to help remote and rural congregations through “Congregation Connect” is progressing well. This partnership with the PWAD Committee has created a very useful technology tool that allows small groups of people to join in and participate in a church service or a bible study held at some other location. It is easy to use, cost effective and helps close the gap when people are unable to attend regular worship services.

We encourage more congregations to look into this ministry aid and see if it might help their respective congregations. If you need any further information about this exciting aid to ministry, please contact Andrew Letcher (CEO).

Mission Churches

In 2017, the PIM Committee requested the Moderator General's assistance in resolving significant governance challenges related to the Darwin Mission Church. This resulted in a Commission of Assembly being called. That Commission made a number of decisions and instructed PIM to carry out a number of actions. Among these was a request to the PIM Committee to begin putting together a plan to exit its Mission Churches.

At the direction of that Commission, the Darwin Mission Church was placed under the Presbytery of North Queensland.

The PIM Committee then took the following action related to its two remaining Mission Churches.

- The Mt Magnet Mission Church was placed under the oversight of the Presbytery of Western Australia. A Memorandum of Understanding has been entered into between PIM, APWM and the Presbytery in order to fund, organise and oversee the various aspects of this very active ministry.
- After an extensive review, the PIM Committee concluded that the Alice Springs Mission Church had not met expectations. With no pastor, elders or formal congregation in place the committee was unable to find a realistic way to sustain or develop the work. Accordingly, the committee closed the Alice Springs operation in Dec 2017. Twelve people were directly impacted by the decision, but each of those had other churches they could attend within the city of Alice Springs.

Where to from here?

As stated earlier in this report there has been an intentional refocusing of our ministries around evangelism and discipling and new governance practices allowing the Committee to think deeply about the long-term future of PIM.

What has also become apparent to the committee is the need to significantly reassess the way that PIM fulfils its mandate set out in its regulations. PIM, like all Christian ministries in Australia, finds itself in a changing landscape.

In particular:

1. **Fluctuating Income.** For some time, PIM has operated most years with a financial loss. Occasional bequests have helped replenish financial reserves however the long term trend has been one of a slow depletion of reserves. The current trend would likely see PIM fully deplete its reserves in less than a decade.
2. **Difficult Recruitment.** Finding the right people to serve in the PIM context has been a challenge for a long time. With a fresh focus on Evangelism and Discipling, the PIM Committee is seeking to recruit people with the right skills for this work. This is not easy.
3. **A Growing Need.** Effective Gospel witness in many remote and rural areas around our nation is declining. There is a significant opportunity for missionary activity in our own ‘backyard’

The PIM Committee has deeply and prayerfully considered these matters and considered a range of possible future scenarios for PIM.

The Committee is committed to vigorously pursue its mandate and has therefore developed a bold new vision to put in place a new means to reach our continent with the

Gospel. This vision will support our current work of ministry teams reaching out into the rural and remote parts of Australia, as well as creating additional opportunities for Gospel ministry.

New Dunesk

When Henrietta Smith, of Dunesk Scotland, gave her financial gift that helped fund the 'Smith of Dunesk' Mission in remote South Australia in 1894, she surely could not have comprehended how her actions contributed to the development of the Australian Inland Mission and the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The Committee now believes that in PIM's second century of ministry it is time to once again set out boldly and create a 'New Dunesk'.

In order to tackle the challenges before us, particularly recruitment, the PIM committee is seeking to:

'Establish a rural facility from which God's people will be inspired, equipped and sent out for ministry to INLAND Australia.'

This new property will be named 'New Dunesk' and will be set up to create a place where God's people can catch afresh the vision for taking the Gospel to the remote and sparsely populated areas of our continent, and receive effective training to help them do that.

We are already well underway in developing evangelism and discipling focused resources to equip Grey Nomads, Gap Year students, Country elders, prospective ministry trainees and others for Gospel ministry across our continent. Our hope is that some of these people will then engage in some form of service with PIM, some will take up rural ministry opportunities in the wider church and all will be inspired and equipped to share the Gospel with those around them, wherever they live and work.

This property, New Dunesk, will be in a place that is accessible to the major population centres of SE Australia. It will allow PIM to put in place the necessary infrastructure to pursue its mission, not just for today but well into the future.

The PIM Committee has, in its long term investment portfolio, the funds to purchase and set up this property. At present these funds are invested in the Stock Market. The purchase of New Dunesk will allow PIM to diversify its investments by selling a portion of those shares and investing them in a piece of real estate that will have the potential to serve the whole church.

The Committee intends to bring to the GAA a presentation about New Dunesk in order that commissioners might also catch the vision for what we are trying to do and give us the necessary approvals to proceed.

Thank you for your continuing prayer support of PIM as well all of the practical and financial support that we receive.

L.G. FOWLER, Convener

A. LETCHER, Chief Executive Officer

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

As you are aware the Presbyterian Women's Association is a ministry to and by women within the Presbyterian Church of Australia. There has been a Federal Executive since 1954. The PWA operates through local branches that are part of individual congregations and parishes throughout Australia. The aim of these local branches is to encourage women within the Presbyterian church to serve and follow Christ. They seek to support women to grow in the knowledge and love of Christ. Each branch will do this in the best way they can within their local church environment and support the ministry of their local congregation. These branches join together through State Units. Each State operates under a different State constitution and so is shaped differently to suit the needs and resources of the State. There are many things that are in common throughout all PWA groups and State Units especially a strong focus on supporting the global spread of the Gospel and those involved in ministry to Indigenous Australians and overseas through APWM as well as the ministry of the Presbyterian Inland Mission.

At the General Assembly of Australia in 2016 a new Constitution for the PWA was approved. Changes were made to accommodate the difficulties of appointing a full Federal Executive from one state. While the larger states were able to supply a full executive, the smaller member states could not and this made it difficult for the State rotation of the Federal Executive to continue. Under the new Constitution the Federal Executive has included representatives from each state that continues to have a State Unit. The role of Federal President will continue to rotate states. Julie White from Western Australia has been the Federal President from 2016 to 2019. The Federal President nominate for 2019-2022 is Heather Burton from Queensland.

This three-year period has seen the PWA successfully transition to this new way of running the Federal Executive. The NSW State Unit of the PWA donated funds toward the expenses of regular teleconferences to enable the efficient functioning of the Federal Executive. Though there have been some teething difficulties with the new arrangements they are currently working well.

Unfortunately, this triennium has seen the closure of the State Unit in South Australia. A dwindling and aging membership, combined with long distances between branches made it difficult to sustain a State Executive. This is a great sadness as the previous triennium saw the discontinuance of the State Unit in Tasmania. This now means that only three states continue to be affiliated to the Federal Executive – Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. PWA branches and individuals in South Australia and Tasmania are able to link into the wider PWA network through the State units in NSW or Queensland.

This does not mean that the ministry of PWA is totally missing from South Australia as there continue to be branches operating in local churches. They continue to meet together to encourage each other and serve their Lord in their local congregations.

The Federal Executive continues to encourage and pray faithfully for the work of the PWA at both State and local levels. There are many challenges to the work of the PWA, not least our aging membership but those who do link in continue to learn more about Jesus and have opportunities to serve Him in many ways.

Our triennial Federal Conference will be held on 9 September 2019 at PCNSW church offices in Chalmers Street, Surry Hills. This year our theme is “Women after God’s Own Heart” and Anna Moss will be leading our devotions and speaking on her role as Women’s Ministries Facilitator for the PCNSW. We are also looking forward to hearing about the work of the PIM and APWM and meeting both the outgoing and incoming Moderators-General.

Please continue to uphold the ministry of women through the Presbyterian Women’s Association in your prayers. Pray that we will faithfully serve our Lord in all that we do and in the way that we do it.

State Summaries – 2016-2019

New South Wales

We thank God for our State Council which meets monthly and for Standing Committee ministries which are continuing with good support from our membership. All aspects of ministry in the wider church are being supported by our members through scripture, eldership, APWM Committee, Christ College, Teaching & Training for Women, National Church Women, World Day of Prayer, Church planting and Aged Care. Each year our Annual Conference has been held in July with all executive positions filled. There are 16 PWA Presbyteries throughout NSW with approx. 75 branches and 700+ members and 90+ Associate members. Our SPAN magazine continues a fine tradition of keeping members well informed with great articles.

Queensland

The PWA of A (Qld Unit) thanks God for His blessings and grace towards us. Our members remain faithful to their calling to be in our Lord's Service. State Council meets monthly on the 4th Thursday of the month. Our Communion and Dedication Service precedes our Annual State Conference and Meeting, Monthly branch meetings and PA Rallies bring our ladies together in Christian fellowship, praising our Lord for His great love.

Western Australia

PWA (WA) has been continuing along at a steady pace in the past 3 years. We have a full committee of godly, committed, active and enthusiastic women and about 35 members

altogether. Our 'At Home' days continue to encourage members and visitors who come along on the day. Our Easter Monday Picnics encourage families, the young, and the not so young, from all our congregations. Our Women's Encouragement Day is held on a Saturday and enables working women to attend. There are some younger women coming into our congregations who are being encouraged in their walk with the Lord through PWA.

PUBLIC WORSHIP AND AIDS TO DEVOTION

Meetings & Communications

Over the last three years the Committee has met 3 times, the last two extending over a period of two days. In between the intervening months we have continued the work of the Committee via emails, phone calls and video links.

Leaving our Committee at the rising of the house is former Convener and long-time member, Rev. Michael Wharton who has given many years of sterling service that has incorporated denominational websites, online PresKey, Rejoice! HymnBase and many other things. We thank him sincerely and wish him well in his artistic endeavours of photography.

Others who left the Committee as a result of GAA's restructuring of the composition of its Committees last Assembly are: Rev. Andrew Unwin, Joy Bartholomew and David Seaman. Again, we thank them for their service to the Committee.

Cooperation With Other GAA Committees

Presbyterian Inland Mission (PIM)

We continue our collaboration with Presbyterian Inland Mission (PIM) and its CEO, Andrew Letcher. PWAD has supplied funding and counsel for the continuing roll-out of the Congregation Connect Programme. PIM's Dennis Rayson heads up this programme supplying remote churches and ministries with live video and audio feeds to other congregations. Client churches invest a small amount of money to sustain the programme and to provide them with continuous teaching, worship services and bible studies.

The next major promotion of this programme is the Henty Field Day (17-19 September, 2019). Held in Henty NSW, it attracts 50,000 attendees over the three-day period, of which 20,000 are farmers. The Wagga Wagga Presbytery is arranging a "drop-in" centre to assist isolated farmers. There will be everything from personal discussion with a concerned listener to assistance from trained counsellors. Remote farmers can be introduced to Bible-based friendship groups using Congregation Connect as a vehicle. Interested farmers will be able to leave with a copy of the software in their phone or a link can be emailed to them if they need to work with the Internet.

We encourage members and churches to avail themselves of these useful advances in technology to help to promote and sustain the Gospel witness in the remote parts of Australia. Contact PIM for more information.

Church and Nation

As flagged in the Committee's report to the last GAA, we anticipated the change in the Government's Marriage Act. We have been in collaboration with the GAA Church & Nation Committee, the state equivalent bodies and representatives from our theological halls and Assembly officers. We have worked very hard to present to this Assembly the information below for our part in the larger discussion brought by the Church & Nation Committee.

Christian Education

The Committee has also had conversations with the Christian Education Committee concerning more modern approaches to the provision and dissemination of resources to the wider denomination. With physical printing of materials now very costly, our two Committees are exploring ways and means to gather, promote and download relevant resources to encourage people in their faith and personal growth, spiritual recovery, church office training, as well as suitable forms, documents and certificates required in ongoing parish ministry.

It is hoped that we can make better use of both state and national church websites, FaceBook, and other social media in providing downloadable outlets for these resources.

Congregational Survey

The Committee's Regulations require it to "...advise the Assembly on trends in worship

within and without Australia..." The Committee has begun a process to provide leadership in areas of public worship for the wider Australian Presbyterian Church. Presbyterian worship can range in style from traditional to contemporary, as suits the needs of individual congregations. However, there are currently no accurate records regarding Presbyterian worship in Australia that would enable the PWAD committee to report to the General Assembly as the regulations require, or to bring to the General Assembly proposals regarding the development of appropriate resources.

In order to gain a snapshot of what happens during public worship within the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Committee has endorsed a short research project.

What we hope to find out

The guiding research question for this project will be: What are the elements of public worship in the places of worship of our denomination?

The following areas of interest will guide the data collection:

- The variety of formats followed in public worship.
- The place of music and its provision in public worship.
- The need for nationwide data on present song choice.
- The diversity of possible practices for corporate prayer.
- The contribution of elders and members during public worship.
- The versions of the Bible used in public worship.
- The usefulness of the present Book of Common Order to those leading public worship.
- The administration of the sacraments.
- The collection of philosophies of worship - written by many while in theological college.

This information will be gathered using the following processes:

A: Collection of Orders of Service

Each congregation will be contacted through their presbytery and asked to provide copies of their Order of Service documents for the month of November 2019. These Order of Service documents will provide the starting point for understanding the basic trends in public worship within the Presbyterian Church of Australia. For more infrequent worship services than monthly, we will ask for an order of service from the worship service closest to November 2019.

Churches can email or post their order of service data for November this year:

- in QLD and SA to Rev. Scott Kroeger, 11a Sunnyside Court, Maleny Qld 4552
Email: cskroeger@bigpond.com
- in NSW and ACT to Rev. Stuart Andrews, 3 Jenkins St., Nundle NSW 2340
Email: saa74mfa@internode.on.net
- in Victoria and TAS to Rev. Luke Isham, PO BOX 985, Horsham Vic 3400
Email: luke.isham@gmail.com
- in WA to Mr Bill MacRae, 66 Harmony Pde, Singleton, WA, 6175
Email: bill240242@yahoo.com.au

They may also be deposited in PWAD's Dropbox, the address for which will be given in formal correspondence to presbyteries and churches.

B: Questionnaire

A short questionnaire will be circulated to all congregations next year. This survey will gather further information about the conduct of public worship. The main questions within this survey will be used to answer the sub-questions. They will be in multiple choice form and short answer responses so that the survey will be easy and quick to complete but also allow for individual responses to be further fleshed out.

These surveys will also gather information regarding the location of each congregation and the number of elders who serve within that congregation.

How will this information be used?

The information gathered from the Orders of Service and the questionnaire results will be analysed to gain a snap-shot of current public worship trends in the Presbyterian Church of Australia. A report will be created and disseminated through the Church's official channels.

It will also be available on the PWAD website. From the data received the Committee intends to bring recommendations to the next meeting of the Assembly.

Worship Directory – Wedding Vows Revision

This project has occupied much more of our time as a Committee, mostly in setting up the collaboration of teams of people including theologians, State committees handling social and public issues, moderators, clerks and other denominational leaders. It has been a work of pulling people's ideas and requests together ... and finding agreement. We have been through several drafts and finally have something we want to present to the Assembly. Some of the best counsel has come from the Moderator-General in conversation followed up in subsequent communications. He highlighted that times have changed, and circumstances of Government policy have made it necessary for the General Assembly of Australia to respond to the federal Governments use of the term, "*vows administered by the rites of their denomination*". These rites in the Presbyterian Church of Australia are not prescribed or codified as far as the law is concerned. Our denomination is exposed to future litigation that would be hard to defend because our Directory of Worship is the only thing we have, and it is not prescriptive for ministers. The Moderator-General advised that the Committee seek to change the wording of the preface to its wedding services and the vows in order to clearly present a Scriptural view of marriage in light of present cultural norms. And we must find a way to carefully find a balance between being prescriptive enough to satisfy the legal interests and still give ministers some freedom in how they may conduct wedding services.

The following is an overview of the changes we recommend:

Preamble

We propose the introduction of a preamble in the Marriage Section of the Assembly approved publication, *Worship – The Book of Common Order*. This preamble has been strengthened to make clear the GAA's understandings of the:

- Definition & purpose of marriage
- Marriage partner
- Legality
- Definition of the rites of the Presbyterian Church
- Purpose of these marriage rites

Clarified rites

We have sought to clarify the "*rites of our denomination*" by making all versions consistent, beginning with an historic minimalist version of vows, the key components of which are in bold script to mark them as "essential components of the Rites of the Presbyterian Church of Australia." These "essentials" are found in the same form in each of the sets of vows—also in bold text to clearly identify them.

We removed all previous sets of vows and replaced them with:

- **Simple Order** - (A simple order satisfying the rites of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, echoing the Westminster Directory of Public Worship 1645.) This includes an Explanation, Prayer of Blessing, Declarations of Intention, Vows, Declaration of Marriage.
- **Extended Order** - (An extended order in modern language with suitable options.)
- **Traditional Order** - (A Traditional Order that echoes the wording of the 1962 second edition of the PCA Book of Common Order.)

Consistency

We sought to ensure a consistent use of personal pronouns, words and language between the several orders of service, with the exception of the traditional vows which kept as much of the original language as we could allow.

The Committee spent a great deal of group time with word-smithing of terms and phrases, and then reading each of the vows aloud to a group to ensure that the sounds and phrases were congenial to the listener.

There were lots of ideas, lots of opinions—some strongly held and contested—but in God's grace we were able to fashion together what we believe is a good and useful set of marriage vows that will comply with the laws of the land insofar as the GAA is willing to abide, comply with our beliefs and Scripture and satisfy those who would come to us with a desire

to be joined in holy matrimony.

If the Assembly approves the proposed changes, the Committee will edit *Worship – The Book of Common Order* and provide various downloadable formats on our website.

We have also been asked to look at clarification as to how ministers should deal with the “Notice of Intent to Marriage” when birth certificates in some states no longer list gender on them.

PWAD Resources

The Committee determined late last year to consolidate its two websites and the internal Pray programme into a single website eliminating the need to go to differing websites in planning a worship service. Now, at pwad.org.au, people will find:

- Short and long documents on the subject of holy worship which conforms to our Reformed & Presbyterian heritage, its confessions and Scripture as its guide.
- The online *Directory of Worship*, broken into chapters, but also downloadable as a .pdf file, that can be read in a PDF reader like Adobe Acrobat, as well as iBook and Kindle.
- A huge collection of prayers that is searchable, categorised for all occasions of worship and public expression. These have hot-links to find things quickly. They are available PDF, iBooks and Kindle formats.
- Practical help in putting together a worship service with templates and suggested scriptural rubrics introducing component parts of worship. There is also a video series to help someone in preparing and delivering a sermon or bible talk.
- *Bible Guideposts* are short notes designed to help someone read the whole Bible over three years and to find their way in the unfamiliar territory of Bible material, history and world setting. It seeks to point out the bigger picture from the Scriptures, to make connections between Old and New Testaments.
- *Rejoice! PLUS Hymnbase* continues to service the denomination in the aftermath of its final publication. Hymns and songs that we still have permission of copyright are still available for download that includes words, sheet music and preformatted PowerPoint slides. And you can listen to them too!
- Useful links to:
 - Music sites with even more music for worship purposes
 - Ministry Resources including videos, films, bibles, graphic designs etc.
 - Children’s Ministries
 - Video information on how to record audio sermons/services to get a file size that is reasonable to upload to your church website while still being of good quality.
- New to the stable of resources is that, beginning in 2020, the Committee will take over the publication of the PCQ’s annual *Book of Family Worship* that enjoyed a national subscription to printed copies over the years. PWAD will not charge any fees and will endeavour to keep the format close to the same but make it downloadable from our website for families and churches to use.

Future Projects in Planning Stages

Smartphone and notepad apps

These are being investigated for such resources as the *Rejoice! Hymnbase* and our own PWAD website with a view to making them available either to selected clientele or made generally available in Australia and overseas according to our needs, taking into account legal issues, duty of care and other restraints. The Committee has approved the expenditure of up to \$1,000.00 on the production of an app for access to *Worship* which, when complete, we will trial.

Expansion of our website library

PWAD has an assortment of material in the areas of public worship, aids to devotion, bible studies, and training material (e.g. for lay preachers, Bible reading in worship and other ministries, Scripture or children’s work course material, devotional material). With the new website, this material will be expanded.

Marketing resources at state assemblies.

We are seeking a way to make USB sticks available at meetings of state assemblies and the GAA to promote some of our website materials to commissioners.

Web-links

We are seeking to establish links between congregational websites and the PWAD website via an annual letter to all congregations in the PCA's database.

Baptismal Vows

We have noted that there are variant forms of vows for parents seeking infant/Covenant Baptism for their children in the Worship Book. It was determined that the Publications Subcommittee will review the Baptism section of Worship for any needed changes.

Committee Membership

Convener: Rev. Scott Kroeger (Convener)
New South Wales (3): Rev. Stuart Andrews (Secretary), Dr Michael Whitelaw,
Vacancy
Queensland (2): Rev. Andrew Clark, Dr Hugh Nelson,
South Australia (1): Rev. Gary Ware
Tasmania (1): Vacancy
Victoria (2): Rev. Luke Isham, Matthew James (Treasurer)
Western Australia (1): Mr Bill MacRae

Proposed Revisions to Worship! – The Book of Common Order

Guiding Principles

1. Purpose of Marriage Marriage is an institution ordained by God for his glory and the happiness of humanity, in which one man and one woman enter into a bodily and spiritual union, as long as they both shall live. The Presbyterian Church of Australia affirms that binary male-female gender can be observed in the world and in Scripture. Therefore, the Presbyterian Church of Australia asserts that marriage remains a life-long union between one man and one woman for the benefit of them, their children and society.

2. Marriage Partner Ministers should counsel the couple prior to the marriage about the covenantal nature of this commitment, the responsibilities of family life and the importance of spiritual compatibility.

3. Legality Ministers who are registered religious celebrants should take due care to fulfil the regulations of the Federal Marriage Act and any relevant civil laws. However, some ministers who are not celebrants under the Marriage Act, may perform a wedding service as a religious rite, and not as the Authorised Celebrant responsible for registering a marriage under the Marriage Act. All weddings or marriages must take place before two or three witnesses, and be carefully documented.

4. Definition of the Rites of the Presbyterian Church The following three marriage orders, prepared according to Scriptural principles, are approved by the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Presbyterian ministers may vary the wording and sequence of the orders according to Scriptural principles. The Presbyterian Church of Australia considers these orders, original or varied, to constitute their 'rites of marriage'.

5. Purpose of these Marriage Rites The Federal Marriage Act (1961) permits ministers of participating denominations to formalise marriages "according to the rites" of their denomination. The following three marriage orders, original or varied, constitute the "Rites of the Presbyterian Church of Australia."

(A simple order satisfying the rites of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, echoing the Westminster Directory of Public Worship, 1645.)

Explanation

Minister:

We are gathered here in the sight of God and before this congregation to join this man and this woman in marriage.

Marriage was established by God for his glory and the happiness of mankind, in which, one man and one woman enter into a bodily and spiritual union, so long as they both shall live. It was also established for the continuance of family life and for the welfare of human society. Husbands and wives are to be faithful to each other, to assist each other in all good things, to forbear and to forgive each other, and to love each other as themselves. Thus united in love, their marriage will reflect more and more the unity of Christ and his Church.

Prayer of Blessing

Minister:

Almighty God, we lift up our hearts to you in adoration. We thank you for creating marriage and we thank you for the love of this man for this woman and of this woman for this man. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon them and fill their hearts with gratitude to you for your great love for them, given to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Bless them with the fruit of the Holy Spirit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And bless them as they serve each other, just as Jesus served us by giving his life as a ransom for our sins, in his name. Amen.

Declaration of Intention

Minister:

[M ...] will you take [F ...] to be your wife and do you commit yourself to her in love and honour, in duty and service, in faith and tenderness, to live with her and to cherish her in the exclusive bond of marriage?

Bridegroom responds:

I will.

Minister:

[F ...] will you take [M ...] to be your husband and do you commit yourself to him in love and honour, in duty and service, in faith and tenderness, to live with him and to cherish him in the exclusive bond of marriage?

Bride responds:

I will.

Vows

The bridegroom says:

I, [M ...], take you, [F ...], to be my wife in the presence of God and before this congregation. I promise to be a loving, faithful and dutiful husband to you so long as we both shall live.

The bride says:

I, [F ...], take you, [M ...], to be my husband in the presence of God and before this congregation. I promise to be a loving, faithful and dutiful wife to you so long as we both shall live.

Declaration of Marriage

Minister:

Now that you have made your covenant together in marriage, declaring it before God and this congregation, I declare that you are husband and wife.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord pour out the riches of his grace upon you, so that you may please him and live together in love until your life's end.

Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate.

Extended Order

(An extended order in modern language with suitable options.)

Music

Entry of the Bridal Party

Selected verses from Psalms 145-148

Hymn of praise

Welcome

Prayer

Bible Readings:

Genesis 2:4-7, 18-24

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Mark 10:2-9

Explanation

Minister:

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today in the sight of God and before this congregation to join together this man and this woman in Marriage.

Marriage was designed by God and given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Throughout the Scriptures marriage is an honoured relationship. The Lord Jesus Himself performed His first miracle – turning water into wine – at the celebration of a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Marriage is presented to us in the Bible as the right and honourable way for a man and woman to share life and love and to serve each other. It is the primary human relationship through which we grow and learn, mature and prosper.

Marriage is therefore not to be entered upon lightly or with any reservation. We should approach it thoughtfully, reverently, and in respect for God, with due consideration of the reasons God has given it to us.

Marriage is designed for the life-long companionship, help, and comfort, which a husband and wife ought to give to and receive from each other.

Marriage is designed to provide security for family life, so that children, whom God's entrusts to us, should be duly nurtured and guided in His ways.

Marriage is designed for the welfare of society, which can be strong and happy only where the marriage bond is held in honour.

The bond of marriage is seen in the Bible as a sign of the loyalty and the love that exists between Christ and his church.

Declaration of Lawfulness

Minister:

If anyone can show any reason why this marriage would not be lawful, let them now declare it.

And I require and charge you both, knowing that you are answerable to God, that if either of you know any reason why your marriage would not be lawful, you declare it now.

Declaration of Intention

Minister:

[M ...], will you have [F ...] to be your wedded wife, to live together after God's design in the unique bond of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, remain loyal to her for as long as you both shall live?

Groom:

I will

Minister:

[F ...], will you have [M ...] to be your wedded husband, to live together after God's design in the unique bond of marriage?

Will you love, respect and submit to him, honour and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, remain loyal to him, for as long as you both shall live?

Bride:

I will.

Statement of Support and Blessing

(The Minister addresses the parents, or substitutes.)

Minister:

Do you give your blessing to this marriage and welcome them into your family?

Parents or Substitutes:

I/We do.

Vows

(Bride hands her flowers to chief bridesmaid. Couple join hands.)

Minister:

[M ...] would you please repeat after me as you make your vow to [F ...].

I, [M ...], take you, [F ...], to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, to cherish, and to comfort, till death do us part, according to God's Holy Word; and before Him and these people I promise always to be true and faithful to you.

Minister:

[F ...] would you please repeat after me as make your vow to [M ...].

I, [F ...], take you, [M ...], to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, to cherish, and to respect, till death do us part, according to God's Holy Word; and before Him and these people I promise always to be true and faithful to you.

Exchange of Rings

(Minister receives rings from Best Man)

Minister:

As symbols of the covenant into which you have entered, these rings are given and

received.

Minister:

[M ...], would you please repeat after me:

This ring is a symbol of the binding promise I have freely made and with it I seal the pledge of my love to you
in the Name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Minister:

[F ...], would you please repeat after me:

This ring is a symbol of the binding promise I have freely made and with it I seal the pledge of my love to you in the Name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of Blessing

Minister:

Now let us join together in praying for [M ...] and [F ...].

God our Father, in your great love for humanity you have given the gift of marriage. May you so bless [M ...] and [F ...] as they pledge their lives to each other, that their love may ever more grow to be the true reflection of your love for us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer may be said.

Declaration of the Marriage

Minister:

As [M ...] and [F ...] have promised themselves to each other in marriage, and have declared the same before God and this congregation, I now pronounce them to be husband and wife: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What God has joined together let no one separate.

[M ...], you may kiss your bride.

Hymn

Bible Reading:

Ephesians 5:21-33 - Colossians 3:12-17

Sermon

Blessing on the Marriage

Minister:

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace, both now and forevermore. Amen.

Benediction

Minister:

The peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds

in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you until that Day comes when our Lord Jesus returns. Amen.

Signing of the Register

(The wedding party shall then proceed to sign the register.)

Presentation

Minister:

Please stand! I have much pleasure in presenting to you today Mr. & Mrs. [M ...].

Traditional Order

(A Traditional Order that echoes the wording of the 1962 second edition of the PCA Book of Common Order.)

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. (Psalm 127:1)

Our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 124:8)

Hymn or Psalm

Explanation

Minister:

Dear Family and Friends we have come here today in the presence of God and before each other to join together this man [M ...] and this woman [F ...] in marriage.

Marriage is a covenant relationship, instituted by God when he created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. Marriage is commended in the Bible as honourable in all things. Marriage is used in the Bible to picture the relationship between Christ and his Church.

Marriage is not to be entered into lightly or carelessly but thoughtfully, reverently and in the fear of God; after giving due consideration for the purpose for which God ordained marriage.

God ordained marriage for the life-long companionship, help, pleasure and comfort which husband and wife ought to have of each other.

God ordained marriage so that family life might flourish and that children might be brought up in the faith, love and security of a stable and happy home.

God ordained marriage for the welfare of human society, which can be strong and happy only where the marriage bond is held in honour.

[M ...] and [F ...] now desire to enter this deep and life-long relationship with each other.

Declaration of Lawfulness

Minister:

If anyone can show any reason why this marriage would not be lawful, let them now declare it.

And I require and charge you both, knowing that you are answerable to God, that if either of you know any reason why your marriage would not be lawful, you declare it now.

Prayer of Blessing

Minister:

Let us ask God's blessing on this marriage.

Almighty and ever blessed God, we acknowledge you in all our ways. We thank you for all the bounties of Your providence, and for all the gifts of your grace to us in this life. Especially today we thank you for the gift of marriage, which you have ordained to guard, hallow and mature the love that [M ...] and [F ...] have for each other.

Heavenly Father, please bless [M ...] and [F ...] as they are united in this bond of marriage. As you have brought them together in your providence, sanctify them by your Spirit, and enrich them with all grace as they cultivate their marriage, so that it will flourish in times of prosperity and adversity, bring joy to their families and great happiness to themselves.

We also thank you for the gift of love – for the love and concern of parents and of all those who have taught, guided and cared for them through the years; and for the love and trust which have drawn [M ...] and [F ...] together in marriage. May they also enjoy your lovingkindness down through the long years.

We ask all this, together with the forgiveness of our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Declaration of Intention

The minister:

[M ...] will you take this woman, [F ...], to be your wedded wife to live together after God's law in the covenant relationship of marriage?

Will you love [F ...], comfort her, honour and keep her in sickness and in health, so long as you both shall live?

Bridegroom responds:

I will.

Minister:

[F ...] will you take this man, [M ...], to be your wedded husband to live together after God's law in the covenant relationship of marriage?

Will you love [M ...], comfort him, honour and keep him in sickness and in health, so long as you both shall live?

Bride responds:

I will.

Statement of Support and Blessing

(The minister now addresses the father of the bride or substitute.)

Minister:

Who gives this woman [F ...] to be married to this man [M ...]?

Bride's father or substitute responds:

I do.

Vows

The minister says:

Please face each other and join hands and repeat these vows after me.

The bridegroom says:

In the presence of God and before these people, I, [M ...], do take you, [F ...], to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death us do part, according to God's holy law, and thereto, [F ...], I give you my troth/ true word/ pledged word.

The bride says:

In the presence of God and before these people, I, [F ...], do take you, [M ...], to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish till death us do part, according to God's holy law, and thereto, [M ...], I give you my troth/ true word/ pledged word.

Exchange of Rings

(The ring/s is/are given to the minister)

The minister says:

Either:

In your Name, O Lord, we hallow and dedicate this ring, that by your blessing, he who gives it and she who wears it, may abide together in your peace, continue together in your favour, live together in your love and, through faith in your Son Christ Jesus, may finally dwell together in your eternal kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Or:

In Your Name, O Lord, we hallow and dedicate these rings, that by your blessing, [M ...] and [F ...], in giving and in wearing, may abide together in your peace, continue together in your favour, live together in your love and, through faith in your Son Christ Jesus, may finally dwell together in your eternal kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The minister says to the groom:

[M ...] please hold [F ...] left hand with your left hand, take the ring in your right hand and place it over the tip of the ring finger on her left hand and repeat after me:

[F ...], with this ring I wed you, with my whole mind I make covenant with you, in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

With two rings, the minister says to the bride:

[F ...] please hold [M ...] left hand with your left hand, take the ring in your right hand and place it over the tip of the ring finger on his left hand and repeat after me:

[M ...], with this ring I wed you, with my whole mind I make covenant with you, in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Declaration of Marriage

(The congregation shall stand and the minister shall say:)

Forasmuch as you, [M ...], and you, [F...], have covenanted together in holy wedlock and have declared the same before God and these people, I pronounce you to be husband and wife, in the Name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder.

Blessing on the Marriage

(The bride and the groom may kneel.)

Minister:

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord pour out the riches of his mercy upon you that you may find grace to live together in love until your life's end. Amen.

The groom may now kiss the bride.

A marriage hymn is sung.

Words of Counsel

Minister:

The duty, which this relationship of marriage chiefly imposes, is the mutual love, respect and help that each should have of each other. This is plainly set forth in the Bible:

Scripture readings

(The Scriptures are read, and words of counsel are given.)

Prayer for the Couple

Minister:

Let us pray:

O LORD our God, you are the Author and Giver of all good things. Grant that [N ...] and [F ...] may dwell together in unity and love all the days of their life, seeking one another's welfare, bearing one another's burdens, and sharing one another's joys. May your love be the true foundation and light of their home. May their happiness not depend upon their outward circumstances, but rest on the assurances you have given us in the Gospel of your Son.

Make them a blessing to their neighbours, their friends, their family and the generations that follow. When everything is going well, help them not to take their blessings for granted. When they face the difficulties of life, guide them by your Spirit that they may know your way. When they come to suffering and sorrow, may they be drawn closer together and nearer to you.

What we have asked for [N ...] and [F ...], Father, we ask for each family represented here today – that those who pledged their love to each other long ago may find their love deepened; and that those who have taken marriage vows may now renew them, and strengthen their love for each other to the great happiness and blessing of us all.

The Lord's Prayer may be said.

Benediction:

Minister:

The peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you until that Day comes when our Lord Jesus returns. Amen.

Signing of the Register

(The wedding party shall then proceed to sign the register.)

Presentation

Minister:

Please stand! I have much pleasure in presenting to you today Mr. & Mrs. [M ...].

C. S. KROEGER, Convener.

RECEPTION OF MINISTERS

Introduction

The Committee has worked harmoniously during the present triennium, with good participation by members in the annual face-to-face meetings, in the conduct of state-based interview panels and in e-voting procedures.

The Convener has chaired all interview panels to help achieve uniformity of process and of standards.

All applicant files and related documents are now digitised, which gives each committee member full access to relevant papers as needed. Time-deadlines, for each stage of the ROMC process, have been introduced, which helps ensure a predictable processing of applications.

All recent and current applicants are reported on below, under appropriate categories. A supplementary report, as necessary, will be presented closer to the meeting of the GAA.

As requested, the Convener gives advice to potential and intending applicants to smooth their path and to help ensure that only eligible applicants come to presbyteries and that applications are not delayed by missing documents.

Overview of application process

The following is provided as a summary of the application process, to help avoid confusion and uncertainty at presbytery level.

1. Applicants obtain a copy of the application form and Guide to Process from the ROMC Convener. Applicants must be ordained and have a definite PCA appointment in hand or in definite prospect;
2. The completed application, with all necessary attachments, is submitted to the Presbytery within whose bounds the applicant expects to serve or is serving;
3. The presbytery reviews the documents, interviews the applicant, makes a recommendation and sends the application form and its recommendation to ROMC;
4. The ROMC convener assesses the eligibility and completeness of the application and arranges a state-based interview panel (thirty day deadline from receipt of application to interview);
5. A first interview is conducted, a recommendation is made by the interview panel and circulated to all ROMC members for e-vote (seven-day deadline for panel report and a further seven-day deadline for committee e-vote);
6. If successful, the application is sent to the grading sub-committee (College Committee) for review of studies (thirty-day deadline);
7. Any required studies are advised to applicants who have three years to complete them;
8. When studies are certified as complete, a further interview is conducted, parallel to the first interview, and including checks with present ministry overseers;
9. If successful, the applicant and his presbytery are advised that he is eligible to sign the Formula.

ROMC processes are separate from employment by a PCA congregation. Such employment is a matter of state and presbytery decision. In general, applicants can be employed by a church prior to, and even independent of, ROMC processes.

Applicants related to ethnically-defined congregations

The Committee is periodically contacted by an applicant linked to an ethnically-defined congregation of the PCA. This raises the question of whether there should be special provision for a man whose ministry is unlikely ever to be outside that ethnic community.

Particular care is taken with these applicants in communicating ROMC processes and they are encouraged to have a suitable PCA minister help them with the application. In assessing their application, the committee is mindful of the ethnically-defined ministry that is in view. We are also sensitive that the minister needs English language skills sufficient to participate in the wider courts of the church and that they demonstrate capacity to lead their church through the adaptation to Australian culture that the second and later generations of their community will undertake.

Applicants considered by GAA 2016

Resigned or withdrew application

- Rev. Stephen Desilva (Presbytery of Western Australia, October 2016)
- Rev. Nathan Holloway (Presbytery of Western Australia, June 2017)
- Rev. Gordon Peden (Presbytery of the Hunter, June 2017)

Studies completed and formula signed

- Rev. Sam Chidamber (Presbytery of Brisbane, October 2018)
- Rev. Kim Jaeger (Presbytery of Bass, December 2017)
- Rev. Karem Krayyem (Presbytery of Melbourne East, October 2018)
- Rev. Brett Peatman (Presbytery of Flinders, December 2017)
- Rev. Joshua Swartz (Presbytery of Mowbray, April 2018)

Studies or process incomplete

- Rev. Seong Mo Byun (Presbytery of Western Australia, studies set August 2016)
- Rev. Douglas Campbell (Presbytery of Melbourne East, studies set May 2017)
- Rev. Minoro Morimoto (Presbytery of Western Australia, studies set January 2017)
- Rev. David Whittingham (Presbytery of Central Tablelands, studies set December 2014 and for whom the committee suggests a one year pause of process)

Applicants approved from a Minister of a Presbyterian or Reformed church under Regulation 12

- Rev. Andrew Matthews (Presbyterian Church in America, Presbytery of the Illawarra, December 2017)
- Rev. Luke Yelland (Christ Community Church, Presbytery of Melbourne North, April 2018)

Applicants requiring decision by GAA 2019

- Rev. Doug Wannenburgh (Church of England in South Africa, Presbytery of Brisbane). Details of his application will be submitted in a separate paper at the GAA.

Applications in process under Regulation 12

- Rev. Young Soo Kim (Presbytery of Mowbray)
- Rev. Jae Hack Lee (Presbytery of Inner West Sydney)
- Rev. Richard Zylstra (Presbytery of Wide Bay / Sunshine Coast)

Other applicants

The Committee has indicated willingness to accept an application from Motor Isaac Yat, as a licentiate of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan, supported for ordination by APWM as a missionary, subject to the regular ROMC regulations.

Committee regulations

The Committee has reviewed its regulations and presents proposals for change as follows.

- Reg 5: include provision for a non-refundable application fee to be charged to help defray committee travel expenses involved in processing applications. These are presently a cost to the GAA.
- Reg 5: make provision for obtaining a report from any previous presbytery of service, in the case of an applicant returning to the PCA. This closes a loophole in the case of a previous minister who may have resigned while under process of discipline.
- Reg 8: include explicit provision for a final interview process, and which includes input from the applicant's present ministry overseers.
- Reg 9: prescribe that all applications are sent for assessment by the Grading sub-committee of the GAA College Committee. This give uniformity to process and standards.
- New Reg 11: requiring Presbytery reports from an applicant who has previously been a PCA minister.

- Reg 16: new regulation to cover the old 16(b)(1) deleted by the September 2018 special meeting of the GAA. The proposed regulation gives greater flexibility in the light of tighter and frequently varying immigration arrangements.

Committee membership

The Committee presently consists of the following persons:

- NSW: I Smith, M Hahn, J Park
- Vic: C Siriweera, one vacancy
- Qld: G Millar, A Richardson
- Tas: J Summers
- SA: A Clarkson
- WA: W MacRae
- Assembly Officers (ex officio)
- Convener: D Burke

Rev. I Smith and J. Summers are unavailable for future membership and are thanked for their service.

Committee nominations for 2019-2022 are as follows:

- NSW: M Hahn, M Oates, J Park
- Vic: C Siriweera, G Vanderwert
- Qld: G Millar, A Richardson
- Tas: vacant at time of this report
- SA: A Clarkson
- WA: W MacRae
- Convener: D Burke

The Committee believes it appropriate that the GAA thank the Rev. Guido Kettniss for his service to the GAA as Convener. All committee convenerships require work that is not readily visible, and Mr Kettniss certainly put in the extra hours and work involved with ROMC.

D. BURKE, Convener

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

The framework for this report is the regulations under which we operate, namely, PCA Constitution, Procedure and Practice (CPP) ch 10.18 RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES COMMITTEE. Allowing the regulations to shape the report is a way of ensuring that we are engaging in the work expected of us and that we are fulfilling each part of our mandate.

The functions of the Committee shall be to:

- (a) initiate and maintain relationships with appropriate ecumenical bodies and recommend to the Assembly membership in such bodies;**

Under the heading of ecumenical bodies, the regulations anticipate multiple connections. However, the committee continues to promote just one ecumenical body as a recommendation to the Assembly for membership: the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF). It's a strong fellowship with more than 60 church denominations and another 100 organisational members.

There has recently been a change of International Director to the Rev. Dr Davi Gomes. We haven't heard much from Dr Gomes yet and we suspect that this might have something to do with the transition of directorship and the time needed for him to adjust to this new role in the light of his very significant duties within the Presbyterian Church of Brazil and as Chancellor of Mackenzie Presbyterian University, Sao Paulo.

The Rev. Robert Benn, AM, serves the church thoughtfully and faithfully, as does the Rev. Dr John McClean. Both are on the Board of Directors of the WRF.

Though one of the smallest member denominations, the PCA was, by far, the one with most participants at the WRF General Assembly in Wittenberg, October 2018: noticeably 24 members of the PCA Reformation Tour group along with John McClean, Bob Thomas and

David Jones.

Having said that there is just one ecumenical body to recommend to the Assembly, this doesn't give the full picture of our ecumenical sensibilities. There are other ecumenical bodies that we don't officially 'belong' to but we have an interest and participation in their activities. So, this committee wants to recommend these bodies to the church as well, namely:

- *Thinking of God (TOG)*, where Rev. Kamal Weerakoon takes an active lead as Board member;
- *The Gospel Coalition, Australia (GCA)*, whose organising committee is liberally sprinkled with Presbyterians such as Rev. Neil Chambers, Gary Millar, Bryson Smith and C S Tang;
- *Together for the Gospel (T4G)*, a biennial conference in Kentucky, where three PCV ministers, including your convener, attended recently.

One other aspect of this responsibility is that your committee wants to keep a watchful eye on other ecumenical bodies, even if we do not, and would not want to, hold membership with them. We should keep a discerning eye, for example, on the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), now with 32 member churches, noting that the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia has just applied to become a member and that church denominations such as both Free Churches of Scotland, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the PCEA are members. We should not ignore such a body where several of our like-minded sister churches have lodged.

Then there's the Reformed Ecumenical Committee (at least keeping an informed eye on it). This committee has now merged with another grouping to become, since 2010, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) with 230 member churches, including the Church of Scotland and some of our African partner churches.

In reporting on our observations of bodies such as ICRC and WCRC to our Assembly, we may then be able to recommend that the reasons we left the REC in 2004 (the stance of fellow members such as the GKN) or the reasons we didn't join the ICRC in 2001 (too small a group) are no longer valid – or remain valid – as the case may be.

It's noted that the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of ICRC is being conducted in Melbourne commencing 1 October 2019, and your convener feels constrained to attend to mix and meet with some world church leaders. It should be noted that the Committee has asked the convener to be an official observer without giving any commitments to the body.

(b) arrange for appropriate representation at conferences and councils of such bodies within the restraints applied by the Assembly;

A previous Moderator-General, Rev. David Jones, was the Bible expositor for the final session of the 2018 WRF General Assembly in Wittenberg.

Dr John McClean continues to serve WRF on the Theological Commission.

PCA representation is appreciated and it should be possible to continue the current arrangements of sending the convener to at least one meeting of the WRF per annum, during the triennium.

(c) transmit study documents and resolutions of such bodies to relevant Assembly and State Committees and to make submissions thereon to such bodies;

This we have failed to do. We can't think of one instance where the Committee has done this. Should we apply ourselves to this in the coming triennium, or is this a regulation that could be dispensed with?

(d) foster relationships with other Presbyterian and Reformed Churches throughout the world;

This, we are better at than (c) above. Some recent examples, but in three categories:

1. Our PCA Partner Churches

Managing the relationship between partner churches and PCA belongs to another committee of the Assembly (APWM) and that committee will report more fully on each of these partnerships. However, there is an inevitable overlap of responsibility, so from this committee's point of view, in brief:

i) Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia

A very new partnership which hasn't developed far beyond initial contacts, and these

primarily through Kevin Murray. The relationship has proved to be helpful in that it made our contact with the South Sudanese refugees in camps in far western Ethiopia possible and smooth. But we would like the PCA to further cement this relationship and be able to visit the Ethiopian church in their space and for their own encouragement. In November 2018, Rev. David Burke, APWM National Treasurer Mr Peter Burke, and theological student Mr Shaddy Hanna made further contact with the leadership of the Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia.

ii) Reformed Presbyterian Church of India

The RPCI partnership, although only recently signed (2017), is one that has been developed after years of cooperative interaction, primarily through warm relationships with the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Dehradun. Although PTS is a stand-alone college and is not run by RPCI, the overlap of personnel is significant. Your convener has preached in RPCI churches and at PTS. Lecturers from PTS have (and are) studying at Presbyterian colleges in Australia to be better equipped for a return home. This relationship will be further solidified by the convener representing the PCA at PTS's 50th birthday celebrations in May 2019.

iii) Presbyterian Church in Japan

This is a relatively new relationship (signed 2016) but one that has already been primed by visits to the General Assembly in 2016, 2017 (Kevin Murray) and 2018 (the convener, Kevin Murray and others). In November 2018, the convener was able to preach in the Presbyterian church at Osaka and then address the General Assembly on behalf of the PCA, and encourage our workers in Japan.

iv) Church of Central Africa – Presbyterian (Blantyre Synod)

There are many sides to our presence in Malawi. The name of the Presbyterian Church of Australia is well known and we are considered to be a valued part of their ministry. Consider:

- John and Sue Steendam (Eltham P.C.) visit every year as guests of CCAP and invited to work at Orbus and with the Prisons Chaplaincy Dept;
- PLC (Melb) faithfully and generously help their sister school Neno Girls Secondary School – and have done so for years;
- Orbus – a caring ministry and school for orphaned and other vulnerable children supported from Australia primarily through PCV churches;
- the convener is often invited to speak at their biennial synod and at pastor in-service training seminars.

v) Evangelical Reformed Church – Myanmar

Following his visit to the GAA in Sept 2016, the PCA was instrumental in restoring life and hope (personally) to Dr Thang Bwee during 2016/17. The PCA provides significant financial aid to this denomination and its Bible College through gifts from congregations and individuals. From time to time ministers and others from the PCA visit the Reformed Bible Institute to provide biblical teaching and English language learning.

vi) Presbyterian Church of South Sudan

The main contact is through Motor Isaac Yat ministering in the South Sudanese refugee camps on the border near Gambella, Ethiopia. Rev. Michael Jensen, the Director of APWM (Rev. Kevin Murray) and Mr Alex Christian visited the refugee camps in November 2017. In November 2018, Rev. David Burke, Mr Peter Burke, and Mr Shaddy Hanna visited the camps to provide training for the 70 pastors who serve some 90 congregations in the six camps. This visit has also provided the PCA with an assessment regarding how we could help provide ongoing training for these pastors. It is proposed that commencing in 2019 there will be biannual teaching workshops for these pastors. This is a strategic ministry and these pastors are hungry for the sort of teaching we provide. It is also planned that a team from the Clayton congregation in Victoria will visit in late 2019 / early 2020. The church's PresAID appeal together with other donations has generously supported this partner church in providing approximately 12,000 Nuer Bibles.

vii) Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste

Regular PCA teaching ministries have been of great assistance to this small denomination. Rev. David Burke and Rev. Rob Duncanson regularly return for special ministry training weeks working from a recently-developed curriculum.

viii) Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu

The Director of APWM (Rev. Kevin Murray) attends the annual General Assembly. John and Kara Dekker live in Vanuatu while John teaches OT at Talua Bible College, alongside Rev. Tom and Mrs Margaret Richards from the Westminster Presbyterian Church. Tom serving under the APWM umbrella through an MOU with APWM.

ix) Church of Central Africa – Presbyterian (Zambia Synod)

There are many sides to our presence in Zambia. The name of the Presbyterian Church of Australia is well known and we are considered to be a valued part of their ministry. Rev. Corrie Nel visited Zambia on behalf of this committee and worked alongside our brothers and sisters at their synod meetings. The convener has conducted evangelistic preaching rallies in several rural Zambian villages over the years and is often invited to speak at their biennial synod and at pastors in-service training seminars.

2. Other, non-partner churches, the highlights:

i) Free Church of Scotland

The Free Church of Scotland (FCoS) has 105 congregations, ten of these being recent church plants. It was a joy to be welcomed to their General Assembly.

This is the denomination most like PCA and in a culture most like ours – the same issues face this church as ours. There's a strongly expressed commitment to the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God – the Bible – as fully sufficient for faith and practice. The application of this is that their General Assembly is consumed with issues such as preaching, training the young into the faith, revitalising the not-so-strong congregations, witnessing the gospel to an increasingly secular society and planting new churches.

The FCoS was very interested to hear of our PCA journey of renewal since 1977 when we were gifted a blessed departure and the opportunity to begin afresh. That is, a fresh commitment to the inspired, inerrant and infallible Bible as the Word of God and the Westminster Confession of Faith as the sense in which we understand the teaching of Scripture. They were very encouraged by the close similarities between our churches. The PCA was very warmly received and greeted.

We could benefit by fostering close, warm and practical ties with the FCoS. We are each part of King Jesus, whose kingdom is growing across the world. One body, many congregations, united in purpose.

ii) Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

There are nearly 30 FCoS(C) congregations in Scotland, most strongly represented in Inverness, the Islands of the Outer Hebrides (eg Lewis) and the Island of Skye. There are about 25 ministers and 25 elders constituting the General Assembly. As they did in previous years with Rev. Bob Thomas, the General Assembly warmly welcomed the convener representing the PCA in May 2018.

There are some entrenched positions of this church that set it apart from ourselves: the exclusive use of metrical Psalms in worship, a ban on any musical instruments for singing (except the human voice), exclusive reference to the King James Version of the Bible, standing for prayer and sitting for singing, lots of "Thee" and "Thou" in prayers, hour-long sermons not well lit with illustration, ministers in clerical collars and women wearing hats in church.

Our friends in the FCoS(C) are devoutly and determinedly focussed on glorifying God and exalting Christ – giving honour to the one who alone is worthy of honour. Notwithstanding that we can enter into any FCoS(C) worship with mind, heart and soul, the convener thinks the entrenched positions mentioned above have become shibboleths preventing any closer relationship than cordial and courteous welcomes as an observer.

iii) Presbyterian Church in America (PCinA – to distinguish it from ourselves as PCA)

Although we've made the approach before and despite some very close friendships with PCinA personnel, we've yet to be invited to their General Assembly – until now. Your convener, as Moderator-General, has been invited to the General Assembly of the PCinA in Dallas, Texas, June 2019. He has been invited to a meeting between heads of churches that will explore the relationship between our two churches, especially in the light of the Sydney church planting venture that PCinA is already engaged in.

iv) Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand commenced approximately 15 years ago as a breakaway from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, which was heading in a theologically liberal direction. GPCNZ describes itself as “Presbyterian in government, Reformed in theology, Evangelical in spirit.” It commenced with 7 congregations with a strong backing from the Briarwood Atlanta (PCinA) congregation. Today GPCNZ has 20 congregations throughout New Zealand. It has strong ties with the Presbyterian Church of America’s Mission to the World (MTW) and the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Australia which is of a similar size.

In mid-October 2018 Kevin Murray attended the GPCNZ Assembly. Other overseas guests were from Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPCA), Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu and MTW.

One of GPCNZ’s ongoing struggles is that while it has its own theological training college it does not have enough students to make the running of training courses cost-effective or practical. They have explored working with various Australian colleges and have even sent some of their men to the US for training. They have had fruitful discussions with Christ College.

The question has been raised whether there would be benefit for GPCNZ to establish a formal partnership in terms of recognition that could perhaps lead to a wider sharing of resources, and, because of that formal recognition, concession in tuition fees for students studying at one of our PCA colleges. Such a partnership could be initiated by your committee. GPCNZ is keen to send one official representative to our 2019 GAA and one unofficial representative. Immediately prior to the 2019 GAA meeting we plan to hold discussions with GPCNZ representatives with a view to forming a formal partnership or some form of MoU.

v) Three-sister Reformed Churches, Sth Africa

The 1652 Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), the 1859 Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA) and the 1853 Dutch Reformed Church (NHK) are represented by the Joint Committee for Ecumenical Affairs.

Those with longer memories will remember that they visited the PCA (GAA, 2010) to seek closer ties with PCA and we reciprocated by making an offer to be more proactive and approachable for Reformed Church members migrating to Australia. Many of our local churches were reaching out anyway, but with various degrees of success as South African migrants found the cultural shift difficult to navigate. Although the offer was well-made, it’s probably true to say that the preferred option over the past eight years has become Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA), and so no formal agreement was pursued by either party.

As an example: the CRCA have formalised it as a resolution of Synod “Continue to encourage churches to be aware of South African migrants coming to their area and providing outreach and pastoral care to integrate them into our churches.” This is in relation to the GKSA only. The CRCA relationship with the larger grouping (NGK) and also with NHK has been suspended over those churches’ stand on homosexuality.

Corrie Nel recently had talks with these three-sister Reformed Churches and this is his initial report:

I have now met with delegates of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHK) and with the Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid Afrika (GKSA). Both have expressed appreciation for our making this contact and have stressed they are eager for ongoing relations. Setting the parameters for such ongoing relations, however, will be interesting.

The NHK has undoubtedly embarked on a liberal minded slipway; while the GKSA are steadfast on their gospel focussed missionary journey.

With no formal contact yet with the NGK, I have however gleaned much from informal meetings with known ministers and can empathise with the NGK for having to sleep in a bed they made for themselves: they are now embroiled in court battles for reversing their previous decision of approving same sex liaisons and marriage.

vi) CCAP Harare Synod

Zimbabwe continues to face political and economic uncertainty and life is very tough. The PCA supports the CCAP Schools (High School and Primary School at Rock Haven and the Primary School at Nyabira, just outside Harare), as well as the commencement of a Bible College for pastors. The Principal has been appointed to the college (Pattison Chirongo) and they are planning to start in the next few weeks. There will be guest lecturers from Australia helping to establish a good platform and a high priority on clear Bible teaching. PCA also supports annual training for elders and evangelists. Jaredi Mwale and Mizeki Mndola are assisting with running preacher training seminars for around 300 elders each year.

Craig Tucker, and more often Luke Tattersall, have continued to monitor and give energy and direction to the relationship we have with CCAP (Harare Synod). Luke, together with his wife, and some people from the Balmain church have been very faithful in giving ongoing commitment to our fellow Presbyterians in Zimbabwe.

3. *Other churches where we dream dreams and think of possibilities, bearing in mind that, while we would love to have a meaningful relationship with EVERY reformed church across the world, this is just impractical*

i) Reformed Presbyterian Church of Central and Eastern Europe (RPCoCEE), principally: Romania and Hungary)

Laszlo and Eva Mihalyi are our PCA on-site contacts. The Budapest congregation (where the Mihalyis serve) has 60 to 70 people in attendance with two pastors: Peter Szabo - senior minister; and Andras Deka-Fogarasi - assistant minister. Also, a former Victorian Moderator, Rev. Robert White, returned from a field trip with a strong suggestion that we should reach out to this group.

The origin of this church goes back to the early 1990s when radical political changes happened in Eastern Europe. After many prayers of different people from all parts of the world, the Lord prepared this field for sowing the seed of the pure gospel powerfully and to build up his church from this sowing. One of the Lord's great works in this region was the coming of Westminster Biblical Missions (later Westminster Biblical World Mission, WBWM) to Hungary and starting a new Reformed theological seminary, the Karolyi Gaspar Institute of Theology and Missions.

Hungarian speaking students were recruited from three countries – Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. They went through a serious reformed theological training of four years. The first seven students graduated in 1996 and started to lay down the foundations of a new work after the historical and nominal Hungarian Reformed Church (HRC) closed its doors. This was primarily because of this new reformed church's theological convictions on inerrancy and authority of Scriptures, liberalism, ecumenism, the office of bishops, Reformed doctrines, the high view of sacraments and the ordination of women.

Robert White, having met with the leaders of the RPCoCEE, makes a strong case that the PCA should pursue a relationship with them with a view to helping and encouraging them. They are a church that has discerned the liberal and spiritually bankrupt state of the HRC and like churches, and have stepped out at some personal cost to individuals to form this much-needed new gospel witness.

APWM missionary in Hungary, Rev. Granville Pillar, is keen to advance this idea and is looking into this question of partnering with RPCoCEE, and his discerning advice to the Committee on this matter has been valuable.

ii) Presbyterian Church of Ireland

There's not much to see on a practical level, but they are a church like PCA. We are not aware of any PCA visitor with the PCI or of any recent contact, except we have had the Rev. Dr Ian Hart teaching for us twice at Talua and accompanied with his wife Dr Pat Hart who is an ophthalmologist.

iii) Reformed Presbyterian Church in Uganda

Another African church where we know key personnel such as WRF member Peterson Sozi. The convener has declined an invitation to visit this church in 2019 and conduct elders and evangelist training schools in biblical theology and preaching. Rev. Ian McIver (PCQ) serves at a Bible College in Kampala – not directly with RPCU, but teaches some of their student pastors.

Finally, under the heading of other world churches, you may be interested (or frustrated) to know that despite our clear communication about our dis-fellowship with them, the Church of Scotland continue to write to the Moderator-General of the PCA inviting him to visit their Assembly in May each year. We'll wait and see what happens for May 2019.

(e) advise the Assembly on relations with other Churches within Australia on a national level;

There are five such relationships, and this committee's advice is to continue fostering these at every opportunity.

i) Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA)

This is perhaps, the warmest relationship and the one with most potential for development. Your convener was very warmly received at the triennial Synod of CRCA (May 2018). We have a proposal to put to the GAA regarding a MOU which has been put forward by the CRCA. The committee recommends we sign it. On the one hand, it doesn't commit us to anything more than we're doing at a local level anyway. But, on the other hand, the formalising of it is a very helpful way to solidify this commitment and it provides a basis that local churches can fall back on in their context.

It is noted that the CRCA representative, Rev. Reinier Noppers, secretary of the CRCA Committee for Ecumenical Relations, will be present during the GAA in Sept 2019, and wishes to speak to the Assembly sometime prior to clause 4 of the proposed deliverance being discussed (regarding the proposed MoU between PCA and CRCA).

ii) Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)

This is our oldest sister-church relationship, and we enjoy meaningful Christian fellowship in various local contexts. For one example, Rev. Dr Rowland Ward teaches church history at the Victorian Presbyterian Theological College.

iii) Westminster Presbyterian Church Australia (WPC)

We already work together in overseas mission with WPC. eg (1) Tom and Margaret Richards in Vanuatu; and (2) the WPC Bull Creek congregation has an interest in Timor Leste with one of their members serving on the APWM Timor Leste Subcommittee. Despite our invitation and warm reception of their representative at the last GAA (2016), there's been no reciprocal invitation – however, Rev. Kevin Murray was invited to attend their 2019 Assembly but was unable to attend due to a prior overseas commitment.

iv) Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (PRCA)

The PRCA has closed down in Melbourne, with some 'casualties' now attending our PCA churches. PRCA is stronger in Qld. But we still fail to understand why they remain separate, except to suggest that the longer we stay apart the harder it is for reunion with a group who, on admirable principles, protested and walked away from the PCA in the late 1960s. Some of us would say: "I would have walked out too if I was there".

v) Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia (RPC)

A church historically bound to remain separate, but warm-hearted and committed Reformed brothers and sisters.

(f) deal with other matters referred to the Committee by the Assembly.

From the 2016 GAA, these are the instructions to report on (other than those matters already reported on above), namely:

i) Min 30(5)

Continue with the practice of directing committees wishing to invite representatives of other churches to attend meetings of the General Assembly, to process those invitations through the Relations with Other Churches Committee in cooperation with the Australian Presbyterian World Mission Committee, the Clerks and the Business Convener.

This process is underway. So far, from the APWM Committee we have the following request:

- Presbyterian Church of Ethiopia
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of India
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste
- Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu - Principal of Talua, Pastor Philip Banihiri

And, from our own committee, we think we should invite representatives from churches we know have a reformed commitment, and only these, namely:

- Anglican Church of Australia, Sydney Diocese
- Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA)
- Grace Presbyterian Church New Zealand (GPCNZ)
- Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)
- Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC)
- Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia (PRCA)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia (RPC)
- Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the Uniting Church in Australia
- Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (FCoS)
- Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCoS(cont))

We ought not play down the function of our General Assembly in making welcome and formally greeting guests from other churches. We ought to see it as one of our key functions.

Your convener has been impressed by the courteous and helpful way other churches have welcomed his participation in sister-church General Assemblies. In particular, the way that FCoS, FCoS(C), CRCA, PCJ and CCAP made special provision for him to be present and to address their assembly/synod. The convener's opinion is that this was more purposeful and better planned than we do for our visiting delegates; though we note that we are planning a pre-GAA day on Sydney Harbour for overseas guests followed by preaching on the Sunday in PCA churches.

ii) Min 30(6)

Encourage the Relations with Other Churches Committee to continue its involvement in promoting the ministries of the WRF, and thank the Rev. Dr John McClean and the Very Rev. Robert Benn for their services on the WRF Board.

This is an instruction that doesn't seem to have been actively pursued. We find it hard to know what the Assembly expects of us in "promoting the ministries of the WRF" and it's hard to carry out. The convener has mentioned membership of the WRF in different forums and contexts where he's been invited to speak.

He writes: "On an individual level, when I encourage membership, there sometimes is a response such as 'what's the benefit for me?' (to join). It's pointed out to me that there's rarely any communication from WRF to individual or organisational members. As I thought about it, the only communication seems to be with Board members. Individuals find it prohibitive to attend the triennial Assembly meetings, so where is the value-add for them?"

The committee wonders what else it should be doing in this regard.

iii) Min 30(7)

Make an annual contribution, during the triennium 2017-2019, to the WRF.

It's vital that we continue to do so. PCA is a valued member and a significant contributor through Robert Benn and John McClean.

iv) Min 30(8)

Approve the travel and accommodation expenses of the Convener to attend one meeting of the WRF per annum during the triennium 2017-2019.

Yes, this is vital to continue.

v) Min 30(9)

Encourage the Committee to continue discussions with other Presbyterian and Reformed denominations in the region and encourage them to join the membership of the WRF.

This is not something we've actively pursued.

J. P WILSON, Convener

RETURNS TO REMITS

Overture (i) 2016: An overture from the Code Committee to amend Standing Order 20 by the deletion of part (b).

Approve:

State Assemblies (4): New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia

Presbyteries (22): Central Coast, Hawkesbury, Hunter, Illawarra, North West NSW, Northern Rivers, Riverina, Sydney, Sydney South, Brisbane, Darling Downs, Mowbray, North Queensland, Central Queensland, Wide Bay – Sunshine Coast, Bass, Ballarat, Geelong, Gippsland, Melbourne North, North Western Victoria, Western Australia.

Disapprove:

Presbytery of South Australia

No reply:

State Assemblies (2): South Australia, Tasmania

Presbyteries (16): Canberra, Central Tablelands, Central West, Mid North Coast, New England, Sydney North, Wagga Wagga, Moreton Bay, Derwent, Benalla, Flinders, Maroondah, Melbourne East, Melbourne West, South West Victoria.

Overture (ii) 2016: An overture from the Code Committee to amend Rule 1.05 of the Code of Discipline.

Approve:

State Assemblies (4): New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia

Presbyteries (23): Hawkesbury, Hunter, Illawarra, North West NSW, Northern Rivers, Riverina, Sydney, Sydney South, Brisbane, Darling Downs, Mowbray, North Queensland, Central Queensland, Wide Bay – Sunshine Coast, South Australia, Bass, Ballarat, Benalla, Geelong, Gippsland, Melbourne North, North Western Victoria, Western Australia.

Disapprove:

Nil

No reply:

State Assemblies (2): South Australia, Tasmania

Presbyteries (15): Canberra, Central Coast, Central Tablelands, Central West, Mid North Coast, New England, Sydney North, Wagga Wagga, Moreton Bay, Derwent, Flinders, Maroondah, Melbourne East, Melbourne West, South West Victoria.

Overture (iii) 2016: An overture from the Code Committee to amend some of the questions asked at ordinations and inductions.

Approve:

State Assemblies (4): New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia

Presbyteries (23): Central Coast, Hawkesbury, Hunter, Illawarra, North West NSW, Northern Rivers, Riverina, Sydney, Sydney South, Brisbane, Central Queensland, Darling Downs, Mowbray, North Queensland, Wide Bay – Sunshine Coast, Bass, Ballarat, Benalla, Geelong, Gippsland, Melbourne North, North Western Victoria, Western Australia.

Disapprove:

Nil

No reply:

State Assemblies (2): South Australia, Tasmania

Presbyteries (15): Canberra, Central Tablelands, Central West, Mid North Coast, New England, Sydney North, Wagga Wagga, Moreton Bay, South Australia, Derwent, Flinders, Maroondah, Melbourne East, Melbourne West, South West Victoria.

Overture (i) 2018 Special Meeting: An overture from the Code Committee to amend the Code of Discipline in relation to the protection of children through the introduction of a new Rule 1.13, among other things.

Approve:

State Assemblies (4): New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia

Presbyteries (17): Central Coast, Central Tablelands, Central West, Hawkesbury, Illawarra, Mid North Coast, North West NSW, Sydney East, Sydney South, Wagga Wagga, South Australia, Bass, Derwent, Geelong, Gippsland, Melbourne North, Melbourne West.

Disapprove:

Western Australia

No reply:

State Assemblies (2): South Australia, Tasmania

Presbyteries (20): Canberra, Hunter, New England, Northern Rivers, Riverina, Sydney North, Brisbane, Central Queensland, Darling Downs, Moreton Bay, Mowbray, North Queensland, Wide Bay – Sunshine Coast, Ballarat, Benalla, Flinders, Maroonah, Melbourne East, North Western Victoria, South West Victoria.

B. MELLER, Assembly Clerk

TRUSTEES

In accordance with the Trust Deed of The Presbyterian Church of Australia dated September 1985 “The Trustees shall consist of persons who for the time being hold office as the Trustees of The Presbyterian Church (New South Wales) Property Trust being a body corporate of that name established by The Presbyterian Church (New South Wales) Property Trust Act 1936 of the State of New South Wales”.

Arising from the 2019 GANSW, the Trustees comprise Mr J. Davis, Ms M. Mackenzie, Mr M. Minter, Mrs L. Russell, Mr M. Siede, Mr A. Yen, and the Rev. K. Boulden, D. Au, D. Seaman, D. Soh, R. Vandervelden and D. Yu.

As a result of the Rev. J. Seaton retiring as a Trustee and as Chairman of Trustees at GANSW 2019, the Trustees at their meeting on 29 July shall appoint a new Chairman.

Mr J. Falls (General Manager of The Presbyterian Church in the State of New South Wales) is Secretary to the Trustees.

The Trustees report that they have met on six occasions since the last Ordinary Session of the General Assembly of Australia on: 26 June 2017, 26 February 2018, 23 April 2018, 28 May 2018, 3 December, 2018, 27 May 2019. Meetings are held, as business requires, at the Presbyterian Church New South Wales offices at Level 1, 168-180 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills. Business dealt with by the Trustees during the period included:

- Approval of the sale of the PIM manse at 53 Glencoe Crescent Tiwi, Darwin, NT;
- Authorisation of the distribution of \$120,000 from the interest earned on funds from the Elizabeth Margaret Lewis Estate. While the use of these funds was authorised by the Finance Committee in 2011, they were not drawn-upon over time. As such, the accumulated interest in 2017 was \$120,000. At that time, the distribution was made for the purposes of Church revitalisation work in the state of South Australia undertaken by the Moderator General’s Church Planting Task Force or its successor over a three year period as follows; \$30,000 in 2018; \$40,000 in 2019; and \$50,000 in 2020.
- Authorisation of Braemar Presbyterian Care’s (WA) use of the Presbyterian Church Logo as a Trademark;
- Approval of the distribution of funds arising from The Late Marion Mildred Vincent (following the recommendations of the APWM Committee);
- Assisting Presbyterian Inland Mission in their business review and with strategic and future planning;

- Whyte Trust distributions to state theological colleges;
- Bequests notified:
 - Gladys Gwendolyn Adamson for Presbyterian Inland Mission;
 - Marion Mildred Vincent for APWM;
 - Gordon George Drummond for Presbyterian Inland Mission; and
 - Leslie Clifford Wright for Presbyterian Inland Mission.

NSW Church Office in Sydney arranges, on behalf of the Trustees for the Presbyterian Church of Australia, appropriate insurance cover to protect the insurable assets and liabilities of the federal body within the insurance programme for The Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales.

J. FALLS, Secretary

WOMEN'S MINISTRY COMMITTEE

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Women's Ministries Presbyterian Church Australia (WMPCA) committee is an ad hoc committee of the General Assembly. An initial working group was commissioned in 2004 (convened by Rev. John Langbridge) to investigate and report to the 2007 Assembly. The WMPCA was first established at the GA of A 2007 under the chairmanship of Rev John McClean. Its aim was to consider how to encourage men and women together to work to serve and equip women with the Presbyterian Church within a complementarian understanding.

For many years previous to WMPCA's establishment, the focus of discussion had been on the ordination of women to the ministry of the Word. This meant the church failed to consider the ongoing ministry of women, who account for around 60% of the PCA membership. This gave the impression that this ministry was not valued.

In 2010, the Assembly directed the WMPCA to accept and promote a complementarian stance, where men and women work together for God's Glory. The committee took this seriously and sought to conduct all business embedded within Scripture's teaching and the Holy Spirit's guidance.

At the 2013 Assembly, Rev John McClean did not re-nominate for the committee and the Assembly appointed Mrs Cecelia (Ceale) Orford as chair of the Committee. She had been involved in this work since 2004. Currently, the Committee has three active members: Mrs Ceale Orford (Chair, QLD); Mrs Margaret Thatcher (WA) and Mrs Vanessa Stuckings (NSW). Margaret Thatcher is feeling the call to other Christian Ministry opportunities and likely to not accept renomination. Expressions of interest to find new committee members have been circulated, however, there are no replacements offered at present. Thus, the continued existence of the Committee is at risk.

The present Committee is of the view that it has an important role in presenting women's ministry concerns to the Assembly and in helping to connect Women's ministry in the States. The Committee is also of the view that the membership needs renewal.

Activities of the Committee

In 2016, the committee developed a strategy document. Activities for the 3 years included engaging with leaders of the Church, engaging with women in the church and holding a conference. Social Media, email, Minister/Presbytery communiques and church publications/newsletters have been the main ways the committee has networked and engaged with men and women of the church. The conference was the key activity of the committee. Initially called 'Flourish', the conference has been rebranded as 'Connecting' since 2016 to avoid confusion with another group that has used the Flourish name. Flourish

Conferences were held in Sydney in 2009 and 2012, Connecting 2016 was held in Melbourne and Connecting 2019 in Brisbane.

Positive Outcomes of the Work

God has enabled the work of this committee to support a great number of positive outcomes. Around 300 women and men (predominantly women) have attended the conferences, and evaluations of the conferences indicate very positive appreciation of the blessings and value of the teaching, workshoping and networking. Many have been encouraged to rejuvenate ministry to women in their areas and been trained in helpful ways to do this.

Examples of the helpful impact of these conferences include:

- The establishment of a women's ministry based at St John's Hobart after the 2009 conference, establishment of the WMNSW and WMV committees, and the great ministry both committees are undertaking amongst women within the PCA.
- The networking of women and men working around Australia with each other to encourage, equip and form strong relationships throughout the church.
- The networking of different ministries to and by women including PWA, PWMU, PIM, APWM, WMNSW, WMV and WMPCA.
- Training women in 1-to-1 Bible reading as a means of helping women encourage, mentor and evangelise each other. This has been taken and used by individuals and was a major focus of the Time of Encouragement in 2017 run by the PWA of WA.
- Providing a platform through the conferences where women's voices could be heard and represented to the GAA. A summary of voices of the women at the Connecting 2019 conference are tabled in Appendix 1.
- The development and acknowledgement of female speakers. The conference presenters vary from well-known, established keynote speakers to first time presenters, forums to present research, papers and new models of ministries around Australia. The bespoke nature of the conferences allows individuals to flourish in a supportive and interested environment.
- Creating opportunities for people and groups who are actively providing ministry to share with others.
- An opportunity for the WMPCA to be in communication with the men and women within Australia who are passionate about ministry to and by women and create opportunity for these vital ministries to be supported by the GA of A.
- The ongoing encouragement for the PCA to have an agreed scripture-based outlook of complementarian partnership for men and women, and encouragement to continue to strive for this to be implemented well when working in the church together for God's glory.

The committee members were greatly encouraged that the Moderator-General, Rev. Dr John Wilson, attended and opened the conference this year in Brisbane, this demonstrated true gospel partnership and Christian ministry. We also were very encouraged and thankful for both QTC and Christ College in their partnership.

There have been difficulties, however, and the committee feels that the members of Assembly should hear the concerns of the committee to provide the underlying reasons for the deliverance associated with this report.

Concerns

- **Lack of connection with the Assembly:** Since 2013, the commissioner to the Assembly has been a member of the Committee. The Committee appreciate that Bruce Mellor indicated that in the absence of others he would join the committee.

This has not proved practicable, since the burden of his roles restricted his availability.

- **Blocks to communication:** There are challenges of networking within the Presbyterian Church. The Women’s network is growing stronger, particularly through the use of social media, FaceBook and a website, proven to be a great opportunity to network with many people. The main blocks in communication come from the traditional ways of communicating with ministry teams. It would be useful to find out what churches, leadership and members need from WMPCA and model any future activity around the findings.
- **Limited opportunities for women to be involved in Christian ministry within the church:** Gender roles in Australian culture have changed dramatically since the 1980’s. In most areas of life, women are widely involved in leadership and have a voice. The Committee supports the stance of the Assembly and its commitment to male-only ministry, and male-only eldership in most States. This does, however, make it difficult for women to have a significant role or voice in discussions in the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Some churches have made significant changes to accommodate this, such as appointing women’s ministry workers or developing ways to effectively consult with women in the congregation. Many churches (perhaps the majority) have not adapted their patterns. As a result, women (and men) are not given the opportunity to use their God given gifts to glorify His name. We know that women thrive best when encouraged by men in their churches, but many report there is little or no engagement from church leaders to promote growth of women in their churches.
- **Confusion of what complementarian partnership looks like in practice:** Concern was raised at the conference this year as to what complementarianism looks like in practice. It was suggested that this be clarified and discussed within the church, maybe within the theological colleges. A general consensus from the conference delegates was that the current practice within our church seems to be “women doing their thing and men doing their thing, independently of each other”.

Conclusion

The WMPCA is very grateful to God for the way he has graciously used the committee in the building and strengthening of his people and church. The committee is mindful of the difficulties that lie ahead, but is confident that, by God’s grace, these will be addressed and be overcome, and that the ministry to and by women in the Presbyterian Church of Australia will flourish.

In His Service,
 Cecelia Orford, Margaret Thatcher and Vanessa Stuckings.

Appendix 1. Women’s voices from the conference delegates to the GA of A members.

<i>We asked the delegates of the conference, “If you had one message to give to the GAA, what would it be?” They said:</i>	
The committee did an amazing job organizing this conference.	Please read the report and pray for your women in the church.
Complementarity is not about women and men doing their own things, it is about hearing and learning from the wisdom of each other and providing ways where we can learn from each other in service of Christ.	The leaders of our Church need to be faithful to their ordination vows (faithful in attendance at the courts of the Church) and be there so they can hear and understand what we’re doing!
The women of our denomination would love you to take our PCA complementarian stance seriously, across all states and territories and acknowledge	We would benefit from structures and teaching that supports the “wisdom of each other”, that is, men and women contributing their feedback and

and make use of the amazing gospel partnership opportunity that exists, which so many women are already actively engaged in, (sometimes without any recognition or acknowledgment) to advance the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.	wisdom to our decision making leaders and in doing so, support men and women to grow in knowledge, wisdom, grace in discipleship and outreach.
Learn about psychological pain and its causes.	We all need encouragement and networking.
Value the gospel partnership women contribute to the denomination for the sake of the Gospel.	The three workshops/talks I attended were the most spiritually refreshing workshops/talks I have had for a long while... timely and practical.
Don't overlook the energy and zeal of the younger generation.	Women participate in the ministry to spread/share the gospel and build the body of Christ every day.
Thank you for keeping this as an ongoing dialogue so we truly can show the world what godly complementarianism looks like.	We all need to be working out how to work together, using each of our skills to build up the church together.
Women help form the spiritual foundations of our churches, and it's imperative for them to feel heard and nurtured, and to engage other women to connect and enable growth. Women's Ministry is a wonderful opportunity that needs to be recognised and supported wholeheartedly by the GAA and every congregation that contains women!	To WMPCA: Please continue to be a voice for Women's' Ministry in our denomination. I think women have sat in the pews too long without a voice. We do not want to be threatening we just want to work alongside our men and serve God the best way we can.
Please promote the importance of paid women's ministry worker in states where there is none, possible amalgamating a couple of states where necessary and possible.	In a church that practices male headship, it's vital that women (and men) in our churches have a clear and consistent understanding of how the church values, engages and grows women with clear pathways for biblical leadership.

AUDITOR'S REPORT

Independent Auditor's Report to the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

We have audited the extraction of the attached balance sheet and statement of comprehensive income of the Presbyterian Church (New South Wales) Property Trust – Funds held on behalf of the General Assembly of Australia (“Assembly Fund Statements”) for the three years ended 31 December 2018 as attached Schedule A and Schedule B.

The Assembly Fund balance sheet and statement of comprehensive income has been extracted from the audited financial statements of The Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales (“The Church’s Statements”). We have conducted audits on The Church’s Statements for each of the three years now reported. Our unqualified audit opinions on The Church’s Statements were dated 27 March 2017, 26 March 2018, 25 March 2019.

In our opinion Assembly Fund Statements comprising the balance sheet and statement of comprehensive income of The Presbyterian Church (New South Wales) Property Trust – Funds held on behalf of the General Assembly of Australia for the three years ended 31 December 2018 are properly extracted, in all material respects, from the financial records of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales in accordance with the requirements of the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor’s Responsibilities for the Audit of the Extraction of the Assembly Fund Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales in accordance with the auditor independence requirements and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board’s APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the extraction of the Assembly Fund Statements in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting

The Assembly Fund Statements are non-statutory reports which the Trustees of Presbyterian Church (New South Wales) Property Trust (the Trustees) prepare to fulfil the requirements of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. No opinion is expressed as to whether the Assembly Fund Statements are appropriate to the needs of financial users. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

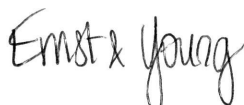
Responsibility of the Trustees for the Assembly Fund Statements

The Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the Assembly Fund Statements, and have determined that the definition of Assembly Fund Statements, as presented is appropriate to the needs of financial users. This responsibility includes such internal control that the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the Assembly Fund Statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the Assembly Fund Statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Trustees either intend to liquidate the entity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Extraction of the Assembly Fund Statements

Our responsibility is to obtain reasonable assurance, based on our audit procedures, about whether the Assembly Fund Statements have been extracted free from material misstatement from the Church's Statements for the 3 years ending 31 December 2018, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the Assembly Fund Statements.



Ernst & Young
25 March 2019

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2018



Presbyterian Church of Australia

in the State of New South Wales

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TRUSTEES

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (NEW SOUTH WALES) PROPERTY TRUST FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2018

The financial statements for the three years ended 31 December 2018 reflect exclusively the assets and liabilities of the Presbyterian Church of Australia,

In the opinion of the Trustees, the accompanying balance sheets disclose the funds and Investments for which the Trustees are responsible and the income statements are properly drawn up so as to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs at 31 December 2016, 2017 and 2018 and the results for the three years ended on that date.

The following pages are extracts and supplementary schedules from the audited accounts of the Presbyterian Church (New South Wales) Property Trust and Presbyterian Inland Mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seaton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John Seaton Chairman of Trustees
Signed at Sydney, 25th March 2019

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA - Schedule A
Extracted from Presbyterian Church (New South Wales) Property Trust audited accounts
Balance sheet as at 31 December 2018

	2018	2017	2016
	\$	\$	\$
Assets			
Cash or cash equivalents	107,107	76,629	53,132
Funds with Trustee Investment Fund	2,110,078	2,086,969	2,277,334
investment Portfolio at market value	2,043,813	2,145,933	0
Interest free loans	200	0	0
Trade and other receivables	88,787	49,863	60,179
Property, plant and equipment	923,498	1,414,778	450,006
	<u>5,273,483</u>	<u>5,774,172</u>	<u>2,840,651</u>
Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	109,111	298,413	98,160
Funds held for Vanuatu	33,534	58,916	116,467
Employee Entitlements	67,001	23,923	19,607
Other provisions	21,524	19,115	20,000
	<u>231,170</u>	<u>400,367</u>	<u>254,234</u>
Net assets	<u>5,042,313</u>	<u>5,373,805</u>	<u>2,586,417</u>
Balance at 1 January	5,373,805	2,586,417	2,464,608
Transfer from Presbyterian Inland Mission	0	3,252,666	0
Surplus/(deficit) for the year:			
Finance Committee - Specific	17,278	18,498	19,063
Finance Committee - Ordinary	(13,514)	0	0
Christian Education Committee	1,548	126	209
World Missions Committee	107,392	(181,470)	99,360
National Journal Committee	(30,397)	(7,610)	4,045
Contemporary Committee	(9,447)	(2,233)	(868)
Presbyterian Inland Mission	(404,352)	(292,589)	0
Total capital and reserves	<u>5,042,313</u>	<u>5,373,805</u>	<u>2,586,417</u>

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA - Schedule B
Extracted from Presbyterian Church (New South Wales) Property Trust audited accounts
Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year:

	2018	2017	2016
	\$	\$	\$
Finance Committee - Ordinary			
Income			
Interest - Trustee Investment Fund - at call	3,547	5,536	6,933
Other income	113	1,810	15,378
	<u>3,660</u>	<u>7,346</u>	<u>22,311</u>
Expenditure			
Audit and accountancy	3,629	3,484	3,300
Computer expenses	12,000	12,000	12,000
Grants	10,000	10,000	10,000
Grants - Freedom for Faith	25,000	15,000	0
Honoraria	5,750	5,750	7,600
National Journal funding	35,500	34,000	34,000
Archives funding	7,000	6,000	6,000
Office services	10,273	10,273	10,273
Sundry expenses	70,021	25,211	44,864
Travel and accommodation	98,158	83,168	119,397
	<u>277,331</u>	<u>204,886</u>	<u>247,434</u>
Deficit for the year	(273,671)	(197,540)	(225,123)
State funding	260,157	197,540	225,123
Net surplus/(deficit)	<u>(13,514)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Finance Committee - Specific			
Specific Interest - Estates Lewis & Matches	17,278	18,498	19,063
Net surplus	<u>17,278</u>	<u>18,498</u>	<u>19,063</u>
Christian Education Committee			
Income	1,968	1,922	1,738
Bequest	515	0	0
Expense	(935)	(1,796)	(1,529)
Net surplus/(deficit)	<u>1,548</u>	<u>126</u>	<u>209</u>
World Missions Committee			

Income	846,888	779,828	1,037,499
Transfer APWM NSW	120,761	0	0
Bequests	56,641	0	0
Expense	(916,898)	(981,298)	(938,139)
Net surplus/(deficit)	107,392	(181,470)	99,360

National Journal Committee

Income	101,550	127,243	140,504
Expense	(131,947)	(134,853)	(138,459)
Net surplus/(deficit)	(30,397)	(7,610)	4,045

Contemporary Committee

Income	2,441	2,279	2,252
Expense	(11,888)	(4,512)	(3,120)
Net surplus/(deficit)	(9,447)	(2,233)	(868)

Presbyterian Inland Mission

Income			
Dividends and interest	120,187	88,094	
Imputation credits	40,462	32,746	
Unrealised gain on revaluation of investments	(294,319)	18,885	
Gain on sale of investments	112,711	12,790	
Donations	514,288	419,266	
Other income	46,392	121,810	
	539,721	693,591	
Expense			
Salaries and related costs	433,608	463,775	
Depreciation	63,421	95,282	
Other costs	447,044	427,123	
	944,073	986,180	
Net deficit	(404,352)	(292,589)	

APPEALS

- (i) ***From Mrs Rhonda Aubert against a decision of the 2017 General Assembly of Victoria***
- (ii) ***From Mrs Rhonda Aubert against a decision of the 2017 General Assembly of Victoria***

Appeals (i) and (ii) were heard in private, the Assembly resolving to keep the minutes of proceedings in relation to these appeals in a record apart. The appeals themselves are therefore contained within that record apart.

DISSENT AND COMPLAINT

- (i) ***From seven members of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in NSW against a decision of that Assembly taken on 19/7/19***

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia...

We, the undersigned, dissent and complain to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia against a decision of the 2019 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in NSW (NSW BB 2019 Min 89 (3)) held on the 19th day of July 2019 which states:

That the Assembly:

3. Inform Sessions that at church meetings or events it is permitted but not necessary to include a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgment of Country, and that an Acknowledgment may be included on a Church website, in a bulletin or on a slide before the commencement of a service.

We dissent and complain for the following reasons:

1. **Undue haste.** The NSW General Assembly acted with undue haste in making this decision before the forthcoming General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia (GAA) had opportunity to consider the doctrinal implications of the matter particularly as a later clause in the deliverance (Clause (4)) resolved to circulate the section of the report of the Committee on Gospel, Society and Culture on Acknowledgement of Country to sessions for their information.

2. **Sessions informed.** The Assembly also acted with undue haste in Clause (2) which states: That the Assembly 'Inform Ministers and Sessions that a Worship Service should not include a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country but may include an appropriate prayer.'

3. **Doctrine of worship.** Clause 2 ('Inform Ministers and Sessions that a Worship Service should not include a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgment of Country but may include an appropriate prayer') discourages Welcome to Country (WtC) and Acknowledgment of Country (AoC) 'in a Worship Service', but clause 3 permits WtC and AoC in 'church meetings or events' as well as 'on a Church website, in a bulletin or on a slide before the commencement of a service.' This contradicts our doctrine of worship: (a) by creating a false dichotomy between our Sunday worship times and other meetings where we are clearly worshipping God such as NSW Assembly meetings, graduation services, etc.; and (b) by creating an artificial distinction between worship services and bulletins or slides used in those services. Worship is an area in which the GAA is supreme (Article 2.1 of the Articles of Agreement of the Presbyterian Church of Australia).

4. **Lack of consideration of evidence.** The evidence of what WtC and AoC means as defined by Reconciliation Australia. 'An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone to show respect for Australia's Traditional Owners, and the continuing connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to the land, sea, sky and waterways. An Acknowledgment of Country can be performed by an indigenous or non-indigenous person, and is generally offered at the beginning of a meeting, speech or formal occasion.'

5. **A form of syncretism** is effectively being introduced by the passing of clause 3.

The biblical doctrine of creation is incompatible with the pantheism implicit in Aboriginal spirituality of the land.

6. **Ancestor worship** is idolatrous. Official protocols for WtC and AoC insist that words like Elder and Country should be capitalised when written – precisely because aboriginal people want to acknowledge the connection between ‘the spirit of the land’ and the continuing real presence of elders who have since died.

7. **Biblical peacemaking** principles of forgiveness teach that past sins should not be continually re-raised once they have been repented of. But AoC statements do exactly that. They have the effect of perpetuating guilt while allowing no final resolution or reconciliation to occur.

8. **Biblical language.** If we are serious about reconciliation then we ought to use biblical language to express biblical concepts of sin, repentance, and godly sorrow – and so point people to Christ. The secular form of language used in WtC and AoC protocols (such as ‘Traditional Custodians’, and ‘Respect to Elders’) is neither politically nor theologically neutral. The NSW Assembly should not have endorsed such language without considering the wider implications of what it signifies.

9. **Guilt by association.** To what extent is the Presbyterian church (or individual members) responsible for historical crimes committed during the colonial period of Australia? Whereas injustices have clearly been done in the past, we should not be hasty to condemn the saints of the past, nor to harm the reputation of the church today through guilt by association.

10. **Church/state relations.** There is currently within Australian society a growing pressure to conform to WtC and AoC protocols as part of a wider political agenda. As Christians, we should not endorse any form of words that may be used as a Shibboleth. This ought to give us pause for thought as we consider what is the truly loving thing to do.

11. **The doctrine of mission.** As the Gospel is sent forth to the ends of the earth, the redemptive power of the cross will continue to deliver God’s chosen people from enslaving idolatries and unite us together in Christ. But WtC and AoC protocols give support to a worldview that privileges aboriginal culture within our society and thereby hinders the work of mission.

12. **The unity of the body of Christ.** Our doctrine of the unity of the body of Christ is harmed by the use of WtC and AoC protocols, since they perpetuate an unnecessary distinction between Aboriginal Christians and all other Christians who live in Australia.

Whereas the Presbyterian Church of Australia confesses that ‘All synods or councils may err; and many have erred ... and are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice: but to be used as a help in both’ (WCF XXXI: IV), for these reasons we believe the NSW General Assembly has erred and its decision should be reviewed by the General Assembly of Australia.

Based on doctrinal grounds, we believe it is inappropriate to include a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgment of Country in a worship service, in a church meeting or at a church event. The Church needs more time at the federal level to discuss the issue and make a determination on this important issue. We humbly ask the Assembly to examine the subject further – including how best to respond to historical injustices committed against Aboriginal and Torres Strait people by Christians (and especially by Presbyterians) and report back to a future Assembly with suggested strategies.

Signed: Rev Mark Powell, David Maher, Bruce Christian, Carl Grande, Steven Mannyx,
Messrs Lance Jackson and John Greig.

4th August, 2019.

Additional documents

The opening paragraphs of the section of the 2019 Gospel, Society and Culture Report to the GANSW referenced a 2017 report received by the GANSW. Therefore the following further documents are submitted as relevant to the Complaint on this topic which has been submitted to the GAA.

Respondents

J. McClean, J. Irvin

**FURTHER EXTRACT MINUTES
SECTIONS OF REPORT OF THE GOSPEL SOCIETY AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
AND MINUTES RELEVANT TO THE COMPLAINT
OF SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE GANSW TO THE GAA**

EXTRACT MINUTE:

At Croydon and within the Audrey Keown Theatre of the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney, on Thursday 6 July, 2016, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales met and was constituted with prayer.

Among other things, the 2016 Assembly at Minute 68 resolved to:

GANSW 2016 BB min 68(14)

- (14) Invite the Gospel Society and Culture Committee to make recommendations at the next Assembly on Indigenous Reconciliation and refer to the GSC clauses (a) to (d) of the original notice of motion (viz,
- (a) Rejoice in the truth that through faith in Christ there are neither Jews nor Gentiles, Indigenous people nor non-Indigenous people.
 - (b) Acknowledge traditional, Indigenous tribal connections to the land, and declare that the Great Commission requires the Church to acknowledge God as the creator, sustainer and owner of the whole earth.
 - (c) Recognise the great and continuing need for gospel ministry in Indigenous communities and among Indigenous people, as well as the general failure of the church at large to address this need.
 - (d) Encourage its ministers, presbyteries, congregations, and committees to prioritise this ministry of reconciliation in Indigenous communities and among Indigenous people.)

EXTRACT MINUTE:

At Croydon and within the Audrey Keown Theatre of the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney, on Tuesday 4 July, 2017, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales met and was constituted with prayer.

Among other things, the 2017 Assembly at Minute 38 resolved to:

GANSW 2017 BB min 38

The report of the Committee on Gospel, Society and Culture together with two addenda was laid on the table and received.

**GOSPEL, SOCIETY AND CULTURE ADDENDUM
INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION**

Introduction

The Gospel, Society and Culture Committee was asked to report to the Assembly with recommendations on Indigenous Reconciliation.

A complete answer to every question that might be raised in a discussion about Indigenous Reconciliation is not possible. For instance, the recent *Closing the Gap Report* shows that Australian governments and the wider society are making little headway in improving the situation of indigenous Australians. Reconciliation includes more than 'closing the gap' in health, education and employment outcomes in indigenous communities. However, the exact basis and scope of reconciliation is open to debate.

Considering the complexity of the issues, the Committee has chosen to provide a report which sets out a framework for thinking as Christians about reconciliation, and offers some recommendations for how *local* congregations might work with *local* Indigenous communities to create a *local* culture of reconciliation as an outworking of the gospel. As John Harris writes in *One Blood*, Christians don't need to wait for a piece of paper — or an amended Constitution — to show a spirit of reconciliation to the world, or to grow the work that is already happening in some churches. We trust that this report will help our church to do that.

The Committee also hopes that the report might serve as a resource to help Australian Christians think about their vote if the Commonwealth Government achieves its goal of presenting a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution. Further, we hope that it might encourage those who have a particular interest in the wider questions

around reconciliation to become involved in action beyond their local community.

The report comprises five sections. The first outlines the current context and presents a brief summary of history between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians, to show the field into which we are sowing the gospel of Jesus. The second section is a brief *excursus* providing context and commentary, from a legal perspective, about the debate of the issue of sovereignty. The third section examines the ideas of corporate sin, apology and reconciliation, and shows what the Bible says to us about these things. The fourth sections considers how the gospel addresses the questions related to reconciliation. The final section makes some recommendations about how local congregations might work towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Reconciliation: History and Historical Present

This year, 2017, brings milestone anniversaries for significant events in the process of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: the introduction of Commonwealth legislation that gave all Aboriginal Australians the right to vote in Federal elections (55 years); the 1967 Constitutional referendum (50); the setting up of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra (45); the establishment of the first Commonwealth Department for Aboriginal Affairs (45); the first meeting of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (25); the handing down of the historic High Court *Mabo* decision, which declared that Australia was not *terra nullius* (25); the publication of the *Bringing Them Home* report about Australia's Stolen Generations (20); and the publication of the first report for Federal Parliament about recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Australian Constitution (5).

This year also marks ten years since the Council of Australian Governments agreed to work with each other and with Indigenous communities to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage, and nine years since Kevin Rudd, then Prime Minister, formally apologised to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Parliament.

The 1967 referendum achieved two things: it removed a section (s.127) that specifically excluded Aboriginal Australians from population counts; and it amended the "races power" (s.51(xxvi)) so that Federal Parliament could begin to make laws for "the peace, order and good government" of Aboriginal Australians. Fifty years on, Australia is moving toward another referendum about making changes to our Constitution that will properly recognise our First Nations. The Referendum Council, appointed by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in December 2015, is expected to bring recommendations, by the end of June 2017, on steps that can be taken to bring about a successful referendum. A series of Dialogues have already been conducted, culminating in the First Nations Constitutional Convention at Uluru in May 2017.

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, issued at the close of the Convention, affirms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first sovereign nations of Australia, and declares that sovereignty "has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown." The Convention recognised the many challenges faced by First Nations communities and attributed them to a problem that is structural in nature: "*the torment of our powerlessness*". Consequently, it seeks constitutional reform that will empower First Nations people to take "a rightful place" in their own country, including a voice enshrined in the Constitution and a *Makarrata Commission* to supervise the making of agreements between governments and First Nations people.

The Convention stresses the importance of acknowledging the truth about the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as part of the process of Australia preparing for Constitutional reform. Christians should recognise the importance of this acknowledgement, especially since Christians and the Christian church have a significant role in the history.

Perhaps the most significant contribution to our understanding of the history between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was written by John Harris in 1994. It's not an easy book to read, chronicling as it does two centuries of interactions between Australia's First Nations and the colonists – a history that could at best be described as "chequered".

Lieutenant James Cook claimed the eastern part of Australia for the British in 1770, naming it New South Wales. In 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip arrived at Sydney Cove, and began to implement the British government's instructions to establish the first British colony in New South Wales. Despite the obvious presence of Aboriginal people on the land, it was assumed *terra nullius*, belonging to no one. This notion was formalised in 1835 with a proclamation from Governor Richard Bourke that any contract established to purchase land from "Aboriginal Natives", anywhere on the continent, was "*void and of no effect against the rights of the Crown*." The next section of the paper will consider this issue more fully.

In addition to taking land, the colonists also took Indigenous lives. Massacres and mass-poisonings in all the British colonies on the continent are well-documented. In a remarkable proclamation in 1816, NSW Governor Lachlan Macquarie authorised settlers along the rivers Hawkesbury and Nepean to form themselves into associations for “mutual relief and assistance” against attacks from “hostile natives”, and to “repel such attacks or incursions by force of arms.” Though he declared such action should be defensive in nature, and never provocative, perhaps the proclamation shaped the future. In NSW, massacres at Appin (1816), Bathurst (1824), Waterloo Creek (1838), Myall Creek (1838), Evans Head (1842), along the Macleay River (1838-1851) and other places claimed hundreds of lives. Motive is difficult to ascribe in all cases, but it appears from the records that many of these deaths were connected with the taking of land, or were retribution for Aboriginal action against the colonists (such as the stealing of livestock). Further afield, Tasmania’s “Black War” between 1828 and 1832 has been described as nothing short of genocide, in that it resulted in the elimination of the full-descent Aboriginal population that had lived there prior to colonization. The written, and even artistic, records of our country testify to the violence committed toward our First Nations. Charles Finch Hatton’s comment is harsh, but the sentiment not unique: “Whether the Blacks deserve any mercy at the hands of the pioneering squatters is an open question, but that they get none is certain. They are a doomed race, and before many years they will be completely wiped out of the land.”²³

The voices and actions of Christians served to moderate the extent of the murder and dispossession of First Nations people. Harris quotes John Gribble, pioneer missionary worker to Aboriginal people: *“If I am to work as a missionary, it must be on the lines of justice and right to the Aborigines of this land, in opposition to the injustice and wrong-doing of unprincipled white men.”* This attitude exemplifies the heart of many who took the gospel to Aborigines, and also of those who protected them in the face of violence. Harris has thoroughly documented their work in *One Blood*.

The 1997 report *Bringing Them Home* is the result of a national Inquiry into government practice of separating, often under compulsion or duress, many Indigenous children from their families. The report includes quotes, from submissions to the Inquiry, that describe the consequences for Indigenous people. Many tell of harmful physical and psychological effects at the time of separation and in the years following; some acknowledge the love shown by adoptive families, and access to better health care and education. The unifying theme is loss of connection, as described in this submission: “Our life pattern was created by the government policies and are forever with me, as though an invisible anchor around my neck. The moments that should be shared and rejoiced by a family unit, for [my brother] and mum and I are forever lost. The stolen years that are worth more than any treasure are irrecoverable.”

The Inquiry recognised that some separations may have been justified (in order to protect the child from neglect or abuse). However, it identified the key reasons for separating children from their families: a desire to segregate full-descent Aboriginals, and a policy of “merging” and “assimilating” mixed-descent Aboriginals with the white Australian population. Implicit in these policies was the notion that in Indigenous culture there was nothing of value, or worthy of preservation. Between 1910 and 1970 significant numbers of Indigenous children were removed from their families, in some places and times as many as one in three children in a community. Aboriginal children who came into the state’s care were far less likely to see their families again than white children in a similar position. The result is that “most [Indigenous] families have been affected, in one or more generations, by the forcible removal of one or more children.”

What was the role of the church in the implementation of these policies? Harris, in his 2015 CASE article, notes that Australian churches and other Christian organisations received “stolen” children into their institutions, that they in fact relied on these children for ongoing government funding. While some Aboriginal people reported positively about their experience in these institutions, Harris argues that regimentation, restrictions, harsh discipline and rules, and a culture of diminished grace were, over all, a “debasement of the gospel”. He concludes: “It’s an undeniable historical fact that Australian churches were, in this way, complicit in the system of removing Aboriginal children from their families”.

In 1997, this Assembly, responded to the *Bringing Them Home* report and recognised the tragic consequences of the policies of removing children from Aboriginal families. It concluded in the

²³Quoted in W.J. Lines, *Taming the Great South Land. A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 109.

following terms.

That the Assembly ...

Note the report of the National Enquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their families and acknowledge, to the indigenous people of Australia and to Almighty God:

- (a) that the policy of Australian governments of separating indigenous children from their families and communities was based on sinful racist assumptions about indigenous people and their culture.
- (b) that in certain instances members of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales were involved in government in setting that policy and with government agencies and non-government agencies in implementing that policy and otherwise were involved in ministry to such indigenous people and their children.
- (c) that although this ministry by Presbyterians was carried out with the genuine desire to help indigenous people and their children, and to glorify God, and although in many cases indigenous people and their children were helped through ministry by Presbyterians, yet that policy and its implementation has caused great harm to many indigenous children and their families and communities.
- (d) that to the extent that it failed as an institution and through its members to understand and speak against the racist assumptions underlying that policy and the terrible damage done through its implementation, the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales sinned and deeply regrets the involvement of some of its members in setting and implementing that policy and unreservedly apologises to all indigenous Australians.

Urge the Australian Prime Minister and the Australian Federal Parliament, for the sake of national reconciliation, to issue, on behalf of the Australian people, a strong and unequivocal apology to the indigenous Australians effected by the past policy of separating indigenous children from their families.

All Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, Christian and non-Christian, carry the legacy of the combined injustices perpetrated against our First Nations people – a cocktail of guilt and hurt that runs through the generations. For many Indigenous Australians this manifests as one or more of the challenges identified by the First Nations Constitutional Convention: “health, housing, high rates of suicide, community closures, Indigenous Advancement Strategy, education, community development program, youth detention and adult incarceration.” The 2017 *Closing the Gap* report gives a fuller picture: while it highlights real successes achieved by individuals and communities working with organisations and governments around the country, it also acknowledges “the stark reality that we are not seeing sufficient national progress on the Closing the Gap targets”.

While there has been some progress in working towards targets in the education system, the following goals seem not likely to be met: halving the gap in infant mortality rate by 2018; closing the gap on life expectancy by 2031; halving the gap in literacy and numeracy for Indigenous students by 2018; halving the gap in employment by 2018.

Some examples of the “stark reality” include:

- in the Northern Territory, the child (0-4) mortality rate for Indigenous Australians is, at 333 per 100,000 population, more than 3 times that of non-Indigenous Australians.
- The proportion of very remote Indigenous Australian students reaching national minimum standards for Year 5 numeracy is, at 42%, less than half that of very remote non-Indigenous Australians.
- Only 29% of Indigenous Australians with only Year 9 attainment are employed, while the figure for non-Indigenous Australian is much higher (47%).
- Indigenous mortality rates from chronic diseases have decreased, but mortality rates from cancers are rising, and the gap widening.
- Data from 2013 shows Indigenous males have a life expectancy at birth that is 10.6 years less than non-Indigenous males; for women, the gap is 9.5 years.
- The smoking rate for Indigenous Australians is almost 3 times that of non-Indigenous Australians.
- In the two years to June 2015, the rate of hospitalisation as a result of assault was 14 times higher for Indigenous Australians than for non-Indigenous Australians. For

Indigenous women, the rate is 30 times higher than for non-Indigenous women. For Indigenous women in remote areas, the rate is 53 times higher.

- Incarceration rates for Indigenous Australians are 13 times that of non-Indigenous Australians, and the majority of Indigenous Australians in prison have committed violence-related or other harm-related crimes. At June 2016, 27% of total prisoners in Australia were Indigenous.

These are sobering facts. They should prompt us to recognise the need to think seriously about questions of responsibility and reconciliation and reparation, questions to which we will turn after our excursus about the question of the settled-conquered land.

An excursus on the invasion/settlement debate

In March last year, the media reported that the University of NSW produced a Diversity Toolkit on indigenous terminology for its undergraduate students which argued that "Australia was not settled peacefully, it was invaded, occupied, and colonised".²⁴ There was some public backlash to the guidelines including claims that the university was trying to "rewrite history" and that the Toolkit represented "anti-intellectualism and political correctness at its worst" while painting the publishers of the Toolkit with distasteful language.²⁵ The media reports and subsequent public discourse illustrate that people hold their positions on whether Australia was "settled" as not only a matter of fact but also with much emotional attachment.

The British acquired Australia on a purported basis of settlement. But was this classification correct? In this part of our report, the Committee seeks to form a view on the question, and to set out the moral implications for Christians to holding such a view.

Why is this an issue?

Under British colonial law in 1788, there were broadly two bases for the British Crown to acquire new land: (1) by settlement of empty (or at least uncultivated) land and (2) by conquest of the previous occupiers of the land²⁶. In the first category, the laws of England become immediately in force at the point of settlement, and in the second category, the old laws of the previous occupiers remain until such time that the Crown changes them²⁷.

In the latter category, it was the practice for the British Crown to enter into treaty agreements with the conquered peoples of the land and until such time that English law repudiated local laws, the local laws remained in force. For example, the British Crown entered into 11 treaties with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada (also known as the Numbered Treaties) and in the case of New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi with the various Maori chiefs of North Island. However unbalanced and flawed those treaties were, they gave at least some recognition of ownership of land to its indigenous people and afforded them some basic rights.

Australia was different. British colonists took steps (such as setting up Marks and Inscriptions) to acquire land under the first category of settlement and it was assumed that Australia was to be treated as "uninhabited". Subsequent extensions of British rule were then made on the assumptions that the entire continent was to be acquired through settlement.²⁸ Accordingly, no treaty-like instruments were entered into with the indigenous people of Australia.

Was it right to classify Australia as a "settled colony"?

Was it correct to classify Australia as a settled colony? The very existence of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia should on one view, on the basis of that fact, mean that the treatment of Australia as "uninhabited" was a grave error.

In 1837, the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Aborigines stated: "The land has been taken from [the indigenous peoples of Australia] without the assertion of any other title than that of superior force.... *whatever may have been the injustice of this encroachment*, there is no reason to suppose that either justice or humanity would now be consulted by receding from it." (emphasis added) The commentary from the Select Committee implicitly accepts prior ownership of the land by the indigenous people of Australia.

²⁴ <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/invasion-of-the-history-rewriters/news-story/d18774ad2553314898261298cef4e17d>

²⁵ <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/kyle-tees-off-about-bulls-university-guidelines-around-indigenous-history/news-story/2196aa3f9f8d77cd902630034d07c98e>

²⁶ William Blackstone, *Commentaries of the Laws of England* (facsimile edition of first edition published 1765-69, 1979) 104-5 [Bk 1, ch 4]

²⁷ <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AJLH/2004/8.html#fnB1>

²⁸ <http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/report-31>

As early as 1829, the Australian courts were required to consider the legally ambiguous status of the Aboriginal people in Australia²⁹. While in 1899, the Privy Council stated that New South Wales was "a tract of territory, practically unoccupied, without settled inhabitants or settled land at the time when it was peacefully annexed to the British dominions"³⁰. This was far from a settled matter in the highest appellate court of Australia.

In *Commonwealth v Coe* (1979) 24 ALR 118, Justice Murphy sitting on the High Court of Australia observed "Although the Privy Council referred in *Cooper v Stuart* to peaceful annexation, the aborigines did not give up their lands peacefully: they were killed or removed forcibly from the lands by United Kingdom forces or the European colonists in what amounted to attempted (and in Tasmania almost complete) genocide. The statement by the Privy Council may be regarded either as having been made in ignorance or as a convenient falsehood to justify the taking of aborigines' land".

In *Mabo v the State of Queensland* (1992) 175 CLR 1, the High Court wholly rejected the notion that Australia was uninhabited and found that "the lands of this continent were not terra nullius or practically unoccupied in 1788". The High Court accepted that the assumption that Australia was unoccupied was false and opined that "the fiction by which the rights and interests of indigenous inhabitants in land were treated as non-existent was justified by a policy which has no place in the contemporary law of this country". It also noted the observations of Justice Blackburn in *Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd* (1971) 17 FLR 141 who said: "The evidence shows a subtle and elaborate system highly adapted to the country in which the [Aboriginal] people led their lives, which provided a stable order of society and was remarkably free from the vagaries of personal whim or influence. If ever a system could be called 'a government of laws, and not of men', it is that shown in the evidence before me". The High Court expressed reservations about Australia being characterised as settled rather than conquered in light of historical facts.

Notwithstanding such commentary, *Mabo* did not unequivocally determine the settled-conquered colony issue. This is because the High Court (notwithstanding finding that the Aboriginal people of Australia were the traditional owners of the land), proceeded to determine the substantive proceedings on the assumption that Australia was validly settled. The reason behind this could be attributed to the High Court finding that the settled-conquered question was not an issue which could be determined by a court.³¹ As one legal commentator observed: "*This legal classification is unreviewable in the courts even though there be acknowledgement by the bench that some lands in the colonies were relinquished by Aborigines only after hostilities or negotiations*"³².

The mere fact that the highest court of the land does not have the power to question whether Australia was settled or not, does not mean that to do so is a fruitless exercise, nor prevents the Committee from producing an opinion on the matter.

In view of the numerous judicial commentary and scholarship on this matter, the Committee's opinion is that the classification of Australia as a settled colony was incorrect. Since the Aboriginal people of Australia were the first inhabitants of the land (as the High Court accepted), it follows that British colonists should not have classified Australia as uninhabited.

While there may be few legal consequences of holding this view (since the position cannot be challenged in the courts), there are moral implications for Christians. While the High Court of Australia does not have power to determine such a question, as the Sovereign ruler of the universe under whom all authority is given, God is able and does judge the actions of our nation past and present.

It must be accepted that, under God's law, there is no moral category to justify the British occupation of Australia. The Bible shows that God has overseen the formation of nations and established them in their lands. The classic text about this is Acts 17:26: "From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands" (see also Dt 32:8; Job 12:23; Gen 9:19; 10:32; 11:8-9). Here 'nation' is not equivalent to a political state — an organized political community under a government — includes people groups as well. The point is that "cities, countries and empires rise and fall, both in terms of their political power ... and ... boundaries" and God "the Lord of the history

²⁹ See for example *R v Ballard* Supreme Court of NSW (Forbes CJ and Dowling J) 13 June 1829, AILR Vol 3 No 3 1998

³⁰ *Cooper v Stuart* (1889) 14 App Cas 286

³¹ <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/SydLawRw/1993/16.pdf>

³² <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/SydLawRw/1993/16.pdf>

of the human race".³³ Although the nations have a problematic origin in Babel, in God's providence they are beneficial, and are a basic part of human experience.

God allocates lands to nations (Dt 2:9, 19), he rules over them and destroys them (Ex 23:28; 34:24; Ps 2:1; 7:8; 46:6; Isa 13:4; Jer 25:9). The most dramatic biblical example of God removing people from their land is, of course, the conquest of Canaan. This was the result of God's gift of the land to his people (Lev 20:24; Deut 7:1), but only after the sin of the Canaanites reached the point at which they lost their right to inhabit the land (Lev 18:24; 20:23; Dt 9:4; 18:12). The possession of the land by Israel must be viewed as a special case, in which God revealed to Israel that they were to take the land and commanded them how it was to be taken. Such 'Holy War' does not give a general basis for the invasion of nations, by other nations. Even when nations are used by God to punish Israel, they are still held accountable for their unrighteousness in the way they prosecute their actions (Hab 2:6–17).

As the first people, God allocated the lands of Australia to the Aboriginal peoples. How are we, then, to assess the process of European settlement, based on a false claim of *terra nullius* and involving appalling acts of violence? We are not asking how God may have used this settlement in his providence (even to bring the gospel to indigenous people), but how we assess the actions of taking possession of the land.

Christian tradition, offers us a useful way of thinking about this assessment in the theory of 'just war'.³⁴ This was developed especially by Augustine and Aquinas, endorsed by Luther, Calvin and other Reformation thinkers and accepted by the Westminster Confession (WCF 23:2). It continues to provide the basis for much International law.³⁵ Judged against this standard, the British settlement of Australia must be considered deeply unjust.

Just war theory holds that to be justified a war must be: (i) authorized by legitimate public officials; (ii) conducted for a just cause when there is no real possibility that the desired outcome could be achieved in some other way, (iii) fought with a good intent based on a conscientious estimate of the proportionality of damages done to the good achieved, or the evil avoided, and (iv) with the prospects for success with the likelihood that war will establish a just settlement. To be just, war must also be conducted justly: (i) avoiding direct attacks against non-combatants, and (ii) avoiding weapons and strategies that inflict disproportionate harm. Under this view it is usually only defensive wars or acts of international policing which are justified. Assessed against such just war criteria, the occupation of Australia fails on several counts. The settlement could have been achieved by other means, such as a series of treaties; it was often conducted violently without any express permission from the proper authorities (and even against their explicit instructions) and it employed weapons and strategies which inflicted horrendous losses on the Indigenous People.

On this basis, Christians should accept that Australia had been misclassified as a settled colony and recognise the grave injustice done to the indigenous people of Australia. Not only was it unjustified and a contravention of God's law, it was a grave injustice under human laws. Had Australia been classified as a conquered colony, the Aboriginal people would have had at least notional recognition that they were the traditional owners of the land (perhaps even the possibility of self-determination) by way of a legal instrument such as a treaty. This opportunity was taken from them whether it was by way of fraud or mistake of fact.³⁶

Injustice remains even if we allow the most generous interpretation that classification of Australia as a settled colony was a mistake of fact by the first British arriving on the shores of Australia. Under God's law, a mistake of fact or law does not absolve a trespasser's sin (Leviticus 5:17; Numbers 22:34; Luke 12:47-48).

Accordingly, Christians should recognise that the occupation of Australia and its classification as a settled colony, rather than a conquered one, are grave injustices done to the indigenous people.

Corporate Sin, Apology and Reconciliation

If we accept that the occupation of Australia was a wrong, the question arises as to whether current generations of non-indigenous Australians bear any responsibility for these actions and whether there is any basis for offering apologies or seeking reconciliation. While the term

³³ E.J. Schnabel, *Acts*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 10.

³⁴ See A.F. Holmes, "Just-War Theory", 521-32 in D.J. Atkinson and D.H. Field, eds. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: IVP, 1995).

³⁵ See O. O'Donovan, *The Just War Revisited* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003) and

M. Walzer, *Just and unjust wars: a moral argument with historical illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2015; 5th ed.)

³⁶ See submission to ALRC <http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/report-31>

'reconciliation' can simply imply that there are fractured relationships which need to be restored, the use of the term in this setting implies something about wrongs which need to be righted. The 2016 report of Reconciliation Australia, *The State of reconciliation in Australia*, states that reconciliation involves not only social justice concerns such as "positive two-way relationships built on trust and respect ... between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians" and equal participation of indigenous people in Australian society, but also "widespread acceptance of our nation's history and agreement that the wrongs of the past will never be repeated". The recognition of historic wrongs implies that there is a need for, at least, apologies, as well as correcting social injustices.

Can we, as Christians, affirm the need to apologies, and even offer apologies of our own?

The Bible recognises the reality of corporate and generational responsibility and guilt. The pattern of shared national responsibility is clear throughout the history of Israel. The covenantal blessings and curses are given to Israel as a nation (Dt 27:14-29:1) and the sin of one or a few could bring judgement on the whole people (Josh 7:1), especially when the sin was that of the king of Israel (e.g. 2 Sam 21:1-14).

One of the key texts which describe the character of the Lord says that "he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation" (Ex 34:7; Num 14:18; Isa 65:6-7; Jer 32:18). This is very fully illustrated in Daniel's prayer of confession in which the righteous man confesses to the Lord the sins which are, primarily, those of the Israel and Judah before the exile (Dan 9:4-15).

The Bible is also clear about individual guilt (Ps 32:1-2, 5; Pr 21:16; Rom 3:9-20, 23). Some commentators suggest on the basis of Jeremiah 31:30 that corporate guilt is only a feature of the Old Covenant and that in the New Covenant "everyone will die for their own sin". Yet Ezekiel 18 says the same thing about the Old Covenant. Since the people of God are a nation in the Old Covenant, then it is no surprise that corporate guilt is a more important feature of the Old Testament, than in the new. Nevertheless, both individual and corporate guilt are ongoing realities in human life.

Reformed theology is familiar with the idea of corporate and inherited guilt. The covenant theology which is basic to much of our doctrine, and is key to the structure of the Westminster Confession, assumes the principle of corporate guilt. Because Adam was the federal head of all humanity, then his guilt was imputed to all humanity (WCF 6:3).

The argument here does not presume that corporate national guilt is anywhere near equivalent to inherited guilt from Adam, nor that it is the same as individual guilt. It simply makes the point that for Christians it should not be difficult to understand that later generations in a nation share in the guilt of earlier generations and can rightly offer apologies and seek reconciliation.

Christians should, in principle, welcome the reconciliation process in Australia; both for the good of the Indigenous population who are one of the most disadvantaged groups in our society, and because we recognise that all non-indigenous Australians share in certain level of responsibility for the wrongs of the past.

The Gospel and Reconciliation

Reconciliation is at the heart of the Christian gospel, which proclaims that we are reconciled to God through Christ (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Rom. 5:8-11; 11:15; Col. 1:20-22; Eph. 2:12-17). Those who were enemies of God and deserving of his just condemnation have been acquitted and restored to friendship with him (Rom 5:10). The preaching of the gospel is a ministry of reconciliation by which God continues to restore sinners to himself (2 Cor 5:18-20). The present reconciliation through Christ in the gospel anticipates the full and final reconciliation of all things. "Because humanity plays the key role in the ordering of God's world, human reconciliation will lead to the restoration of creation" (cf Eph 1:10).³⁷

The reconciliation of believers with God now, in anticipation of cosmic reconciliation at the return of Christ, is the basis for human reconciliation in the present, in Christ. In Paul's letters this is primarily applied to the theological distinction between Jews and Gentiles. In Christ, the two groups have been brought together in peace to form "one new humanity" and they are to recognise one another as "fellow citizens" and part of God's household who are being built together as a "holy temple in the Lord" (Eph2:14-22). The inclusion of Gentiles into the church through Christ is the way God displays his rich wisdom to the spiritual powers and authorities (Eph 3:7-12). The reality of

³⁷ N.T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon* (IVP/Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

reconciliation in Christ is the reason Paul is so concerned for Jews and Gentiles to live in unity with each other in the church, and he urges them to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph4:3–4).

While the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles is in the forefront of the discussion of in the New Testament, it is not the only indication of genuine human reconciliation through Christ. Paul says in the church “Christ is all, and is in all” so “there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised”, but also no barbarian, Scythian, slave or free (Col 3:11). Similarly, in Galatians, while focussing on the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ Paul also says there is “neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female” (Gal 3:26–29). He does not mean that those distinctions are no longer recognisable, but that the divisions they imply are not to be part of Christian fellowship. Ethnicity, rank and gender are not to be barriers to Christian unity, but we are to live as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The message of gospel reconciliation has important implications for Christian thought about the reconciliation process in Australia. Primarily, it means that genuine reconciliation is found in Christ by the gospel. The sad history of the mistreatment of the Indigenous people of Australia and the sins which stain our past are only properly overcome in the work of Christ. So, the fullest contribution which the Christian church can make to national reconciliation is to proclaim Christ.

Secondly, the church must be a community of reconciliation. We should commit ourselves to maintaining and expressing the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. The Presbyterian Church of Australia supports the ministry of Mt Druitt Indigenous Church and has had a history of some involvement with the Australian Indigenous Ministries (AIM). These are some expression of unity with indigenous brothers and sisters, but the gospel calls us to far more. Many of our churches are in areas with significant Indigenous populations and can seek to work with Christians and churches in those communities.

Thirdly, while we recognise that the steps to national reconciliation are not directly grounded in Christ and do not flow from gospel ministry, we can recognise something of the faint echo of the gospel and support this work for the common good. We will not confuse national reconciliation with gospel reconciliation, but we support the national process because we value reconciliation. We are told to pray for all people, including our rulers, so that our society might be blessed with peace. Paul ties this instruction to God’s peace-making in Christ (1 Tim 2:1–7). Perhaps because God’s peace-making is the model for our prayers, or perhaps because a peaceful society allows a free gospel ministry which extends God’s peace. Either way, as we pray for common peace we should also support a process which seeks such peace.

In 2003, the Assembly considered the issue of reconciliation and resolved as follows.

Recognise the complexity of the issues involved in the way Europeans treated Aboriginal peoples at the time of European settlement of the Australian continent, and in the subsequent history of this country.

Acknowledge that wrong has been done to Aboriginal people through the colonisation process.

Recognise the need for reconciliation between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people as a result of the events of Australian history.

Acknowledge the church's responsibility to take the initiative in the reconciliation process.

Encourage local congregations to explore ways to be involved with local Aboriginal people as an act of reconciliation.

Encourage Aboriginal Christians to get involved in the reconciliation process.

Thus, this Assembly has previously acknowledged the wrongs in colonisation and the need for reconciliation and come to similar conclusions to those in this report.

Recommendations for action

The conclusion of this paper is that Christian should recognise the needs of national reconciliation, including apologies, and support the ongoing process of reconciliation. This will have implications for our support for a possible amendment to the constitution, though the Committee cannot comment on this more specifically until the text of the proposed amendment is released.

More importantly, the church as a wider institution, and particularly as local congregations, should strive to be a community in which there is genuine reconciliation through Christ. This certainly means that our congregations should seek to include Indigenous Australians, but they should also establish fellowship with Aboriginal Christians in other churches and aim for positive contact with local Aboriginal communities.

Our churches should be informed about the history of European settlement of Australia. To that end, the Committee is seeking the encouragement of the Assembly to develop this report into a Resource Paper for our churches.

As well as the general history, there is great value in local congregations understanding the history of settlement in their own area. Rev. Michael Boyd from Tweed Heads has written a document for his church (*Am I my brother's keeper? Confession and reconciliation towards Indigenous Australian peoples*) which includes the local story, noting that Tweed Heads Presbyterian Church may have been built over a midden. He is willing to share his paper with anyone who is interested.

Many public events in Australia now start with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country. The welcome to country is a development from traditional culture in which the people from one Nation would grant permission for travellers to enter their country, offering safe passage and the "protection of their spiritual being".³⁸ Today these Welcomes are offered by a local Traditional Owner and can include song, dance, a smoking ceremony or a speech. Many conservative Christians have been reticent to promote such Welcomes which have roots in non-Christian religion and which may involve or imply the invocation of spiritual forces. On the other hand, Tanya Riches reports that "most Aboriginal pastors are forthright in saying that Welcome to Country is done to simply honour the history and peoples of our land — a beautiful ritual gesture in a world that often lacks respect".³⁹ Since few of our churches have Aboriginal members who could offer a welcome to country, a theological assessment of the Welcome to Country ceremonies is not urgent. The Committee is seeking the Assembly's encouragement to investigate this further, in consultation with Aboriginal Christians.

It is more realistic for our churches to consider including an Acknowledgement of Country in some services or meetings. These may be presented by any person and simply acknowledge the Traditional Owners and the connection of the Aboriginal peoples with the Country. This often takes the form of a statement such as "I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today. I would also like to pay my respects to Elders past and present" (or a locally specific version). The mention of respect for past Elders raises the question of whether they are considered to be continuing guardians of the land and it is a form of ancestor worship. Again, the committee thinks that this element deserves further research.

The Committee considers that it is appropriate for Church meetings and services to include a simple Acknowledgement of Country followed by a prayer which acknowledges God's providence and the wrongs of settlement and prays for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The 2017 Christ College graduation commenced with words which might provide a model.

We meet in the name of the Lord Jesus, as his people and in the presence of our Holy God. And we meet on land which has been occupied by Aboriginal Wangal people for many generations. We start this evening by acknowledging that in prayer.

Our Lord and loving Heavenly Father, we acknowledge you as the Creator who from one man has made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and who has marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.

We acknowledge that, in your providence, you gave custodianship of the land upon which we meet to the Wangal people of the Eora nation. We also acknowledge the destruction of that people by disease and dislocation and the painful history between the Aboriginal people and the later settlers of this land.

You, Lord, have placed all peoples in your world so that they may seek you and reach out for you and find you, though you are not far from any one of us. So, we pray that through the Lord Jesus and his gospel you might continue to bring the indigenous people of Australia to yourself and bring peace in our nation. We ask you to strengthen us to work together for the welfare of all and the glory of your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Committee is convinced that the question of reconciliation with the indigenous people of Australia is an important issue for our church and nation. It hopes that the Assembly will continue to consider this issue over the next few Assemblies and be able to take more concrete steps toward reconciliation.

³⁸ "Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country" from *Reconciliation Australia* available from <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Welcome-to-and-Acknowledgement-of-Country.pdf>

³⁹Tanya Riches, *Redeeming Australia Day: How Aboriginal Christians are Challenging Australian Spiritually* <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2016/01/25/4394002.htm>

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J. McCLEAN, Convener.

EXTRACT MINUTE:

At Croydon and within the Audrey Keown Theatre of the Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney, on Tuesday 10 July, 2018, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales met and was constituted with prayer.

Among other things, the 2018 Assembly at Minute 30 resolved to:

GANSW 2018 BB Min 30

The report of the Committee on Gospel, Society and Culture together with two addenda to the report was laid on the table and received.

(Relevant Section of the report)

Indigenous Reconciliation The 2016 Assembly encouraged the Committee to develop a Resource Paper based on the report on Indigenous Reconciliation, including suggestions for congregations to seek reconciliation in the local community. This paper is in preparation and should be available before the Assembly.

The Committee has consulted Aboriginal Christian leaders (including Rick and Kayleen Manton) and has continued to investigate issues related Recognition of Country ceremonies. The Committee intends to bring recommendations on this issue to the 2019 Assembly.

The meetings were closed with prayer.

Extracted this day, 15th August 2019, from the official records of the General Assembly.



Rev. John Irvin
Clerk of the Assembly
Presbyterian Church of Australia in NSW

OVERTURES

(i) From the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland concerning the administration of the sacraments by unordained persons in addition to elders and home missionaries

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

WHEREAS:

1. The General Assembly has made a special provision for unordained people to administer the sacraments so that the people of God may not be without these sealing ordinances.
2. The General Assembly has enacted Rules under Article of Agreement 2.2 to govern this special provision.
3. The General Assembly has authority to enact such Rules in accordance with its power set out in Article of Agreement 2.1(a) and (b).
4. These rules have permitted the administration of the Sacraments by Home Missionaries for many years.
5. In recent years this authority has been broadened to include PIM Padres and elders.
6. The reference to the setting apart of Elders by the Presbytery within this rule may inadvertently erode the power of the Moderator or Interim Moderator of Charges.
7. There may be circumstances when the use of the services of an elder to administer the Sacraments by a Moderator or Interim Moderator is beneficial for reasons other than those outlined in the current rule.
8. Within the polity of the Church the ordination of a person to the office of Elder and the reporting of all such administration of the Sacraments by an Elder to the Presbytery provides adequate accountability.

9. At least one State Home Missions Committee uses a number of titles for unordained ministry workers in addition to the term Home Missionary, and there may be occasions when it is appropriate for such unordained ministry workers to administer the Sacraments.

NOW THEREFORE:

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland overtures the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to take the above recitals into consideration and amend Rule 4.2.2 so that it reads as follows:

4.2.2. Administration of the Sacraments by Elders, Home Missionaries and other authorised unordained ministry workers

Unordained ministry workers approved by relevant Federal and State Church bodies and Elders may be authorised by the Moderator or Interim Moderator of a Charge to administer the Sacraments.

The Moderator or Interim Moderator of the congregation shall be responsible to Presbytery for the manner in which the Sacraments are administered, and all such cases are to be duly reported to the Presbytery.

Moderators and Interim Moderators are counselled to exercise care so that only Elders, Home Missionaries, and other unordained ministry workers who meet the following criteria are appointed and given the right to administer the Sacraments:

- (a) an adequate understanding of the theology of the Sacraments.*
- (b) a proven record of service demonstrating their suitability to take on special responsibilities.*
- (c) a genuine pastoral connection with the congregation that includes the preaching of the Word to that congregation.*

Elders, Home Missionaries, and unordained ministry workers, when administering the Sacraments, shall consult and use the forms in the most recently approved Book of Common Order of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Such persons authorised to administer the Sacraments under this provision shall not do so except on occasions fixed by the Kirk Session.

Or do otherwise as the Assembly may consider fitting.

Rev. M Viney and L J F Hall were appointed to state the overture.

(ii) From the Presbytery of North Western Victoria concerning the status of Roman Catholic baptism

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

WHEREAS:

- A. Jesus' words in Matt 28:18-20 and WCF 28.1 stating that baptism is "to be continued in His Church until the end of the world", indicate that baptism is a sacrament for a true Church belonging to Christ;
- B. Peter states in Acts 4:12 and WCF 25.2 "The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation";
- C. Jesus' warning in Rev. 2:5 is reflected in WCF 25.5 stating that "some [Churches] have so degenerated, as to become no Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan";
- D. There are some who now attend congregations of the Presbyterian Church who, having been baptised by the Roman Catholic Church either as infants or adults, have now come to a saving faith in Christ alone and desire to become members of the Presbyterian Church;
- E. Among many other helpful comments on this issue, John Calvin wrote in his "Institutes"

- that:
- i. “Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ’s institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists” (4.1.9);
 - ii. “For, in order that the title “church” may not deceive us, every congregation that claims the name “church” must be tested by this standard as by a touchstone. If in Word and sacraments it has the order approved by the Lord, it will not deceive; let us, then, confidently pay to it the honour due to churches. But again, if devoid of Word and sacraments, it advertises the name of church, we must just as scrupulously beware such deceits, as we must avoid rashness and pride on the other side” (4.1.11);
 - iii. “Consequently, by this reckoning either they [the Roman Catholic Church] are not churches or no mark will remain to distinguish the lawful congregations of believers from the assemblies of Turks” (4.2.10);
 - iv. “A sacrament is never without a preceding promise but is joined to it as a sort of appendix, with the purpose of confirming and sealing the promise itself, and of making it more evident to us and in a sense ratifying it” (4.14.3);
 - v. “What our opponents commonly say is this: a sacrament consists of the word and the outward sign. For we ought to understand the word not as one whispered without meaning and without faith, a mere noise, like a magic incantation, which has the force to consecrate the element. Rather, it should, when preached, make us understand what the visible sign means” (4.14.4);
 - vi. “For Paul joins together the Word of life and baptism of water, as if he had said: “Through the gospel a message of our cleansing and sanctification is brought to us; through such baptism the message is sealed”” commenting on Paul’s words in Titus 3:5;
- F. Louis Berkhof, who in his “Systematic Theology” wrote, regarding the marks of the church, that:
- i. “There is a limit beyond which a Church cannot go in the misrepresentation or denial of the truth, without losing her true character and becoming a false Church” (Part 5, The Church, chapter 2, G, 2a);
 - ii. The sacraments should never be divorced from the Word, for they have no content of their own, but derive their content by the Word of God ... A denial of the central truths of the gospel will naturally affect the proper administration of the sacraments; and the Church of Rome certainly departs from the right mode, when it divorces the sacraments from the Word, ascribing to them a sort of magical efficacy” (Part 5, The Church, chapter 2, G, 2b);
- G. Mark Dever, who in a recent panel discussion discussing the life of RC Sproul related a conversation in which they debated the recognition of Roman Catholic baptism (not considering the issue of infant baptism), where Sproul initially took the position that as long as there was the name of the Trinity used it was a valid Christian baptism, but was then convinced that what was also required for a valid Christian baptism was the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ (which can be listened to at <https://t4g.org/media/2018/04/reflections-life-rc-sproul/> at 31:40-33:20);
- H. That pastoral sensitivity is required for those who have received Roman Catholic baptism and who have now come into the Presbyterian Church;
- I. That though the Roman Catholic Church is not a Christian Church, there are still Christians within that organisation, who are Christians despite its teachings;
- J. That the WCF 27.3 states “The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it: but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution...”
- K. That the issue does not surround the personal salvation of the one administering the sacrament, but instead of the status of the institution within which the sacrament is being administered;
- L. That the WCF 28.8 states “The sacrament of Baptism is but once to be administered unto any person”; meaning:

- i. If baptism administered by the Roman Catholic Church is a legitimate Christian baptism, those entering a protestant church from the Roman Catholic Church should not be rebaptised; but
- ii. If baptism administered by the Roman Catholic Church is not a legitimate Christian baptism, those entering a protestant church from the Roman Catholic Church should be baptised, because the baptism they have received was not baptism;

NOW THEREFORE:

The Presbytery of North Western Victoria humbly overtures the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to take the above recitals into consideration and:

- (1) declare whether baptism administered in the Roman Catholic Church is legitimate Christian baptism; and if it decides that it is not, to
- (2) declare the theological, practical and pastoral implications of this on those who are current members of the Presbyterian Church and those who wish to become members in the future, with special reference to whether they should receive Christian baptism; or
- (3) do otherwise as in its wisdom the Assembly may deem fit.

Rev. J Walz and Elder C Morrow were appointed to state the Overture.

(iii) From the Church and Nation Committee concerning sex, gender and marriage

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

WHEREAS:

- A. The Scriptures which are authoritative and sufficient for all matters of life and faith are the Supreme Standard of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.
- B. The authoritative and sufficient teaching of Scripture consists of that which is expressly set down in Scripture and that which by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from it (WCF 1.6).
- C. Within western culture there are views expressed which are at odds with a biblical understanding of and classical Christian teaching on sex, gender and marriage, but such views are not addressed directly in the Westminster Confession.
- D. The Scriptures are relevant to contemporary issue relating to sex, gender and marriage, especially in that which may be deduced by the good and necessary consequence.
- E. The Church can and should state the teaching of Scripture in relation to contemporary issues.
- F. The General Assembly of Australia and various State Assemblies have made statements on areas of sex, gender and marriage over the last several years, though none of these statements has sought to be summative and comprehensive.
- G. A summative and comprehensive statement on sex, gender and marriage would provide guidance of Ministers, Sessions and Church institutions in teaching and pastoral care.
- H. A summative and comprehensive statement on sex, gender and marriage would provide information and encouragement for church members and easy reference for church representative when dealing with enquiries from people outside the Church.
- I. A summative and comprehensive statement on sex, gender and marriage, as an implication of Scripture and in consistency with the Subordinate Standard, may prove to be an important provision if it is necessary to establish Church doctrine on these matters in the case of an anti-discrimination complaint.
- J. A statement of the Church's view of sex, gender and marriage should indicate its basis in Scripture and its consistency with the Subordinate Standard.
- K. The biblical understanding of sex, gender and marriage is best summarised through the pattern of creation, fall, redemption and consummation, affirming the integrity of God's order in the original creation, the extensive damage of sin, the powerful and progressive redemption in Christ by the Spirit, and confidence in the final reconciliation of all things to God under Christ.
- L. Pastoral care relating to sex, gender and marriage should be directed by a biblical

understanding of these issues and a statement should set out the major implications for the ministry of the Church from its view of sex, gender and marriage.

- M. The Church should recognise its failings in teaching and living a biblical view of sex, gender and marriage, even while it asserts such a view in humble reliance of the Lord and his word.

NOW THEREFORE:

The Church and Nation Committee overtures the General Assembly to take these premises into consideration and to make the following declaration regarding the position of the Assembly on its understanding of sex, gender and marriage or; do otherwise as the Assembly in its wisdom may deem fit.

J. McCLEAN, Convener

The Rev. Dr John McClean and the Rev. Chris Duke were appointed to state the overture.

STATEMENT ON SEX, GENDER AND MARRIAGE

1. Preamble

- 1.1. The Presbyterian Church of Australia seeks to be faithful to God by holding to the teaching of Scripture in faith and life. Our Subordinate Standard affirms the biblical teaching that God created us male and female (WCF 4.2) and that marriage is to be between one man and one woman (WCF 24.1). This statement presents the Church's understanding of humanity in relation to sex, marriage and gender, based on the teaching of Scripture.
- 1.2. This statement uses the terminology of 'sex' and 'gender' while setting out a biblical understanding of their relationship.
- 1.3. In this statement the Church:
 - expresses its joy in God our Creator and his good order of creation;
 - expresses its grief over the effects of our Fall into sin in distorting God's good order;
 - expresses its faith in the Lord Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Saviour;
 - expresses its hope in God's promise of a new creation in which righteousness dwells; and
 - reaffirms its commitment to serving Christ, his church and his world in the area of sex, gender and marriage.

2. We rejoice in God our Creator and his good order of creation

- 2.1. All people are made in God's image (Gen 1:26-27; Declaratory Statement §4) and have a common dignity and worth. No one should be mocked, hated, or bullied.
- 2.2. God established a good order in his creation (WCF 5.1) in which humans were either male or female (Gen 1:27; 5:2; WCF 5.2), sharing a common humanity (Gen 2:23), but distinguished biologically through their capacity to conceive children together through sexual intercourse (Gen 2:24; 4:1). Men and women are equally created in God's image and are to express their gender in complementary relationships, especially in a loving marriage (Gen 2:18; Deut 22:5; 1Co 11:14-15; Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-21; 1 Tim 2:12-14) and also within leadership in the household of God (1 Cor 14:29-35; 1 Tim 2:11-3:7; Titus 1:6-9).
- 2.3. In God's good order, gender identity was determined by one's biological sex (Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4).
- 2.4. Marriage is a union of a husband and a wife, to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life (WCF 24.1), which for the good order of society is established by a public commitment. It is a sign of the love that exists between Christ and his church (Eph. 5:24-33). The purpose of marriage is lifelong love, intimacy and companionship, to provide the most favourable and stable environment to reproduce and nurture children, and to promote the health and stability of society (Gen 2:18; Ecc 4:9-11; Deut 6:1-7; Eph 6:1-4; Prov14:1; Pss 127 & 128; WCF 24.2). In the unity and partnership of marriage, a

husband is to love his wife as his own body and as her head, and a wife is to submit to her husband (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:22–30). Marriage is the only proper setting for sexual intercourse and is the divinely ordained environment for the raising and nurturing of children.

2.5. Married couples are commanded by God to be faithful. All sexual activity outside of marriage is prohibited (Ex 20:14; 22:19; Lev 19:29; Deut 5:18; 22:13-21; 1Co 6:9-10; Heb 13:4; Rev. 21:8; 22:15), as is abuse and violence within marriage (1 Pet 3:7). Divorce is prohibited, except on proper grounds (Mal 2:15; Mt 19:4-8; Mk 10:6-9; 1Co 7:10-14; WCF 24.5-6).

3. We mourn the effects of the Fall and our own sin as they distort God's good order

3.1. The fall of Adam rendered all humanity guilty and subject to God's eternal punishment (Rom 5:12-19). It corrupted us and the created order. 'Our first parents ... fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body', and 'the same death in sin and corrupted nature' was 'conveyed to all their posterity' (WCF 6.1-3). As a consequence, all humans turn away from God, refuse to obey him, and worship created things instead (Rom 1:25) — including marriage, sexual experiences, sexuality and gender. All humans face struggle, distress and distortion in our experiences of gender and sexuality and marriage.

3.2. From the Fall, human sin and God's curse have disordered and frustrated God's good creation pattern (Gen 3:14-19; Rom 8:19-21). Humans have sought to make sense of their world and establish their identities apart from God (Prov 1:7; 12:23; Rom 1:21-29; 7:5,14-18; Eph 4:22). Relationships between husband and wife are spoiled (Gen 3:7,12,16; 4:19,23); women are often mistreated and abused (Ge 34:7-31; Deut 22:28–29; Jdg 19:22-20:7; 2Sa 13:1-32; Zec 14:2; 1 Pet 3:7); men and women are tempted to, and participate in, sexual immorality (Ge 39:6-12; 2Sa 11:2-5; Mt 5:27-28; 1 Pe 4:3; 2 Pe 2:14-18) including homosexual sex (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:18-32; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:9-10); people transgress the boundaries of their sex (Deut 22:5; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Cor 11:4-5, 13-15).

3.3. One consequence of the Fall is that some people are born with conditions in which their sex organs are not easily characterised as either male or female, or their sex organs are not consistent with their sex chromosomes (sometimes called intersex conditions or disorders of sex development). These are often physically uncomfortable and emotionally distressing conditions.

3.4. A further consequence of the Fall is that some people experience their gender to be different to their sex (sometimes called gender identity disorder or gender dysphoria). This is often a very distressing and confusing experience.

3.5. People who suffer from these conditions and experiences are equally made in God's image and share in the common dignity and worth of all human beings. However, these conditions do not constitute a third sex or gender, nor do they contradict the truth that in his originally good creation, God has established a binary sexual order for human beings. Binary biological sex remains the basis on which we understand these experiences.

3.6. All aspects of sexual life and gender are subject to temptations to turn from God's good order and to break his commands. Temptation is not, in itself, sin; though for all fallen humans it appeals to sinful desires which are affected by our sinfulness and for which we are culpable. As a consequence, we are all prone to living out these sinful desires in thought, word and deed (Jam 1:13-15). Marital unfaithfulness through violence, desertion or sexual unfaithfulness is sin, as are all forms of sexual immorality.

3.7. Modern Western culture has developed in a framework in which God is not relevant to understanding the world or shaping ethics. This has promoted a culture which views each person as free to determine their own identity and moral framework; and assumes that diversity, including gender and sexual diversity, is a good in itself; and that pleasure and comfort are primary. This culture does not acknowledge the existence of God's good creational order and often celebrates changes which transgress that order. It also presents temptations through sexualised advertising, pornography and social pressures in friendships and in employment and educational contexts.

- 3.8. The church, in seeking to teach and apply the biblical view of sex, gender and marriage has often failed to acknowledge our own sin and has caused undue hurt. We have failed to adequately understand the struggles of others; and, in doing so, have prevented the gospel being heard by those who, like us, are in desperate need of salvation and secure identity in Christ. As a church we are accountable to the Lord Jesus for our treatment of others, especially those who are young in the faith (Matt 18:6; 1 Pet 4:17).
- 4. We look to Christ for redemption, proclaim him as Lord and Saviour and seek to live for him in ways consistent with God's good order**
- 4.1. In his incarnation, God the Son took on human nature to redeem people from sin, to heal them from corruption and reconcile them to God, and to restore God's good order to creation. He achieved this by his life, death, resurrection and ascension (Jn 3:16-21; Eph 1:3-10; 1 Pet 1:1-9; WCF 8).
- 4.2. The gospel, which proclaims Christ as the Saviour for all who trust him, is offered to all people (Isa 57:19; Acts 2:39; Rom 1:5; 3:24; 1 Tim 2:4). Everyone who comes to Christ is welcomed by him and included in his salvation (John 6:37). In Christ, his people find their true humanity and a new identity, irrespective of their gender, sexuality, marital status, family background, social status or ethnicity. They are restored to the image of God in Christ and united with each other in him (Rom 10:12; 1Co 12:13; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:10, 15; 4:22-24; Col 3:10-11). Christ is the answer to the underlying problems for all people — including those facing sexual temptation, the consequences of sexual sin, broken and difficult marriages, loneliness, shame, and gender confusion.
- 4.3. By the gift of the Holy Spirit those in Christ are restored to God and are able to live for him (Rom 8:3-9; WCF 10.1, 13.1).
- 4.4. God does not promise to heal all broken bodies or human relationships nor to end temptation, nor remove homosexual attraction, gender confusion or other burdens in this life. He promises that, because we are his chosen, redeemed and sanctified children, his grace will be sufficient in all our trials (2 Cor. 12:9). He also promises that on the return of Christ all his people will receive resurrected and restored bodies and enjoy full communion with him in a world of righteousness freed from curse and frustration (Rom 8:20-24; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev. 21:1-5).
- 4.5. Christ calls all people, though lost in sin, to come to him to be reconciled to God and to discover their true humanity in his service. Sinners come to God as he works by his Spirit to lead them to love him, and he reorders their desires and behaviour to conform to Christ. By the Spirit, believers are enabled to grieve for and hate their sins and to commit and strive to live as God commands. All believers struggle with sin and must constantly turn to Christ and put to death the sinful nature with its particular sins.
- 4.6. An unmarried person who is a follower of Jesus Christ is called to live faithfully for him in chastity. Singleness is a proper and honourable Christian calling, since it was the calling of the Lord Jesus himself (Matt 19:12; 1 Cor. 7:32–35; 1 Tim 5:5).
- 4.7. Married couples who follow Jesus Christ are called to live together faithfully as husband and wife, loving and serving one another. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, and wives are to submit to their husbands (Col. 3:18–19; Eph. 5:22–33; Tit 2:4-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7). Parents are to love their children and raise them in the training and instruction of the Lord (Gen 18:19; Deut 6:7; Col 3:21; Eph 6:4). Children are to honour and obey their parents (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16; Pr 6:20; Col 3:20; Eph 6:1-2).
- 4.8. An intersex person who is a follower of Jesus Christ should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known. Surgical treatment to enable this may be appropriate, though it is not morally necessary.
- 4.9. A person who experiences gender dysphoria and who is a follower of Jesus Christ should accept their body as inherent to their personhood, given to them by God, and seek to reconcile their understanding and presentation of their gender according to this fundamental truth. Learning to live consistently with this may be an on-going and difficult process, yet, as with all Christians, their union with Christ through his Spirit will lead them to grow in grace.
- 4.10. Faithful proclamation of the gospel requires the church to give a clear public witness in word and action to the righteousness of God, the nature and consequences of human sin, including its impact on the curse and frustration of the fallen creation, and God's

free offer of grace in the Lord Jesus (Jn 16:8; Acts 2:23, 17:16-17, 30-31; Rom 1:18-3:20). The church presents God's good order and his moral law to the wider society, in part for the sake of the common good which is promoted by a recognition of the moral law. The church is not called to provide moral discipline for society (1 Cor 5:9-10), nor to seek moral reformation of society apart from gospel ministry. The priority of its mission is to proclaim Christ and to call people to salvation in him.

5. We live in eager expectation of God's new creation

- 5.1. The Lord has promised at his return a new creation where righteousness will dwell, and his people will enjoy glorious freedom in his presence, and he will wipe away all their tears (Rom 8:21; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev. 21:1-5; WCF 33.2). So, we live in hope, longing for and praying for the day when we shall be fully conformed to Christ and the created order will be gloriously transformed, healed of all disorder and corruption. In the presence of the Triune God, God's people will be given the fullness of their new identity in Christ (1 Cor 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4-5).
- 5.2. In the new creation, marriage and sexuality will reach their fulfillment in the marriage of Christ the lamb to his people (Rev. 19:7; 21:2). Jesus declares there will be no marriage at the resurrection, which means that marriage is temporal, and not an 'ultimate' relationship for humanity, but one that points to this ultimate fulfillment (Matt 22:30). We do not know the details of how bodies will be transformed and how that will reflect sex or intersex conditions. The bodies of God's people will be glorified and made to be like Christ (1 Cor. 15:35-53; Phil 3:20-21; 1 Jn 3:2).
- 5.3. Only then will God's people be freed from temptation and able to love him perfectly and freely.

6. We commit ourselves to serving Christ, his church and his world in the area of sex, marriage and gender

- 6.1. As the Church addresses issues of sex, gender and marriage in its teaching and pastoral ministry should teach and act in consistency with the understanding set out in this statement.
- 6.2. It is important to differentiate between cultural trends and movements, and the situation of individuals. The Church should identify for its members, and for the society, false views about marriage, sex and gender. It should do so in a way that is gracious, compassionate and engaging, and which offers life lived for Christ as a genuine alternative. It should treat those who are influenced by these movements as victims in need of compassion and, like all people, sinners in need of repentance. The Church should remain sensitive to congregation members who may silently struggle with gender or sexuality issues.
- 6.3. The deeply personal nature of sex, gender and marriage makes teaching about these areas, and the provision of pastoral care, particularly complex. We should seek to be informed as well as possible, to welcome advice from those with relevant personal and professional experience and constantly to seek wisdom from the Lord.
- 6.4. Good pastoral care will involve determining with those concerned, in light of the teaching of Scripture, how they can live faithfully in Christ. It will involve supporting them in this and, in love, holding them accountable for their actions. It may involve helping them access the services of appropriate professionals who should share a view of sex, gender and marriage consistent with this statement.
- 6.5. We should seek to build churches in which people of all ages grow together in the gospel, and which share the gospel of God's love in Christ. Our churches should aim to reinforce, enrich and model identity in Christ in contrast to the idolatrous identities of the world. Churches should seek to model faithfulness in marriage and singleness, and to support single people, couples moving toward marriage and married couples to live godly lives and to serve Christ together. The Church should be a community in which people can be honest about their temptations and pain and receive compassionate support from fellow believers as they seek to live faithfully.
- 6.6. The Church should teach that God opposes abuse and violence in marriage and in the family. He particularly warns husbands to be considerate to their wives and treat them with respect (Eph 5:28-30; 1 Pet 3:7). Acts of domestic violence and abuse are heinous sins. In providing pastoral care, church leaders should be alert for signs of domestic and family violence, and teaching in churches should address these issues. Domestic

violence may be a valid ground for divorce, along with adultery and desertion (WCF 24:6).

- 6.7. Biological or natal sex is the relevant basis on which the church makes decisions about qualifications for marriage, church membership and church office.
- 6.8. The Church will not ordain any person who is involved in a sexual relationship outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. No church officer nor anyone in a position of leadership or responsibility within the Church should be involved in such a relationship.
- 6.9. All schools, training colleges, aged care facilities, charitable organisations, and other ministries and institutions operated by, in connection with, or under the authority or control of the Church are to operate in a manner, and for purposes, consistent with the understanding of sex, gender and marriage set out in this statement. Church property is only to be used in a manner and for purposes consistent with that understanding.

(iv) From the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales concerning the use of honorific titles for Moderators

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

WHEREAS

- A. It is customary to use special titles for GA of A Moderators such as the “Right Reverend” during their term of office, and the “Very Reverend” after their term of office;
- B. These titles appear to have been inherited from the Church of Scotland, as indicated by Cox’s Practice and Procedure (page 795)

In 1895 Her Majesty Queen Victoria issued an order that, in the English Table of Precedence, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland should take his place after the Bishops of the Church of England and before barons. Consequential on this the title “Right Reverend” seems to have been informally adopted.

In 1904, on the recommendation of the Secretary of State for Scotland, His Majesty King Edward V11 granted to the Moderator of the General Assembly precedence, in Scotland and during his term of office, next after the Lord Chancellor of Great Britain.

In 1910 the Scottish Office decided that the designations “Right Reverend” for Moderators and “Very Reverend” for ex-Moderators should be officially recognised.

- C. It also appears that neither in the Presbyterian Church of Australia nor in the Church of Scotland has the Assembly determined to use these honorifics.

Indeed, Andrew Herron, in his *Law and Practice of the Kirk* (page 111), wrote:

All ministers are equal and any apparent exception to this rule is quite illusionary. During his year in office the Moderator of the General Assembly is designated “Right Reverend” and thereafter as “Very Reverend” and on civic occasions and the like has a distinctive place accorded him, but at no point is he invested with any authority in the Kirk beyond that necessary for the control of Assembly business. The Deans of the Thistle and of the Chapel Royal and the principal of St Mary’s College St Andrews (if a minister) claim the designation “Very Reverend” but the General Assembly has issued no deliverance on their status or on the use of the designation referred to.

- D. These titles were introduced to ensure that when dining with the Queen, Moderators would be placed in seats of honour. This is hardly in keeping with what Jesus teaches about “loving places of honour”, and the use of titles like Master, Father and Teacher. (Matthew 23:1-12), Instead, Christian leaders are to be servants.

NOW THEREFORE:

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales humbly overtures the General Assembly of Australia to take these premises into consideration, and discontinue the use of the titles “Right Reverend” and “Very Reverend” for its Moderators; or do otherwise as

the Assembly may see fit.

Rev. Kevin Murray and Mr John Greig were appointed to state the overture.

(v) From the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales concerning the administration of the sacraments by civil chaplains

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

WHEREAS:

A. The General Assembly in 1914 amended WCF and The Constitution, Procedure and Practice (G.A.A. Blue Book 1914 Min. 61, 1916, Minute 71) so that it reads:

"There be only two Sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any but a Minister of the Word lawfully ordained (saving where the General Assembly has made special provision to the contrary that the people of God may not be left without these sealing ordinances).

- B. The Assembly further declared that in Rule 4.2.2. PIM Padres are considered as home missionaries with their authorisation coming under the PIM Committee through its Superintendent (G.A.A. Blue Book 2007 Min. 92(2)).
- C. Ordination is not a requirement to be appointed as a chaplain to a hospital, aged care facility or prison.
- D. Chaplains working in aged care facilities, hospitals and prisons often receive requests for administration of sacraments as part of their ministry.
- E. The Code has made provision for those living in remote areas not to be left without the sealing ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- F. Inmates in prisons would be left without access to these sealing ordinances if a chaplain was not authorised to administer the sacraments.
- G. Chaplains in major hospitals are from time to time called upon to administer baptisms and the Lord's Supper. The nature of after hour requests means an ordained minister is not always available. Also with the changing requirements by the Ministry of Health it is becoming increasingly difficult for persons not officially appointed as a chaplain being able to provide pastoral care to patients and patients could be left without access to these.

NOW THEREFORE:

The Presbyterian Church in NSW humbly overtures the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to take these premises into consideration and declare that in the rule 4.2 Aged care, Hospital and Prison chaplains, who are not ministers, appointed by the relevant State Assembly Committee be considered as Home Missionaries with their authorisation coming under the appropriate Committee through its convener. The relevant Committee must be satisfied that any chaplain authorised to administer the sacraments has an appropriate understanding of the sacraments and all occasions in which they are administered must be reported to the relevant committee through its Senior Chaplain.

Rev Dr. J. McClean and the Rev I. Schoonwater were appointed to state the overture.

(vi) From seven members of the Assembly seeking an amendment to Standing Order 23

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

WHEREAS:

A. Standing Order 23 says: "Relevant questions may be put by any member through the

- Moderator to the Convener of a Committee when the report is before the Assembly, and also after the deliverance as a whole has been moved and seconded.”
- B. It is helpful to allow questions on the report, and this is often used to clarify matters presented by the Committee that at first sight are not clear in the report.
 - C. It is not clear as to the purpose of allowing questions after the deliverance as a whole has been moved and seconded, as when the Assembly has reached this stage in the debate the whole matter has largely been decided.
 - D. It appears to be a hindrance to proper consideration to disallow questions on individual clauses of the deliverance in order to gain clarity on their meaning prior to their being agreed to or not.

NOW, THEREFORE:

the overturists ask the General Assembly to take these factors into consideration and agree to change Standing Order 23 so that it shall read:

“Relevant questions may be put by any member through the Moderator to the Convener of a Committee when the report is before the Assembly, after individual clauses or the deliverance as a whole have been moved and seconded and also to the mover of a substantive motion before it is considered.”

Or to do otherwise as the Assembly may deem fit.

Signed:

John P Wilson (Vic)
 Kevin Murray (NSW)
 Gary Ware (S.A.)
 Peter Phillips (Vic)

Cameron Garrett (Vic)
 Ian Schoonwater (NSW)
 Stuart Bonnington (W.A.)

The Rev. Dr J. Wilson and the Rev. C. Garrett were appointed to state the overture.

PETITIONS

(i) From Mr G. Freeman concerning the naming of churches

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Australia.

This petition shows that:

- A. The Scriptures teach:
 - 1) Justification by faith removes all obstacles to the acceptance of, and fellowship with, those who are united to Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection.
But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners; doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! - Galatians 2:17 (NIV)
 - 2) The law is not opposed to the promises of God:
Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. - Galatians 3:21 (NIV)
 - 3) Our righteousness before God is only through faith in Jesus Christ:
May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. - Galatians 6:14 (NIV)
- B. There is a need to be aware of possible hindrances to the spread of the gospel.
- C. The problem which occurred at Antioch, where Paul opposed Peter, has pastoral implications for the wider church today.
- D. Justification by faith means that the church should not be divided as a result of church names or anything else except geographical location.
- E. The sending of this petition (first 3 propositions) has been supported by the Tuggeranong

Presbyterian Church Session and it is of an unusual nature.

Now therefore Geoffrey Freeman asks the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Australia to take these premises into consideration and establish a committee to examine the pastoral implications of the incident at Antioch for the wider church and, in particular, relevance for the naming of churches or to do otherwise as the Assembly in its wisdom may deem fit.

(ii) From Mr M. Crow concerning the standards of the Church

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Australia.

This petition shows that:

- A. The universe and our planet were not created in 6 / 24 hour days;
- B. The Genesis 2 creation story of Adam and Eve being the first people is not true "Holy Scripture".
- C. The Old Testament is not inerrant and was superseded by Jesus' New Covenant.
- D. The doctrine of the "elect" proposed by Calvin is wrong and detrimental to compliance with Jesus' Commission to go out into the world and make disciples.
- E. The study of science should be encouraged as all science is from the Lord.
- F. The Westminster Confession of Faith should be removed from our Church as it is Biblically misleading in many aspects, and to have our elders and Ministers obligated to the document is wrong.

Now therefore, I ask the General Assembly or other court of authority within the PCA, to take these premises into consideration, thus after reading the relevant explanations in following pages, to deal with each as follows:-

- 1) That the Church acknowledge that Genesis 1 is an ancient myth not part of "Holy Scripture";
- 2) That the Church acknowledge that the Adam and Eve story is also an ancient myth not part of "Holy Scripture",
- 3) That the Old Testament be renamed the "Jewish Testament" and removed as Christian "Holy Scripture" but remain as an essential teaching component.
- 4) That Calvin's theory be removed from PCA considerations;
- 5) That confirmed science be studied and preached as being from God;
- 6) That the WCF be withdrawn from Presbyterian reference and from obligation of our elders and Ministers.

Or to do otherwise as the Assembly in its wisdom may deem fit.

Signed: M. Crow

(iii) From Rev. J. Playfoot seeking relief from decisions made by the Presbytery of North East Victoria

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia:

This petition shows that:

- A. During 2016-2017, I was the subject of a judicial process under the Code of Discipline at the hands of the then Presbytery of Benalla (now North East Victoria). That process resulted in a finding of guilt being declared against me.
- B. I appealed the final decisions of that process and the General Assembly of Australia, assuming original jurisdiction of my case, proceeded with a judicial review during 2017-2018.
- C. The General Assembly of Australia, as a result of that review, determined that:
 - a. the administrative suspension imposed on me was an inappropriate exercise of power that was disproportionate to the matter being

- investigated and thus null and void (Min 91.2(c)); and
- b. the decision to proceed by judicial process was excessive (Min 89.3).
 - D. As a consequence of those decisions, the guilty verdict was overturned and, instead, the Assembly issued me with an admonition (Min 91.3).
 - E. I understood that the outcome of the General Assembly process of review was final in that the supreme judicial court of the church had cleared me of guilt in relation to the alleged offence I had been charged with, had found no grounds for censure against me, and by so doing had reaffirmed my status as a minister in good standing.
 - F. This outcome required the Presbytery to accept and respect the final determination of the GAA, being the court supreme in matters of discipline, to regard me as a minister in good standing, and to cease and desist from taking any further action against me in relation to matters now determined and settled by the GAA.
 - G. When the decisions of the GAA were conveyed to the Presbytery, it proceeded to pass a series of motions that fail to recognize me as a minister in good standing, but which seek to impose restrictions and limitations upon me administratively that are linked directly to the matters settled by the GAA, restrictions which that court did not order. The Presbytery appears to now be acting outside of its powers and beyond its jurisdiction by continuing to pursue its case against me contrary to the rules of the Church. (See Document I and II)
 - H. The Presbytery may believe that the provisions of new GAA Code of Discipline rule 1.13(j) give it the freedom to impose such requirements but I submit that they have erred and gone far beyond the provisions of that new rule.
 - I. The Presbytery's decisions are inherently contradictory in that they state that I "remain a minister of the PCA and [am] eligible to accept a call" yet at the same time, they make this eligibility conditional upon a series of unreasonable requirements.
 - J. I submit that all these requirements:
 - a. effectively nullify and render false the statement that I am a minister in good standing and eligible for a call, in that any call would most likely have to be conditional upon the satisfactory completion of those requirements, which would take at last 2 years,
 - b. are an attempt to exercise punitive measures not specified by the Code of Discipline notwithstanding that I have not been found guilty of any disciplinable offence,
 - c. are an attempt to re-apply the original finding of guilt against which I successfully appealed,
 - d. are evidence that the Presbytery has refused to accept in good faith the decisions of the Commission of the GAA,
 - e. would raise such unwarranted doubt and suspicion in the minds of a prospective calling congregation that any call from beyond the bounds of the Presbytery of North East Victoria would be unlikely, and
 - f. would, if made public, result in severe but unwarranted reputational damage to myself, my wife and family as would prejudice any further involvement in the wider Christian community, and the community in general.
 - K. The Presbytery seems to build its case on GAA Minute 89.2 which they cited in their letter to me dated 21st March 2019, but has ignored the following Minute 89.3 which states, *"It would have been appropriate for the Presbytery of Bena/la ... to admonish Mr Playfoot to greater watchfulness, but the decision to proceed by judicial process was excessive."* It further ignores the decision in Minute 91.3 in which I am admonished to "exercise the greatest care", both of which decisions I have submitted to.
 - L. Having resolved to impose these restrictions and limitations upon me in my absence, the Presbytery then wrongly offered me the right of appeal within a 90 day period, despite the fact that I am no longer a member of Presbytery, was not eligible to vote, was not at the bar, and therefore by law have no right to appeal, hence the need to petition as my only recourse. (See Document III)
 - M. The extreme manner in which the judicial processes of the Presbytery were pursued,

particularly my prolonged suspension from active duty for a period of almost 2 years prior to the termination of my appointment, resulted in a severe breach of trust between the then congregation of the Broadford Presbyterian Church and the Presbytery. That breach of trust was so profound that it led around 90% of the then congregation to feel that they had no choice but to make the painful decision to leave the Presbyterian Church. This prompted the Presbytery to declare the parish to be in an unsatisfactory state, and to terminate my appointment as the minister of Broadford Presbyterian Church, while still maintaining my unlawful suspension, thus leaving me without employment or income. (See Documents IV and V)

- N. Those former members of Broadford PC have since formed the Mitchell Christian Fellowship, and, needing the services of a pastor, have sought to engage me to pastor them. Being without work or the means to support my family, and with no prospect in the foreseeable future of receiving a call or appointment within the PCV due to the reputational damage I have suffered as a result of the prolonged disciplinary action taken against me, I requested the permission of the Presbytery to work outside the PCV in order to fulfil my calling as a preacher of the Gospel, and to provide for my family by pastoring the Mitchell Christian Fellowship.
- O. The Presbytery refused my reasonable request, offering only as its reason that the existence of the Mitchell Christian Fellowship is "detrimental to the work of the Presbyterian Church in Broadford, Seymour, Nagambie, and Yea" (Documents VI and VII). Rightly or wrongly, the very existence of the Mitchell Christian Fellowship is a direct result of the Presbytery's actions, as acknowledged by the GAA in Min. 90 (b), which found that *"the decision to suspend Mr Playfoot resulted in serious emotional and material harm to the Broadford congregation... which may not be recoverable."* It also directly undermines Min 90(c) which nevertheless exhorts that *"[e]very effort should be made by the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and particularly the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, to address and repair, so far as may be possible, the broken relationships."* In making its refusal, the Presbytery is actively pursuing an action that will only serve to be even more "detrimental to the work of the Presbyterian Church."
- P. The Presbytery is now, without legitimate reason for doing so, denying me the opportunity to work or to support my family by pastoring the Mitchell Christian Fellowship, yet offering me no alternate work. I have no desire to resign as a minister of the PCA. However, I must be able to work to support my family (See Documents VI and VII).

Now therefore, I, Rev. James Playfoot, humbly petition the General Assembly to take these premises into consideration and:

1. declare that the limitations and restrictions imposed on me by the Presbytery are outside of the Presbytery's powers and therefore null and void;
2. grant my request for permission to work outside the PCA; and
3. permit me to pastor the Mitchell Christian Fellowship for an initial period of up to five years;

or by doing otherwise as in their wisdom they may consider appropriate.

Signed: James Playfoot
Dated: 12/07/2019

Attachments to Petition (iii) begin on the next page.

Attachments to Petition(iii)



**Presbyterian Church of Australia - Victoria
Presbytery of Benalla**

Clerk: Rev Kevin Maxwell, 241 Hogan St, Tatura, Vic 3616
Ph 03 5824 1042. 0409 433 705 kmaxwell@internode.on.net

12 April 2019

Mr James Playfoot
520 Ennis Rd
TALLAROOK VIC 3659

**Petition (iii)
Document I**

Re: Findings of the GAA Commission

Dear James,

I sent the attached letter by ordinary postal service shortly after the 21 March 2018. Having received no reply, I reported this fact to the Presbytery at the Ordinary meeting held on 9 April 2019. The Presbytery directed me to send it again by Registered Mail.

Please see the attached.

Presbytery was also informed that your name has been removed from the Communicants Roll at Broadford PC as you have failed to fulfil the duties of a communicant member of this congregation. As a personal courtesy I remind you of the requirements of PCV Code 2.11.3 and your obligation as a minister of the PCV to be on the congregational roll of Presbyterian Church in Victoria.

Please inform of your decision to comply with the instructions of Presbytery as outlined in the attached letter and the PCV congregation of which you desire to be a member.

Yours in Christian Service

Kevin Maxwell
Presbytery Liaison



**Presbyterian Church of Australia - Victoria
Presbytery of Benalla**

Clerk: Rev Kevin Maxwell, 241 Hogan St, Tatura, Vic 3616
Ph 03 5824 1042. 0409 433 705 kmaxwell@internode.on.net

21 March 2019

Mr James Playfoot
520 Ennis Rd
TALLAROOK VIC 3659

**Petition (iii)
Document II**

Re: Findings of the GAA Commission

Dear James,

At the Ordinary meeting of Presbytery held on 23 October 2018 the Presbytery considered the findings and decisions of the Commission of the GAA resulting from your appeals against various decisions of Presbytery. Presbytery determined that two specific findings relate to your ongoing ministry; the implementation of child protection protocols in the PCV as required by Victorian Government, and Presbytery's responsibility to supervise ministers within its bounds. These findings are as follows:

1. GAA Commission 4 September 2018 Minute 89.2

Rev Playfoot's conduct demonstrates a disregard for the authority of the Session and of the Victorian Assembly as expressed through the Safe Church Unit, and that he is unwilling to comply with child protection protocols established by the Safe Church Unit.

2. GAA Commission 4 September 2018 Minute 91.4

Record that the Rev J. Playfoot's suspension from the ministry of word and sacraments, having been declared null and void and the case having been disposed of, has never been in place and his entitlements during the period of purported suspension should be dealt with on that basis.

The effect of decision 2 is that you remain a Minister of the PCA and are eligible to accept a call, as indicated in previous correspondence.

In response to these decisions and findings the Presbytery instructed the Clerk to seek advice from the PCV Safe Church Unit on how Presbytery should proceed in light of these findings and remain compliant with Victorian legislation for the protection of children, particularly the Child Safety Standards 4-6.

At the Ordinary meeting of Presbytery held on the 11 Dec 2018 the Clerk reported on the advice received from the Safe Church Unit, and Presbytery instructed the Clerk to seek advice from the PCV Law Agent, GAA Clerk and the GAA Law Officers.

At the Ordinary meeting of Presbytery held on 12 February 2019 the Presbytery received the advice from the GAA Clerk, Law Officers and the PCV Law Agent.

In the light of this advice the Presbytery determined that it is necessary for you to undergo a return to work training program to ensure that you are appropriately skilled to fulfill your responsibilities as a Minister of the PCV, in the area of child protection. In addition, this program includes a period of Professional supervision to ensure that you are adequately resourced and supported to carry out your ministerial duties.

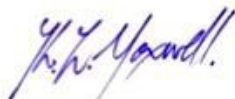
At the Ordinary meeting of Presbytery held on the 12th of February 2018 the Presbytery resolved that before returning to-ministry in the PCA or accepting a call the Presbytery-requires the Rev James Playfoot to complete the following return to work training and establish a professional supervision structure - to support you on your return to work.

1. *A formal risk assessment of the minister, as an employee, and a risk mitigation plan developed and implemented - Standard 6*
2. *Remedial training in Child Safety Protocols: -*
 - a. *Organisational procedures — Undertaking the PCV Safe Church Basic, Advanced and specific Ministers Training, with assessment tasks to demonstrate knowledge of PCV Safe Church requirements (including reporting), materials and legal obligations - Standards 4 and 5*
 - b. *External reinforcement of appropriate child safety procedures — Undertake external child safety training provided by a PCV approved and National Safe Church Training Agreement (SCTA) accredited provider (the SCTA is the national peak body for such training and the PCA state churches are members of this agreement) - Standards 4 and 6*

- c. *Understanding Legal Obligations — Attending the Commission for Children and Young People information and training sessions for religious organisations personnel, to provide a full understanding of the legal obligations of PCV ministers - Standards 4, 5 and 6*
3. *Suitability assessment to work as a minister by a Board of Assessment consisting of 5 ministers of the PCV approved by Presbytery prior to his return to work - Standards 4 and 6*
4. *Professional supervision: -*
 - a. *Prior to his return to work, establish and plan a probationary period of employment with a documented structure of close supervision and oversight of the minister by Presbytery and formally documented and minuted by Presbytery - Standards 4 and 6*
 - b. *Professional supervision (counselling supervision) in line with recommendations of the Royal Commission by a PCV approved and appropriately accredited counsellor, once a month for 2 years and then reviewed as required - Standards 4 and 6*

The Presbytery has appointed the Rev Kevin Maxwell to liaise with you on completing this course of training. Please contact Rev Maxwell to commence this training program as soon as practicable.

Yours in Christian Service



Kevin Maxwell
Presbytery Liaison.



**Presbyterian Church of Australia - Victoria
Presbytery of Benalla**

Clerk: Rev Kevin Maxwell, 241 Hogan St, Tatura, Vic 3616
Ph 03 5824 1042. 0409 433 705 kmaxwell@internode.on.net

3 July 2019

Mr James Playfoot
520 Ennis Rd
TALLAROOK VIC 3659

<p>Petition (iii) Document III</p>

Sent via email to: jkplayfoot@gmail.com

Re: Time to respond to Return to work program

Dear James,

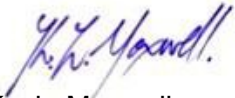
In response to your query about time to respond to the return to work strategy the Presbytery resolved as follows on 11 June 2019:-

The Australia Post Delivery Confirmation Receipt for correspondence sent by registered mail to Rev J Playfoot be received and the date of delivery be recorded as the 15 April 2019.

The Presbytery declare Rev Playfoot has 90 days from the 15 April 2019 to appeal the decision of Record Apart minute 653 and 657 made on the 12th of February 2019, the final day for an appeal to

be received being 14 July 2019.

My apologies for the late notice. Yours in Christian Service



Kevin Maxwell
Presbytery Liaison



**Presbyterian Church of Australia - Victoria
Presbytery of Benalla**

Clerk: Rev Kevin Maxwell, 241 Hogan St, Tatura, Vic 3616
Ph 03 5824 1042. 0409 433 705 kmaxwell@internode.on.net

8 December 2017

Mr James Playfoot
520 Ennis Rd
TALLAROOK VIC 3659

jkplayfoot@gmail.com

Re: Parish of Broadford in an Unsatisfactory State

Dear James,


On Tuesday the 5th of December 2017, at the Ordinary Meeting of Presbytery, the Presbytery received a report from the Special Visitation Committee to Broadford PC and resolved as follows: -

616 It was resolved to find that Broadford PC is in an unsatisfactory state (Code 4.97.4) and proceed according to the relevant provisions of Code 4.97.

623 It was resolved that the Presbytery of Benalla gives notice that at the next Ordinary Meeting of Presbytery that the appointment of Mr. James Playfoot to the Parish of Broadford be terminated.

PCV rule 4.97.11 makes provision for you to be "heard" on this matter. If you wish to make a written submission to Presbytery on this matter, please ensure that your submission has been received by the Clerk of Presbytery by 23 Dec 2017. If you wish to be heard in person on this matter, please contact the Clerk of Presbytery to arrange a Fixed Order of the Day at the next Ordinary meeting of Presbytery.

Yours in Christian Service



Kevin Maxwell
Clerk of Presbytery.

**Petition (iii)
Document IV**

James Playfoot
520 Ennis Rd
Tallarook, 3659

23 December 2017

**Petition (iii)
Document V**

The Presbytery of Benalla

Dear Kevin,

I write in response to your letter dated 8 December about the Broadford Presbyterian Church being in an unsatisfactory state. I have only two comments.

First, if it has not done so already the Presbytery should first consult the congregation about this matter.

Secondly, I have not been able to exercise ministry at that Church for a year because of action taken against me by Presbytery under the Code of Discipline. I am still under suspension pending the hearing of my appeal against the decision on 4 November, this being mandated by Rule 5.25(n) of the Code of Discipline. I also refer you to Rule 5.01(a) which states that my suspension shall not affect my right to stipend. The Presbytery should accordingly take no action about my ministry until my appeal is determined.

Yours in Christ,
James Playfoot

22/10/18

**Petition (iii)
Document VI**

Presbytery of Benalla
ATTN: Rev Kevin Maxwell, Clerk
241 Hogan St
Tatura, VIC 3659

To the Presbytery of Benalla:

Dear Brothers,

In the light of the determination of my appeals by the GAA I write to you with the following two requests:

1. A Certificate of Status.
2. That permission be granted to work outside the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Thank you,
James Playfoot



**Presbyterian Church of Australia - Victoria
Presbytery of Benalla**

Clerk: Rev Kevin Maxwell, 241 Hogan St, Tatura, Vic 3616
Ph 03 5824 1042. 0409 433 705 kmaxwell@internode.on.net

20 November 2018

Mr James Playfoot

**Petition (iii)
Document VII**

jkplayfoot@gmail.com

Re:- Request for permission to work outside the PCV

Dear James,

At the ordinary meeting of the Presbytery held on 23 October 2018, the Presbytery of North East Victoria received your requests to work outside the Presbyterian Church of Victoria and a certificate of status as a minister of the PCA, and resolved as follows:

Item 11

- 18.10.34 *It was resolved to request from Rev J Playfoot clarification the specific details concerning what work he intends to pursue outside the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.*
- 18.10.35 *It was resolved to inform Rev J Playfoot that Presbytery had deferred the decision to issue a Certificate of Status until the next ordinary meeting of Presbytery on 4 Dec 2018.*

Please provide details of what work you intend to do and why such work requires an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. If you could respond before 4 Dec 2018 it would enable the Presbytery to resolve this matter at the next ordinary meeting.

My apologies for the delay in this response due to ill health.

Yours in Christian service.



Kevin Maxwell
Clerk of Presbytery



**Presbyterian Church of Australia - Victoria
Presbytery of Benalla**

Clerk: Rev Kevin Maxwell, 241 Hogan St, Tatura, Vic 3616
Ph 03 5824 1042. 0409 433 705 klmaxwell@internode.on.net

20 Dec 2018

Rev James Playfoot
520 Ennis Rd
TALLAROOK VIC 3659

jkplayfoot@gmail.com

**Petition (iii)
Document VIII(a)**

Re: -Status and work outside the Presbyterian Church of Australia

Dear James,

At the ordinary meeting of Presbytery held on the 11th of Dec 2018 the Presbytery consider your status as minister the Presbyterian Church of Australia and your request to work outside the PCA as minister/pastor of the Mitchell Christian Fellowship and resolved as follows: -

- 18.12.23 It was resolved to inform Rev Playfoot that Presbytery considers the establishment and the ongoing support of the Mitchell Christian Fellowship

detrimental to the work of the Presbyterian Church in Broadford, Seymour, Nagambie and Yea, consequently it is inappropriate for a minister of the Presbyterian Church to be involved in this work.

18.12.24 It was resolved to refuse the request of Rev James Playfoot to work outside the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the Mitchell Christian Fellowship.

18.12.25 It was resolved to inform Rev James Playfoot that he currently retains his status as a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

As you were unable to attend Presbytery your right to appeal these decisions remains in accordance with provisions of the PCV Code.

Yours in Christian service.



Kevin Maxwell
Clerk of Presbytery



**Presbyterian Church of Australia - Victoria
Presbytery of Benalla**

Clerk: Rev Kevin Maxwell, 241 Hogan St, Tatura, Vic 3616
Ph 03 5824 1042. 0409 433 705 kmaxwell@internode.on.net

20 Dec 2018

Rev James Playfoot
520 Ennis Rd
TALLAROOK VIC 3659

jkplayfoot@gmail.com

Certificate of Status

I hereby certify that the Rev James Playfoot holds the Status of Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Yours in Christian service.



Kevin Maxwell
Clerk of Presbytery

**Petition (iii)
Document VIII(b)**

03/12/18

Presbytery of North East Victoria

ATTN: Rev Kevin Maxwell,
Clerk 241 Hogan St
Tatura, VIC 3659

**Petition (iii)
Document IX**

To the Presbytery of North East Victoria:

Dear Brothers,

I am writing in response to your letter dated 20 Nov 2018. The PCV Code states:

4.42 Work outside the Presbyterian Church of Australia by a minister

A presbytery may permit a minister to work outside the Presbyterian Church of Australia for up to five years. In doing so, it must give due weight to the primary importance of pastoral work within the Presbyterian Church of Australia and must satisfy itself that the circumstances and area of work is not inconsistent with his calling.

I requested that permission be granted to work outside the PCA. This provision enables a minister to retain his status while working outside the PCA for a time. This may be necessary for a minister if he finds himself without a charge or if he believes God is calling him to serve outside a local church. Such work may include serving in other Christian organisations or even secular employment. I am currently a minister in good standing, yet without charge and am seeking permission to work outside the PCA. I have no immediate opportunity for employment within the PCA and therefore have no opportunity to support my family. I have an opportunity to serve within an outside Christian Organisation, 'Mitchell Christian Fellowship', and seek your permission to do so.

Thank you,
James Playfoot

July 5, 2019

**Petition (iii)
Document X**

Presbytery of North East Victoria
ATTN: Rev Kevin Maxwell,
Presbytery Liaison Officer
241 Hogan St
Tatura, VIC 3659

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for your letter dated July 3, 2019, and for your apology for the late notice which I accept. In response to your letter I am writing to inform you that I will not be appealing the decision of Presbytery but rather petitioning the GAA for relief from the requirements of the Presbytery's return to work program.

The reasons for not appealing the Presbytery's decision are as follows:

1. I was not a member of the Presbytery at the time the decision was made to impose these requirements on me
2. Because I was not a member, I was not present
3. Not being present I could not have voted, even if I'd been a member
4. Since I could not vote, I could not have voted against the motion
5. For all the above reasons, I am not qualified to appeal the Presbytery's decisions according to the GAV Code 6.4.21

Therefore, because I am not qualified to appeal, the only other way I can bring the Presbytery's decisions under review is by petition. And, since the Presbytery was responding to decisions made by the GAA in a matter referred to it by the GAV, I intend to petition the GAA to grant me relief from the Presbytery's requirements. A copy of my petition will be provided to the Presbytery in recognition of its place as a party whose interests will be affected by the petition.

In following this course of action, please be assured of my desire to promote the prosperity and peace of the Church and the advancement of Christ's kingdom. I do not wish to cause anybody, including the members of Presbytery any unnecessary grief.

Yours in Christ,
James Playfoot

REFERENCES

(i) From the Presbytery of Moreton Bay concerning the condition and state of the reprobate in hell.

To the Venerable, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

The Presbytery of Moreton Bay was duly convened and constituted on the 7th May, 2019, and resolved to refer to the General Assembly of Australia for opinion, advice, decision or direction the matter contained in the following extract minute:

Minute 19.7.8 – That Presbytery sends a Reference to the 2019 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia requesting the Assembly to express an opinion on whether the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches or excludes particular views on the condition and state of the reprobate in hell.

Extracted from the records of the Presbytery of Moreton Bay on 3 July 2019 by me

Paul Cotton
Clerk

Rev. J. Nicol and Mr P. Cotton were appointed to state the reference.

(ii) From the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of NSW, seeking guidance concerning deacons.

To the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

The NSW General Assembly duly convened and constituted on 19 July 2019 resolved to refer to the General Assembly of Australia for opinion, advice and direction the matter contained in the following extract minute:

Among other things, the 2019 Assembly at Minute 89 resolved to:

*84. Reference to GAA: Pursuant to notice Mr M. Smith moved:
That the Assembly:
Request the GAA by means of a Reference to advise whether it is consistent with the doctrine of the Church for deacons to be ordained, inducted, or commissioned for a limited term.
Appoint Murray Smith to state the reference.
The motion was seconded and approved.*

The meeting was closed with prayer.

Extracted this day, 5th August 2019, from the official records of the General Assembly.

The context of this Reference arose from an Overture on Deacons before the GANSW. A proposal in a draft of the overture was for Deacons to be ordained only for a limited tenure

rather than for life (as is the current case for persons ordained as elders/ministers).
The GANSW seeks advice from the GAA so that if the GAA considers this invokes doctrinal matters and not just government, the GANSW can frame its overture in a manner consistent with the determinations of the GAA.

Signed: Rev. John Irvin
Clerk of the Assembly

APPENDIX: MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, 6 September 2018

1. **Assembly Special Meeting** At Hurstville and within the Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Rd, Hurstville, NSW on Thursday, 6 September 2018, at 10.00 a.m., the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia convened for a special meeting in accordance with the requirements of Article 1.8 of the Articles of Agreement.

2. **Constitute** The Assembly was constituted with the reading of Scripture and prayer, the Moderator, Rev. Dr. J.P. Wilson, presiding.

3. **Roll of Assembly** The Clerk laid on the table the roll of Assembly being commissioners to the 2016 General Assembly of Australia with the deletion of the name of elder Gordon Drummond (who had since died) and the persons formerly commissioned by the Presbytery of Sydney, and the addition of persons commission by the new presbyteries of Sydney East and Sydney Inner West. The Assembly resolved that the list of commissioners as made up be the roll of this Assembly.

4. **Apologies** Apologies for absence were received from the Very Rev. R. Benn, D. Cook, D. Jones, J. Knapp (former Moderators-General); Rev. Dr Andrew Bain, P. Barnes, J. McClean, I. Smith, Rev. G. Barnes, N. Benfell, W. Brown, D. Burke, D. Carson, P. Chang, P. Evans, L. Fooks, C. Garrett, P. Harris, I. Hutton, C. Lindsay, K. Murray, B. Nelson, R. Quadrio, P. Sheely, M. Wharton (ministers); Mesdames H. Barr, Y. Forsyth, Messrs C. Ashton, P. Barton, R. Butcher, T. Cunneen, A. Deeming, N. Dimond, J. Finster, P. Graham, J. Hare, L. Jackson, C. Langford, A. McClenaghan, E. Papajcsik, G. Rodgers, P. Sanders, M. Smith, L. Thorpe (elders).

5. **Circular calling this meeting** The Clerk tabled a copy of the email convening this special meeting of the Assembly and sent to all members of the Assembly as follows:

Dear Members of the General Assembly of Australia,

You are hereby advised that a special meeting of the General Assembly of Australia will be convened (DV) at the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, cnr Park Rd and Macmahon St, Hurstville NSW, on Thursday, September 6, 2018, commencing at 10.00 a.m. and concluding no later than 5.30 p.m.

The business of that meeting will be as follows:

1. **Child Protection** (*Overture from the Code Committee*)

1.1. *Clarification of the interaction between: secular State and Commonwealth laws relating to child protection; State churches' child protection policies; and the Code of Discipline.*

1.2. *Amendments to the Code of Discipline to clarify the interaction of risk management obligations of the Church and procedures under the Code of Discipline;*

1.3. *The enactment of new Rules to allow for suspension of church members from the exercise of privileges enjoyed as church members if they are accused of assaulting or abusing a child; and*

1.4. *Recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse.*

2. **Financial support for Freedom for Faith** (*Communication from Church and Nation Committee*)

3. **Change to Regulations of Reception of Ministers Committee** (Petition from General Assembly of Queensland)
Bruce Meller, Assembly Clerk

The request made of the Moderator was as follows:

Rev. J.P. Wilson
Moderator-General
Presbyterian Church of Australia

Requisition for Special Meeting of the General Assembly of Australia

As provided in Article 1.8, I declare that I am a member of the General Assembly of Australia and request you to convene a meeting of the GAA to deal with the following matters that were unforeseen at the meeting in 2016:

1. **Child Protection** (Requested by Code Committee)
 - 1.1. Clarification of the interaction between: secular State and Commonwealth laws relating to child protection; State churches' child protection policies; and the Code of Discipline.
 - 1.2. Amendments to the Code of Discipline to clarify the interaction of risk management obligations of the Church and procedures under the Code of Discipline;
 - 1.3. The enactment of new Rules to allow for suspension of church members from the exercise of privileges enjoyed as church members if they are accused of assaulting or abusing a child; and
 - 1.4. Recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse.
2. **Financial support for Freedom for Faith** (Requested by Church and Nation Committee)
3. **Change to Regulations of Reception of Ministers Committee** (Petition from General Assembly of Queensland, with support of the Committee)

The requisition was signed by the following members:

NSW

Very Rev. B. Christian
Rev. M. Cropper
Mrs Y. Forsyth
Rev. L. Fowler
Mr P. Graham
Rev. J. Irvin
Rev. C. Lindsay
Rev. D. McDougall
Rev. B. Meller
Rev. W. Morrow
Rev. K. Murray
Rev. M. Powell
Rev. R. Quadrio
Rev. I. Schoonwater
Rev. S. Smith
Mrs J. Stevenson
Rev. R. Vandervelden
Dr R. Yager

QLD

Rev. P. Barber
Rev. P. Barson
Rev. P. Campbell
Rev. P. Case

Rev. T. Cheetham
Mr J. Eaton
Mr P. Eckersley
Rev. L. Hall
Rev. M. O'Connor
Rev. A. Poyser
Mr K. Stewart
Mr N. Stewart

VIC

V. Rev. C.R. Thomas
Mr P. Betts
Rev. D. Brown
Mr J. Hare
Rev. P. Hastie
Rev. B. Johnson
Mr L. Kruize
Mr A. Letcher
Rev. P. Mercer
Rev. D. Middleton
Mr C. Morrow
Rev. G. Nicholson
Rev. P. Phillips
Rev. R. White
Mr B. Stasse

SA

Rev. G. Ware

TAS

Rev. G. Munro
Mr G. Roberts

WA

Rev. S. Bonnington
Mr W. MacRae

Thereupon the Assembly approved the actions of the requisitionists in requesting, and the Moderator in convening, this meeting.

6. **Business Committee** The Clerk presented the report of the Business Committee concerning the business of this meeting of the Assembly.

The report was received.

The Clerk submitted the deliverance.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

- (1) Determine the hours of meeting to be:
 - From 10.00 a.m. until 5.30 p.m., Thursday, 6 September 2018
 - Lunch adjournment of 1 hour at approximately 12.30 p.m., the actual time to be at the Moderator's discretion
 - Morning and afternoon tea breaks of 20' at the Moderator's discretion
- (2) Determine that speeches will be limited in time as follows:

Overtures	10 mins (total)
Petitions	10 mins (total)
All other speakers	5 mins (each)
Time allowed for questions	30 mins during the presentation of each overture or petition, such time to be subject to extension by resolution of the Assembly
- (3) Approve the order of business as follows:
 - a. Overture 1 – Code Committee re Child Protection and the Code of Discipline
 - b. Petition 1 – General Assembly of Queensland in relation to the Reception of Ministers
 - c. Communication 1 – Church and Nation Committee re Freedom for Faith

7. **Overture 1 – Code Committee re Child Protection and the Code of Discipline**

Overture 1 from the Code Committee was laid on the table and received.

There appeared for the overturist, the Rev. B. Meller and Mr S. Fraser.

The overture was stated.

Questions were asked of the overturist.

The debate was adjourned (Min. 9).

8. **Petition 1 – General Assembly of Queensland re the Regulations of the Reception of Ministers Committee**

Petition 1 was laid on the table and received.

The petitioner was called to the bar.

There appeared for the petitioner, the Rev. P.M. Campbell and L.J.F. Hall.

The petition was stated.

The debate was adjourned (Min. 10.)

9. **Overture 1 – Code Committee re Child Protection and the Code of Discipline**

Debate on Overture 1 from the Code Committee was resumed (Min. 7).

The Procurator addressed the Assembly by teleconference with respect to the proposed new rule 1.13 (10).

Questions were asked of the Procurator.

Questions were asked of the overturist.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Sustain the Overture.

The motion was seconded and approved without dissenting voice.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:
- (2) Remit the Overture to State Assemblies and to Presbyteries for approval or disapproval under the procedure established in Article 2.2, with replies to be in the hands of the Assembly Clerk by 31 July, 2019.

The motion was seconded.

The Rev. D. Stone moved as a procedural motion:

That the Assembly:

Consider the approval of the proposed amendments to the Code of Discipline within the Overture prior to remitting the Overture.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Rev. B. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Approve the amendments to the Code of Discipline as proposed in Overture 1.

The motion was seconded.

The Rev. J. Irvin challenged the competence of the motion.

The Moderator ruled the motion incompetent.

The Rev. G. Nicholson moved that the motion be amended by the insertion, before the word "remit", of the following words, "Amend the Overture by the excision of clause (10) from the proposed rule 1.13 and".

The amendment was seconded and disapproved.

Clause (2) was approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

(3) Grant interim authority to the following amendments to the Code of Discipline pursuant to Article 2.3.

Amend the first sentence of Rule 1.03 as follows:

1.03 OFFENCES

Delete the words "An offence, the proper object of judicial process" and replace them with the words "Alleged behaviour which constitutes an offence that is subject to the staged processes of this Code of Discipline" so that it will read, "Alleged behaviour which constitutes an offence that is subject to the staged processes of this Code of Discipline is anything in the doctrines or practices of a member of the Church which is contrary to:"

Add a new Rule 1.13 at the end of Chapter 8 Part 1 as follows:

1.13 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

- (a) This Rule relates to practices and procedures which may be adopted by a State Assembly from time to time to give effect to secular legal, including statutory, obligations that apply to State churches (including church courts, church organisations, committees and office-bearers within State churches) relating to the protection of children. Such practices and procedures are referred to in this Rule as child protection policies. State churches initiate, develop and amend child protection policies under their State rules which must accord with any mandatory specific requirements of secular State and federal law applicable in their State. It is an object which is in accord with the supreme powers of the national federal Church under Article 2.1(c) that State churches achieve as much uniformity between their child protection policies as the secular laws applying in a particular jurisdiction permit.
- (b) In child protection policies, the primary purpose is the protection of children rather than the application of discipline to the alleged offender. Such policies are however congruent with the ends of discipline expressed in Rule 1.02: putting in place proper measures to protect children and to forestall an alleged offender against his or her alleged propensity is for the glory of God, the purity of the Church and the spiritual good of the alleged offender.
- (c) Child protection policies operate in relation to members of the Church and those who are not members of the Church but who attend or otherwise participate in or interact with the life and activities of the Church. Discipline under this Code of Discipline applies only to those who are members of the Church (communicants or adherents) including office-bearers of the Church. Accordingly, in relation to those who are not members of the Church, child protection policies will operate apart from this Code of Discipline.
- (d) Where a child protection policy operates in relation to alleged conduct or activity of a member of the Church that by the description of the alleged conduct or activity comes

- within Rule 1.03, the provisions of this Code of Discipline must be followed in accord with the following paragraphs of this Rule (which incorporate reference to child protection policies).
- (e) If in accordance with the child protection policies a member of the Church willingly and without coercion or duress enters into an arrangement, such as a safety agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of the child protection policies, there is no necessity for any (or any further) steps under the Code of Discipline to be taken and in particular Rules 3.01 to 3.05 will have been satisfied.
 - f) If a member of the Church in respect of whom child protection policies are invoked:
 - (i) either disputes the application of those policies or alleges that those policies were not implemented with procedural fairness, and
 - (ii) denies any conduct or activity which if proven comes within Rule 1.03;then that member is entitled to require, by written notice given to the relevant court at the time of the denial in (b) that procedures be commenced in the relevant court of the Church under this Code of Discipline.
 - (g) Rule 1.04 does not apply to procedures commenced in accordance with paragraph (6). As with any process under this Code of Discipline, procedures commenced in accordance with paragraph (6) must, in accordance with applicable secular State and federal law, not prejudice investigation and prosecution procedures under State law.
 - (h) Procedures commenced in accordance with paragraph (6) must observe any mandatory specific requirements of secular State and federal law even if the alleged offence is not proven or guilt is not established.
 - (i) If the alleged offence is confessed at any point in the procedures under this Code of Discipline, or is proven, then any mandatory specific requirements of secular State and federal law must be observed in the imposition of a consequence or the imposition of a censure and the range of available consequences includes entry into an arrangement, such as a safety agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of child protection policies. Entry into such an agreement or covenant may be accepted in place of or as a condition of other consequences or censures or as a condition of relief from other consequences or censures.
 - (j) If the alleged offence is not proven or the alleged offender is found not guilty, the court may still determine, despite anything in Parts 4 to 9, that it is appropriate in accordance with the child protection policies to require the alleged offender to enter into or to continue in (in existing or in amended form) an arrangement, such as a safety agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of the child protection policies and to put in place a procedure for periodic review by the court of such an arrangement. Such review is to take into account the state of any investigation or other action by secular State authorities and the conduct of the alleged offender since the determination of the alleged offence or since the last review, and is to include a fresh assessment by the court of any continuing risk relating to children from the alleged offender. Such review is not a procedure under this Code of Discipline (and thus is a decision of the court that is subject to the usual appeal processes of the State church) unless a new allegation of conduct or activity which if proven comes within Rule 1.03 is raised in respect of or in the course of the review.
 - (k) A session or other authority of the Church to whom an application for membership of the Church is made may in accordance with child protection policies and as a pre-requisite for and condition of granting membership put, or leave, in place (in existing or in amended form) an arrangement, such as a safety agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of the child protection policies and to put in place a procedure for periodic review by the court of such an arrangement. Such review is to take into account the state of any investigation or other action by secular State authorities and the conduct of the alleged offender since the entry into membership or since the last review. The session or other authority is required to exercise procedural fairness in exercising its power of admission to membership under this paragraph, but there are no rights under the Code of Discipline for the person seeking admission to membership in respect of the decision on admission to membership (refer paragraph (3))."

Add the following to Rule 3.12 in Part 3:

After "resolved to proceed" add ", or been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed," and after "resolves to proceed" add ", or has been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed," and change "as referred to in Rule 5.01" to "as referred to in Part 5" so that the first sentence would read: "If an allegation is made against a person who holds office in the Church, including a minister of a parish, which concerns inappropriate behaviour with young people, including child molestation, then having regard to the need to protect children the Court may at any time suspend the accused person from office even though the Court has not at the time resolved to proceed, or been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed, to judicial process as referred to in Part 5."

Add a new Rule 3.12A to Ch 8 Part 3 as follows:

"3.12A If an allegation is made against a member (office bearer, other communicant or adherent) of the Church, which concerns inappropriate behaviour with young people (which term includes a child or children as defined in legislation relating to child protection that has force of secular law in the relevant State), including but not limited to child molestation, then having regard to the need to protect children the Court may at any time suspend the accused person from all or some privileges or rights of membership, or place conditions on the enjoyment or exercise of such privileges or rights of membership, or place conditions on the enjoyment or exercise of such privileges or rights, including conditions concerning attendance at services and/or other activities of the Church or of a congregation or of a Church organisation, even though the Court has not at the time resolved to proceed, or been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed, to judicial process as referred to in Part 5. If the Court subsequently resolves to proceed, or has been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed, by judicial process it may either continue or discontinue the suspension and may in any event discontinue the suspension at any time with or without conditions. Such suspension is not governed by and operates independently of and in addition to any suspension under Rule 3.12 and/or Rule 5.01(a)."

Add new provisions to Ch 8 Part 9 as follows:

Change rule 9.01 to read as follows:

"9.01 A Court may impose a censure where a charge has been confessed or regularly proven in the course of judicial process."

Change Rule 9.06 to add the following sentence at the end: "Rebuke may be also used in the circumstances described in Rule 4.06 as an alternative to admonition."

Change Rule 9.08 to add at the end "as proven in judicial process or, if confessed, in the circumstances stated in Rule 4.06 as an alternative to admonition" so that the whole as amended reads "9.08 Rebuke is a solemn reproof and is administered to persons guilty of serious offences as proven in judicial process or, if confessed, in the circumstances stated in Rule 4.06 as an alternative to admonition."

Change Rule 9.09 so that the second sentence reads "This is to be distinguished from suspension under Rule 3.12, 3.12A or 5.01, which is not in the nature of a censure."

The motion was seconded and approved by the required majority of two thirds of the commissioners present and voting.

The Rev. J. Irvin sought leave to move an additional clause.

Leave was not granted.

10. **Petition 1 – General Assembly of Queensland re the Regulations of the Reception of Ministers Committee**

Debate on Petition 1 was resumed (Min. 8).

Questions were asked and answered.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Grant the prayer of the petition.
- (2) Refer the petition to the Reception of Ministers Committee for consideration and report to the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly.
- (3) As a temporary expedient, to last until the conclusion of the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly, delete clause 16(b)(i) from the Regulations of the Reception of Ministers Committee.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Moderator informed the petitioner of the decisions of the Assembly in relation to the petition and removed the petitioner from the bar.

11. **Communication 1 – Church and Nation Committee re Freedom for Faith**

Communication 1 from the Church and Nation Committee was laid on the table and received.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

- (1) In recognition of the important work that Freedom for Faith is performing in defence of freedom of religion, authorise the Finance Committee to provide the sum of \$15,000 to Freedom for Faith, in each of the years 2018 and 2019.
- (2) Request the Church and Nation Committee to submit any further request for funding in future years to the Finance Committee in time for it to make recommendations to the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly.

The motion was seconded and approved.

12. **Commission to review and approve minutes**

The Rev. B. Meller moved:

That the Assembly appoint a commission consisting of the Moderator, Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Rev. J. Irvin, S. Bonnington and G. Ware to review, correct and confirm the minutes of this meeting.

The motion was seconded and approved.

13. **Expression of Thanks**

Pursuant to notice, the Rev. B. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Express its thanks to the Session of the Hurstville congregation for making the church available for this meeting; the Rev. David and Mrs Liz McDougall for arranging morning and afternoon refreshments; the Procurator (Mr G. Burton) and the Law Agent (Mr S. Fraser) for their extensive work in preparing Overture 1 for the Code Committee; Miss Jessie Zhang for assisting with the audio system, and Ms Elise Angel for her assistance in making travel and accommodation arrangements for members of the Assembly.

The motion was seconded.

The Rev. P. Philips moved, as an amendment, that the words, “the Clerk (Rev. B. Meller)” be inserted after “Mr S. Fraser”.

The amendment was seconded and approved.

The motion was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

Express its thanks to the Session of the Hurstville congregation for making the church available for this meeting; the Rev. David and Mrs Liz McDougall for arranging morning refreshments; the Procurator (Mr G. Burton), the Law Agent (Mr S. Fraser) and the Clerk (Rev. B. Meller) for their extensive work in preparing Overture 1 for the Code Committee; Miss Jessie Zhang for assisting with the audio system; and Ms Elise Angel for her assistance in making travel and accommodation arrangements for members of the Assembly.

14. **Closure** The Business of this meeting being concluded, the Moderator thanked the members of the Assembly for their faithful attention to duty, declared that the Assembly stood adjourned to meet again for ordinary business in Sydney on 9 September 2019 and closed the meeting with prayer.

DR JOHN P. WILSON, Moderator

Certificate

The minutes of this special meeting, having been carefully reviewed and corrected, are confirmed as authorised in Minute 12.

No minutes appear below this line

Overture (1) submitted to special meeting on 6/9/18

An overture prepared and submitted by the Code Committee to effect changes to the Code of Discipline to clarify powers to manage risks to the safety of children

Whereas:

A. There has emerged from recent hearings in the Commission of Assembly and in the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse a need to review the interaction between secular State and Commonwealth law relating to child protection, State churches' child protection policies and the Code of Discipline.

B. The amendments to the Code of Discipline proposed in this overture have been developed by the Assembly Law Officers and the Clerk in response to the matters in recital A. The particular changes concerning suspension proposed for Rule 3.12 and a new Rule 3.12A were approved for development by the Code Committee at its meeting on 26 April 2018 to add certainty to the use of existing powers (including those within Rule 1.08) in respect of communicant and adherent members who are not officeholders.

C. Further changes have become necessary within the Code of Discipline as a consequence of matters in recitals A and B.

D. The Code Committee met on 21 August 2018 and supports both the overture and the immediate implementation of the changes by the grant of interim authority.

Now therefore the Code Committee overtures the General Assembly of Australia to take these premises into consideration and to:

- (i) Enact new rules and amend existing rules as specified below:

Amend the first sentence of Rule 1.03 as follows:

1.03 OFFENCES

Delete the words "An offence, the proper object of judicial process" and replace them with the words "Alleged behaviour which constitutes an offence that is subject to the staged processes of this Code of Discipline" so that it will read, "Alleged behaviour which constitutes an offence that is subject to the staged processes of this Code of Discipline is anything in the doctrines or practices of a member of the Church which is contrary to:"

Add a new Rule 1.13 at the end of Chapter 8 Part 1 as follows:

1.13 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

- (a) This Rule relates to practices and procedures which may be adopted by a State Assembly from time to time to give effect to secular legal, including statutory, obligations that apply to State churches (including church courts, church organisations, committees and office-bearers within State churches) relating to the protection of children. Such practices and procedures are referred to in this Rule as child protection policies. State churches initiate, develop and amend child protection policies under their State rules which must accord with any mandatory specific requirements of secular State and federal law applicable in their State. It is an object which is in accord with the supreme powers of the national federal Church under Article 2.1(c) that State churches achieve as much uniformity between their child protection policies as the secular laws applying in a particular

- jurisdiction permit.
- (b) In child protection policies, the primary purpose is the protection of children rather than the application of discipline to the alleged offender. Such policies are however congruent with the ends of discipline expressed in Rule 1.02: putting in place proper measures to protect children and to forestall an alleged offender against his or her alleged propensity is for the glory of God, the purity of the Church and the spiritual good of the alleged offender.
 - (c) Child protection policies operate in relation to members of the Church and those who are not members of the Church but who attend or otherwise participate in or interact with the life and activities of the Church. Discipline under this Code of Discipline applies only to those who are members of the Church (communicants or adherents) including office-bearers of the Church. Accordingly, in relation to those who are not members of the Church, child protection policies will operate apart from this Code of Discipline.
 - (d) Where a child protection policy operates in relation to alleged conduct or activity of a member of the Church that by the description of the alleged conduct or activity comes within Rule 1.03, the provisions of this Code of Discipline must be followed in accord with the following paragraphs of this Rule (which incorporate reference to child protection policies).
 - (e) If in accordance with the child protection policies a member of the Church willingly and without coercion or duress enters into an arrangement, such as a safety agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of the child protection policies, there is no necessity for any (or any further) steps under the Code of Discipline to be taken and in particular Rules 3.01 to 3.05 will have been satisfied.
 - (f) If a member of the Church in respect of whom child protection policies are invoked:
 - (i) either disputes the application of those policies or alleges that those policies were not implemented with procedural fairness, and
 - (ii) denies any conduct or activity which if proven comes within Rule 1.03,then that member is entitled to require, by written notice given to the relevant court at the time of the denial in (b) that procedures be commenced in the relevant court of the Church under this Code of Discipline.
 - (g) Rule 1.04 does not apply to procedures commenced in accordance with paragraph (f). As with any process under this Code of Discipline, procedures commenced in accordance with paragraph (f) must, in accordance with applicable secular State and federal law, not prejudice investigation and prosecution procedures under State law.
 - (h) Procedures commenced in accordance with paragraph (f) must observe any mandatory specific requirements of secular State and federal law even if the alleged offence is not proven or guilt is not established.
 - (i) If the alleged offence is confessed at any point in the procedures under this Code of Discipline, or is proven, then any mandatory specific requirements of secular State and federal law must be observed in the imposition of a consequence or the imposition of a censure and the range of available consequences includes entry into an arrangement, such as a safety agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of child protection policies. Entry into such an agreement or covenant may be accepted in place of or as a condition of other consequences or censures or as a condition of relief from other consequences or censures.
 - (j) If the alleged offence is not proven or the alleged offender is found not guilty, the court may still determine, despite anything in Parts 4 to 9, that it is appropriate in accordance with the child protection policies to require the alleged offender to enter into or to continue in (in existing or in amended form) an arrangement, such as a safety agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of the child protection policies and to put in place a procedure for periodic review by the court of such an arrangement. Such review is to take into account the state of any investigation or other action by secular State authorities and the

conduct of the alleged offender since the determination of the alleged offence or since the last review, and is to include a fresh assessment by the court of any continuing risk relating to children from the alleged offender. Such review is not a procedure under this Code of Discipline (and thus is a decision of the court that is subject to the usual appeal processes of the State church) unless a new allegation of conduct or activity which if proven comes within Rule 1.03 is raised in respect of or in the course of the review.

- (k) A session or other authority of the Church to whom an application for membership of the Church is made may in accordance with child protection policies and as a pre-requisite for and condition of granting membership put, or leave, in place (in existing or in amended form) an arrangement, such as a safety agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of the child protection policies and to put in place a procedure for periodic review by the court of such an arrangement. Such review is to take into account the state of any investigation or other action by secular State authorities and the conduct of the alleged offender since the entry into membership or since the last review. The session or other authority is required to exercise procedural fairness in exercising its power of admission to membership under this paragraph, but there are no rights under the Code of Discipline for the person seeking admission to membership in respect of the decision on admission to membership (refer paragraph (3))."

Add the following to Rule 3.12 in Part 3:

After "resolved to proceed" add ", or been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed," and after "resolves to proceed" add ", or has been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed," and change "as referred to in Rule 5.01" to "as referred to in Part 5" so that the first sentence would read: "If an allegation is made against a person who holds office in the Church, including a minister of a parish, which concerns inappropriate behaviour with young people, including child molestation, then having regard to the need to protect children the Court may at any time suspend the accused person from office even though the Court has not at the time resolved to proceed, or been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed, to judicial process as referred to in Part 5."

Add a new Rule 3.12A to Ch 8 Part 3 as follows:

"3.12A If an allegation is made against a member (office bearer, other communicant or adherent) of the Church, which concerns inappropriate behaviour with young people (which term includes a child or children as defined in legislation relating to child protection that has force of secular law in the relevant State), including but not limited to child molestation, then having regard to the need to protect children the Court may at any time suspend the accused person from all or some privileges or rights of membership, or place conditions on the enjoyment or exercise of such privileges or rights of membership, or place conditions on the enjoyment or exercise of such privileges or rights, including conditions concerning attendance at services and/or other activities of the Church or of a congregation or of a Church organisation, even though the Court has not at the time resolved to proceed, or been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed, to judicial process as referred to in Part 5. If the Court subsequently resolves to proceed, or has been required under Rule 1.13(6) to proceed, by judicial process it may either continue or discontinue the suspension and may in any event discontinue the suspension at any time with or without conditions. Such suspension is not governed by and operates independently of and in addition to any suspension under Rule 3.12 and/or Rule 5.01(a)."

Add new provisions to Ch 8 Part 9 as follows:

Change rule 9.01 to read as follows:

"9.01 A Court may impose a censure where a charge has been confessed or regularly proven in the course of judicial process."

Change Rule 9.06 to add the following sentence at the end: "Rebuke may be also used in the circumstances described in Rule 4.06 as an alternative to admonition."

Change Rule 9.08 to add at the end "as proven in judicial process or, if confessed, in the

circumstances stated in Rule 4.06 as an alternative to admonition" so that the whole as amended reads "9.08 Rebuke is a solemn reproof and is administered to persons guilty of serious offences as proven in judicial process or, if confessed, in the circumstances stated in Rule 4.06 as an alternative to admonition."

Change Rule 9.09 so that the second sentence reads "This is to be distinguished from suspension under Rule 3.12, 3.12A or 5.01, which is not in the nature of a censure."

- (ii) Remit the Overture to State Assemblies and to Presbyteries under the procedure established in Article 2.2; and
- (iii) Grant interim authority to these new rules.

The Rev. Bruce Meller and Mr Simon Fraser were appointed to state the overture

***Petition (1) presented to special meeting, 6/9/18
seeking changes to the Regulations of the Reception of Ministers Committee***

A Petition from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland unto the Venerable the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The Petition of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland respectfully shows that:

1. General Assembly of Australia regulation concerning the Reception of Ministers Committee Regulation 16(b)(i) poses extreme difficulties in being fulfilled because of the current policy of the relevant Australian government in relation to permanent residency.
2. In receiving an ordained minister from another denomination who currently resides outside of Australia, and is not a citizen of Australia or a permanent resident of Australia, it is required that before he can sign the Formula to become a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia he must hold Australian citizenship or is legally entitled to reside permanently in Australia.
3. The Australian government in a case of someone coming from overseas will not recognise his ordained status as being within the Presbyterian Church of Australia, and will not grant him permanent residency.
4. Likewise he cannot be entitled to reside permanently in Australia until he is actually accepted as an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.
5. Thus the Regulation 16(b)(i) virtually makes it impossible for someone to be received as a Presbyterian Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia unless he has permanent residency, and he cannot become a permanent resident unless he is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, since his ordination status in his previous denomination forbids such an action.

Therefore, your Petitioner, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland accordingly prays:

1. That the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia accept the fact that the regulation referred to is incongruous.
- (i) Request the Reception of Ministers Committee to undertake a review of Regulation 16(b)(i) with a view to approaching the General Assembly of Australia, with a view to deleting the regulation or deleting the regulation and inserting a new clause (i), so that the difficulty brought about by the present regulation will be dealt with expediently.
2. If this action is taken that the numbering system of (ii) and (iii) should be changed.
3. That if the Reception of Ministers Committee is unable to finalise the matter in the special meeting of General Assembly of Australia in late August or early September then action will be taken by the General Assembly of Australia to refer the matter to the next meeting of the Commission of Assembly of the General Assembly of Australia.

Or do otherwise as the General Assembly of Australia sees fit. And Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Date: 26 June 2018
Signed: Rev. Ron Clark

Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland

Rev. Phil Campbell and Lesleigh Hall were appointed to present the petition to the General Assembly of Australia.

***Communication (1) presented to the Special Meeting held on 6/9/18
Affiliation Fees for Freedom for Faith***

The Clerk General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia
Via email

Wednesday, 8 August 2018

Dear Bruce,

I am writing on behalf of the Church and Nation Committee to request the General Assembly to approve annual affiliation payments to Freedom for Faith of \$15,000 for 2018 and 2019.

The last twelve months have highlighted the need for a defence of freedom of religion in Australia. Most prominently, the recent "Ruddock Inquiry" has attracted a wide range of submissions, including some which propose the effective removal of religious organisations from the public square and severe restrictions on religious expression. State legislation continues to place pressure on religious expression in the public square, as evidenced by the recent action against Campbell Markham and David Gee in Hobart. Reduction of freedom of religion in Australia has an obvious impact on Christian mission, and also detracts from the common good.

In this context, Freedom for Faith is making a vital contribution to the preservation and promotion of religious freedom. It made the leading submission to the Ruddock Inquiry in support of freedom of religion. It is successfully drawing Christians together to work on the issue and is bringing to the attention of politicians.

The PCA was involved in the early development of Freedom for Faith, especially through David Palmer. At least since 2013 we have committed to an annual financial contribution. In the 2013-2016 triennium the Assembly approved an annual \$10,000 affiliation fee. From the records of the Finance Committee, this appears to have been paid 2013 and 2015, but not in 2014 nor 2016.

At the 2016 Assembly the Church and Nation Committee moved in the following terms: Continue to support the work of Freedom 4 Faith Inc, by allocating \$15,000 per annum for the next three years subject to the annual recommendation of the Church and Nation Committee to the Finance Committee. The motion was ruled incompetent because the funding request had not been submitted to the Finance Committee as required.

Following the Assembly, the Committee Convener requested the Finance Committee to approve the annual payment, and received the impression that would take place. There was no official correspondence between the two Committees, and in retrospect it is apparent that this contributed to some ongoing confusion.

The February 2017 meeting of the Finance Committee noted the lack of Assembly authorisation for the annual affiliation fee of \$15,000. It resolved to pay of \$15,000, as requested by the Church and Nation Committee on the basis of the non-payment of the \$10,000 payment approved in 2016.

In January 2018, the Finance Committee approved a special payment of \$10,000 to help support the work of Freedom for Faith in relation to the Ruddock inquiry. At the same meeting the lack of Assembly authorisation for the annual affiliation fee of \$15,000 was noted and the Finance Committee made no decision with respect to paying this fee.

In May 2018 Freedom for Faith sent an invoice for \$15,000 to the the Church and Nation Committee. When this was forwarded for payment, the Convener was informed that there was no authorisation from the Finance Committee to pay the affiliation fee. The only way to rectify this is for the GAA to approve continued payments.

The Finance Committee supports this proposal, as indicated in the attached correspondence.

The Church and Nation Committee regards our Church's support for Freedom for Faith to be a high priority, especially in the current political and cultural climate. We therefore ask the Assembly to approve an annual payment of \$15,000 for 2018 and 2019.

Yours in Christ,
John McClean

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
FIFTIETH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA**

FIRST SEDERUNT

1. Assembly Constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW at 7.00 p.m. on Monday, 9 September 2019, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia convened.

Public worship was conducted by the Rev. J.P. Wilson, Moderator, after which the Assembly was constituted with prayer.

2. Roll of Assembly: The Clerk laid on the table the list of commissioners appointed to this Assembly by the State Assemblies and presbyteries of the Church together with those who are members ex officio.

It was resolved that the list of commissioners, as tabled, be the Roll of this Assembly.

3. Apologies: Apologies for absence were received from the Rev. Bruce Christian, Jason Summers and Craig Tucker; Messrs Peter Eckersley, Jim Hare, Bill MacRae, Chris Monamy, Greg Rodgers and Phillip Wilkie.

4. Election of Moderator: The Clerk tabled the report of the Moderator's Nominating Committee.

The report was received.

It was resolved that the Assembly:

Accept the nomination of the Moderator's Nominating Committee and elect the Rev. Dr P.E. Barnes, minister at Revesby, as Moderator of the Assembly.

The Rev. Dr P. E. Barnes was welcomed, was installed in office with prayer by the Moderator, took the chair and delivered an exposition of Ezekiel 37:1-14 under the heading, "The Word and the Spirit Bring Life."

5. Representatives of Partner and Overseas Churches: The Moderator welcomed the following representatives of partner and overseas churches:

- the Rev. Vijai Tagore, Reformed Presbyterian Church of India
- Pastor Carlos Marcal, Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Timor Leste
- the Rev. Jong Gu Lim, Presbyterian Church of Korea (Hapdong)
- Pastor Philip Baniuri, Principal of the Talua Theological Training Institute
- the Rev. David Bayne, Stated Clerk, Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand
- the Rev. Richard Eyres, Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

It was resolved that the representatives of overseas churches be associated.

6. Representatives of other Australian Churches: The following representatives of other Australian churches, being present, were welcomed by the Moderator:

- the Rev. Dr Glenn Davies, Archbishop, Diocese of Sydney, Anglican Church of Australia
- the Rev. Ian Weeks, Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the Uniting Church of Australia
- the Rev. Andrew Nugteren, Ecumenical Secretary, Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
- the Rev. Rowland Ward, Clerk of Southern Presbytery, Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia
- the Rev. Andrew Stewart, Presbytery Clerk, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia

It was resolved that the Rev. Andrew Nugteren, Rowland Ward and Andrew Stewart be associated.

7. Business Committee: The report of the Business Committee was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. P.J. Barson submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) to (12) were approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Suspend so much of the Standing Orders as may be necessary to enable the Assembly to receive and deal with the reports of its special committees.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The debate was adjourned. (Min. 114)

8. Notices of Motion: Notices of Motion 1 to 31 were laid on the table.

9. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet tomorrow, Tuesday, 10 September, 2019, at 9.30 a.m. in the Hurstville Presbyterian Church for the celebration of the Lord's Supper followed by the transaction of other business whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

SECOND SEDERUNT

10. Lord's Supper: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Tuesday, 10 September, 2019 at 9.30 a.m. the Assembly met for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The service was conducted by the Moderator assisted by the Rev. D.R. Middleton (preacher), the Rev. G. Barnes, C. Markham, A.R. Vines, S. Bonnington (Chaplains), Messrs W. Richards, J. Rolland, T. Cuneen and S. Harris (elders).

11. Assembly Constituted: At the conclusion of the service the Assembly was constituted with prayer, the Moderator presiding.

12. Motion of Loyalty: The following Motion of Loyalty, submitted by the Business Convener, was approved.

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty:

May it please Your Majesty, your faithful subjects, ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church of Australia convened in General Assembly at Sydney on the ninth day of September, two thousand and nineteen, take leave to assure Your Majesty of our loyalty and devotion to Your Person and to the Throne.

We pray that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and the only Saviour of mankind, may, by His grace, sustain and uphold Your Majesty in His providential care, and that He may grant to Your Majesty personally all the gifts needful for the discharge of the exacting duties of Your Majesty's high office.

We also pray that Christ, through His unchanging Word and by the guidance of His Spirit, will grant to Your Majesty, in your demanding position of leadership in church and nation, wisdom, integrity, courage, and faithfulness to Him.

We have the honour to be Your Majesty's faithful servants, ministers and elders of The Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Signed in our name and at our appointing,
Reverend Dr Peter Barnes, Moderator.

13. Prayers for the Australian Parliament: Pursuant to notice the Business Convener moved:

That the Assembly:

Forward to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate of the Australian Parliament assurances of the regular prayers of the people of the Presbyterian Church of Australia for the nation's elected representatives in the exercise of their responsibilities.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Assembly joined in prayer for those in authority over us.

14. Report of Retiring Moderator: The report of the retiring Moderator was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson addressed the House.

Pursuant to notice the Clerk of Assembly moved:

That the Assembly:

Give thanks to God for the ministry of the Rev. Dr John P. Wilson as Moderator-General of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia during his term of office, particularly the way that he has so diligently represented this Church and its beliefs both in Australia and overseas and assure him of the continuing prayers of Assembly members for his ongoing ministry and that of his wife, Mrs Paula Wilson.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Moderator conveyed the thanks of the Assembly to Mr and Mrs Wilson.

15. Returns to Remits: The report on Returns to Remits was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. B.M. Meller submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) and (2) were approved.

Clauses (3) and (4) were approved.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

(1) In accordance with returns to remits on Overture (i) (BB 2016 Min. 87) from the Code Committee to amend the Standing Orders by the removal of clause 20(b), amend the said rule to read as follows:

20. Committees of the General Assembly shall submit to the Assembly a written report; recommendations for action shall be appended in a proposed deliverance; such reports and proposed deliverance shall be printed and circulated among members of the Assembly at least one day before they are considered.

(2) In accordance with returns to remits on Overture (ii) (BB 2016 Min. 88) from the Code Committee to amend Rule 1.05 of the Code of Discipline, remove all words and replace them with the following:

1.05 No accusation shall be received or proceeded with in respect of any offence alleged to have been committed more than five years before the date of the accusation, unless it relates to sexual abuse or abuse of authority.

When an allegation is made under the Code of Discipline, it must be investigated and pursued thoroughly, responsibly and as quickly as the case might allow so that no delay in process or judgement will prejudice either the accuser or the accused.

(3) In accordance with returns to remits on Overture (iv) (BB 2016 Min. 40) from the Presbytery of Wagga Wagga to amend the first question asked at ordinations and inductions, contained in the Constitution, Procedure and Practice, 6.1(i) and 6.6(i), delete all words in each place and replace them with the following:

“Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only rule of faith and practice?”

(4) In accordance with returns to remits on Overture (i) considered at a special meeting of the Assembly held at Hurstville on 6 September 2018 (Min. 9) from the Code Committee to amend the Code of Discipline to strengthen processes for the protection of children:

(i) Amend the first sentence of Rule 1.03 as follows:

1.03 OFFENCES

Delete the words “An offence, the proper object of judicial process” and replace them with the words “Alleged behaviour which constitutes an offence that is subject to the staged processes of this Code of Discipline” so that it will read, “Alleged behaviour which constitutes an offence that is subject to the staged processes of this Code of Discipline is anything in the doctrines or practices of a member of the Church which is contrary to:”

(ii) Add a new Rule 1.13 at the end of Chapter 8 Part 1 as follows:

1.13 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

(a) This Rule relates to practices and procedures which may be adopted by a State Assembly from time to time to give effect to secular legal, including statutory, obligations that apply to State churches (including church courts, church organisations, committees and office-bearers within State churches) relating to the protection of children. Such practices and procedures are referred to in this Rule as child protection policies. State churches initiate, develop and amend child protection policies under their State rules which must accord with any mandatory specific requirements of secular State and federal law applicable in their State. It is an object which is in accord with the supreme powers of the national federal Church under Article 2.1(c) that State churches achieve as much uniformity between their child protection policies as the secular laws applying in a particular jurisdiction permit.

(b) In child protection policies, the primary purpose is the protection of children rather than the application of discipline to the alleged offender. Such policies are however congruent with the ends of discipline expressed in Rule 1.02: putting in place proper measures to protect children and to forestall an alleged offender against his or her alleged propensity is for the glory of God, the purity of the Church and the spiritual good of the alleged offender.

(c) Child protection policies operate in relation to members of the Church and those

who are not members of the Church but who attend or otherwise participate in or interact with the life and activities of the Church. Discipline under this Code of Discipline applies only to those who are members of the Church (communicants or adherents) including office-bearers of the Church. Accordingly, in relation to those who are not members of the Church, child protection policies will operate apart from this Code of Discipline.

- (d) Where a child protection policy operates in relation to alleged conduct or activity of a member of the Church that by the description of the alleged conduct or activity comes within Rule 1.03, the provisions of this Code of Discipline must be followed in accord with the following paragraphs of this Rule (which incorporate reference to child protection policies).
- (e) If in accordance with the child protection policies a member of the Church willingly and without coercion or duress enters into an arrangement, such as a behavioural agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of the child protection policies, there is no necessity for any (or any further) steps under the Code of Discipline to be taken and in particular Rules 3.01 to 3.05 will have been satisfied.
- (f) If a member of the Church in respect of whom child protection policies are invoked:
 - (i) either disputes the application of those policies or alleges that those policies were not implemented with procedural fairness, and
 - (ii) denies any conduct or activity which if proven comes within Rule 1.03;then that member is entitled to require, by written notice given to the relevant court at the time of the denial in (ii) that procedures be commenced in the relevant court of the Church under this Code of Discipline.
- (g) Rule 1.04 does not apply to procedures commenced in accordance with paragraph (f). As with any process under this Code of Discipline, procedures commenced in accordance with paragraph (f) must, in accordance with applicable secular State and federal law, not prejudice investigation and prosecution procedures under State law.
- (h) Procedures commenced in accordance with paragraph (f) must observe any mandatory specific requirements of secular State and federal law even if the alleged offence is not proven or guilt is not established.
- (i) If the alleged offence is confessed at any point in the procedures under this Code of Discipline, or is proven, then any mandatory specific requirements of secular State and federal law must be observed in the imposition of a consequence or the imposition of a censure and the range of available consequences includes entry into an arrangement, such as a behavioural agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of child protection policies. Entry into such an agreement or covenant may be accepted in place of or as a condition of other consequences or censures or as a condition of relief from other consequences or censures.
- (j) If the alleged offence is not proven or the alleged offender is found not guilty, the court may still determine, despite anything in Parts 4 to 9, that it is appropriate in accordance with the child protection policies to require the alleged offender to enter into or to continue in (in existing or in amended form) an arrangement, such as a behavioural agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of the child protection policies and to put in place a procedure for periodic review by the court of such an arrangement. Such review is to take into account the state of any investigation or other action by secular State authorities and the conduct of the alleged offender since the determination of the alleged offence or since the last review, and is to include a fresh assessment by the court of any continuing risk relating to children from the alleged offender. Such review is not a procedure under this Code of Discipline (and thus is a decision of the court that is subject to the usual appeal processes of the State church) unless a new allegation of conduct or activity which if proven comes within Rule 1.03 is raised in respect of or in the course

of the review.

- (k) A session or other authority of the Church to whom an application for membership of the Church is made may in accordance with child protection policies and as a pre-requisite for and condition of granting membership put, or leave, in place (in existing or in amended form) an arrangement, such as a behavioural agreement or a similar covenant, which is intended to give effect to the purposes of the child protection policies and to put in place a procedure for periodic review by the court of such an arrangement. Such review is to take into account the state of any investigation or other action by secular State authorities and the conduct of the alleged offender since the entry into membership or since the last review. The session or other authority is required to exercise procedural fairness in exercising its power of admission to membership under this paragraph, but there are no rights under the Code of Discipline for the person seeking admission to membership in respect of the decision on admission to membership (refer paragraph (c))."

(iii) Add the following to Rule 3.12:

After "resolved to proceed", in the first and third sentences, add ", or been required under Rule 1.13(f) to proceed," and change "as referred to in Rule 5.01" to "as referred to in Part 5" so that the Rule would read: "If an allegation is made against a person who holds office in the Church, including a minister of a parish, which concerns inappropriate behaviour with young people, including child molestation, then having regard to the need to protect children the Court may at any time suspend the accused person from office even though the Court has not at the time resolved to proceed, or been required under Rule 1.13(f) to proceed, to judicial process as referred to in Part 5. In the case of any such suspension the provisions of Rule 5.01(a) shall apply as though the suspension had occurred after the decision to proceed by judicial process. If the Court subsequently resolves to proceed, or has been required under Rule 1.13(f) to proceed, by judicial process it may either continue or discontinue the suspension and may in any event discontinue the suspension at any time."

(iv) Add a new Rule 3.12A to Ch 8 Part 3 as follows:

"3.12A If an allegation is made against a member (office bearer, other communicant or adherent) of the Church, which concerns inappropriate behaviour with young people (which term includes a child or children as defined in legislation relating to child protection that has force of secular law in the relevant State), including but not limited to child molestation, then having regard to the need to protect children the Court may at any time suspend the accused person from all or some privileges or rights of membership, or place conditions on the enjoyment or exercise of such privileges or rights of membership, including conditions concerning attendance at services and/or other activities of the Church or of a congregation or of a Church organisation, even though the Court has not at the time resolved to proceed, or been required under Rule 1.13(f) to proceed, to judicial process as referred to in Part 5. If the Court subsequently resolves to proceed, or has been required under Rule 1.13(f) to proceed, by judicial process it may either continue or discontinue the suspension and may in any event discontinue the suspension at any time with or without conditions. Such suspension is not governed by and operates independently of and in addition to any suspension under Rule 3.12 and/or Rule 5.01(a)."

(v) Add new provisions to Ch 8 Part 9 as follows:

- (i) **Change rule 9.01** to read as follows:
"9.01 A Court may impose a censure where a charge has been confessed or regularly proven in the course of judicial process."
- (ii) **Change Rule 9.06** to add the following sentence at the end: "Rebuke may be also used in the circumstances described in Rule 4.06 as an alternative to admonition."
- (iii) **Change Rule 9.08** to add at the end "as proven in judicial process or, if

confessed, in the circumstances stated in Rule 4.06 as an alternative to admonition" so that the whole as amended reads "9.08 Rebuke is a solemn reproof and is administered to persons guilty of serious offences as proven in judicial process or, if confessed, in the circumstances stated in Rule 4.06 as an alternative to admonition."

- (iv) **Change Rule 9.09** so that the second sentence reads "This is to be distinguished from suspension under Rule 3.12, 3.12A or 5.01, which is not in the nature of a censure."

16. Private Sitting: The Assembly sat in private.

17. Petition (i): A petition from Mr G. Freeman concerning the naming of Churches was laid on the table.

It was moved, seconded and agreed that Petition (i) not be received.

18. Petition (ii): A petition from Mr M. Crow concerning the standards of the Church was laid on the table.

It was moved, seconded and agreed that Petition (ii) not be received.

19. Open Court: The Assembly resumed in open court.

20. Defence Force Chaplaincy: The report of the Committee on Defence Force Chaplaincy was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. D.J. Cassidy, chaplain to the Australian Army, addressed the Assembly.

The Rev. P.W. Phillips submitted the deliverance.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Thank our Defence chaplains for their faithful ministry to our service personnel, and assure them of our prayerful support and encouragement.
- (2) Encourage ministers and especially younger ministers to consider available opportunities for service either in full-time or reserve ADF chaplaincy.
- (3) Approve the following additional clause to the Committee's regulations:

8. The Presbyterian Member, with the prior approval of the Committee, may nominate a minister of the Word and Sacraments of a denomination other than the Presbyterian Church of Australia for appointment as a chaplain provided that the minister concerned and, if required by the Committee, the denomination to which he belongs, enters into such declaration of faith or statements or agreements as may be required by the Committee so that the person appointed will be subject to the exercise of appropriate supervision by the Church as referred to in the Memorandum of Arrangements between the Commonwealth of Australia represented by the Chief of Defence Force and the nominated denominations including the Church.

21. Notices of Motion: Notices of Motion 32 to 36 were laid on the table.

22. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 2.00 p.m. whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J.F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

THIRD SEDERUNT

23. Assembly Constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Tuesday 10 September 2019 at 2.00 p.m. the Assembly met, pursuant to adjournment, and was constituted with praise, the reading of Scripture and prayer, the Moderator presiding.

24. Presbyterian Women's Association: The report of the Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia was laid on the table and received.

Mrs J. White, Immediate Past President; Mrs H. Burton, President; Mrs Jackie Reiner, Vice President; Miss B. Knowles, Secretary; and Mrs J. Evans, Treasurer; were presented to the Moderator and at his invitation Mrs J. White addressed the House.

At the request of the Moderator, the Rev. G. Barnes led the Assembly in prayer for the ministry of the Presbyterian Women's Association.

Pursuant to notice the Clerk moved:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Give thanks to God for the work and ministry of the Presbyterian Women's Association of Australia through the congregations of the Church and in the life, work and mission of the Church across several states.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Clerk moved:

That the Assembly:

- (2) Encourage the ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to support the ministry of the PWA and assist those involved by providing Bible teaching, training where needed, and praying regularly for its members to grow in the Lord and to serve him faithfully.

The motion was seconded and approved.

25. Women's Ministries: The report of the Committee on Women's Ministries – Presbyterian Church of Australia was laid on the table and received.

Mrs C. Orford, Convener of the Committee, addressed the Assembly.

The Rev. Dr J McClean submitted the deliverance.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Note that Mrs Margaret Thatcher is not nominating for the Committee at this meeting of the Assembly and thank her for nine years of dedicated service to this Committee and her commitment to encouraging and supporting gospel ministry, especially by women.
- (2) Express its thanks to God for the service of Mrs Ceale Orford to the Assembly and the Church in convening the Women's Ministry Committee over the last six years.
- (3) Reappoint the Committee with the following members: the Rev. James Snare (Convener); Mesdames Jenni Smith and Vanessa Stuckings (NSW), the Rev. Ben Johnson (VIC), Mrs Karina Brookes (VIC), Mrs Ceale Orford (QLD), and Mrs Christine Jolly (TAS) with power to co-opt.
- (4) Request State Moderators and Theological College Deans/Principals to promote the opportunity for people within the church (women and men) who have a desire to see women thrive, grow and flourish within our churches, to be State or College representatives on the Committee.
- (5) Instruct the Committee in the next triennium to consult with key stakeholders such as women's ministries groups within the Church, Theological Colleges, churches, ministers, elders, youth ministers and individual members within churches (Facebook or website subscribers) to develop a Women's Ministry Strategy which will guide future activities and direction of women's ministry within the PCA, and present the Strategy to the next meeting of the Assembly.
- (6) Instruct the Committee to explain and give clear examples of "complementarian partnership in action" in the Strategy.

26. Bible Exposition: The Rev. D. McDougall gave an exposition of Isaiah 54 on the theme *Glorious Things for the Church: Prosperity, Security, Felicity*.

27. Book Launch: The Rev. P.F. Cooper and D.A. Burke (Editors) launched the book *Read in the Light: the 1901 Declaratory Statement of the Presbyterian Church of Australia*. The Moderator, the Rev. D.N. Jones and the Rev. D.A. Burke addressed the Assembly.

28. Reception of Ministers: The report of the Reception of Ministers Committee was laid on the table and received.

The Assembly sat in private.

The Rev. D.A. Burke submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) and (2) were approved.

Clauses (3) and (4) were approved.

The Rev. D.A. Burke read a supplementary report.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. D.A. Burke moved:

That the Assembly:

- (5) Accept the application of the Rev. Doug Wannenburg, (Presbytery of Brisbane) subject to completion of studies and other requirements under GAA regulations and authorise the Reception of Ministers Committee to process his application through to completion.
- (6) Note that the Rev. Douglas Campbell (Presbytery of Melbourne East) has been received as a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, by the ROMC, under regulation 12.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Note that the following have been received as ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in keeping with decisions at the 2016 GAA:
 - the Rev. Sam Chidamber (Presbytery of Brisbane, October 2018)
 - the Rev. Kim Jaegar (Presbytery of Bass, December 2017)
 - the Rev. Karem Kravayem (Presbytery of Melbourne East, October 2018)
 - the Rev. Brett Peatman (Presbytery of Flinders, December 2017)
 - the Rev. Joshua Swartz (Presbytery of Mowbray, April 2018)
- (2) Note that the following have been received as ministers of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, by the ROMC, under regulation 12:
 - the Rev. Andrew Matthews (Presbyterian Church in America, Presbytery of the Illawarra, December 2017)
 - the Rev. Luke Yelland (Christ Community Church, Presbytery of Melbourne North, April 2018)
- (3) Amend the regulations of the committee as follows:
 - (a) Amend Regulation 5 so that it will read:

Application Procedure: An applicant shall make application to the General Assembly through a presbytery. For this purpose, an applicant shall:

 - (a) already be committed to an appointment or to a call in the Presbyterian Church of Australia;
 - (b) obtain a form from the Committee;
 - (c) complete the form and provide all the information required by the form;
 - (d) lodge the completed form with the presbytery within whose bounds he resides, or, if the applicant is not resident in Australia, with such presbytery as the Committee directs; *and*
 - (e) pay a standardised non-refundable application fee to the committee, at a level determined by the committee, as a contribution to the cost of processing the application.

Applications received by the Committee within two months of the next meeting of the General Assembly may be deferred by the Committee for consideration by the succeeding Assembly.

- (b) Amend Regulation 8 so that it will read:

Committee Interview:

- (a) The Committee shall interview (or arrange for members of the Committee to interview) the applicant.
- (b) For an overseas applicant, such interview may be carried out by correspondence

- and/or by a person appointed by the Committee.
- (c) The Committee shall consider the recommendation and any comments of the presbytery and if it disagrees with the recommendation of the presbytery the Committee shall say so in reporting to the General Assembly.
 - (d) The Committee shall conduct a final interview with applicants after the completion of studies and shall obtain references from the applicant's present ministry overseers to assist the committee in its consideration of the application.
- (c) Amend Regulation 9, including by the deletion of words, so that it will read:
Theological Training: After the first interview, the Committee shall submit each and every application to the Grading sub-committee of the College Committee for assessment of further study requirements. Where the Committee refers an application to the College Committee, the study requirements for all applicants will include at least the completion of an assessment of the applicant's knowledge of the Declaratory Statement, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the history of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to the satisfaction of the appropriate faculty. The course of study prescribed by the College Committee shall be undertaken through one of the Theological Halls of the Church in a manner prescribed by the Faculty of the Relevant Theological Hall.
- (d) Add a new Regulation 11 to read as follows:
 If an applicant has previously been a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, the Committee shall obtain a reference from all previous presbyteries, including details of any disciplinary matters commenced or completed.
- (e) Renumber the remaining regulations.
- (f) Amend Regulation 16 so that it will read:
Conditions required before signing the Formula: Before an applicant may sign the Formula, the following conditions must be met:
- (a) the Committee must receive, from the College Committee, confirmation that all requirements for additional study have been met to that committee's satisfaction;
 - (b) the applicant must satisfy the Committee that he:
 - (i) is entitled to live and work in Australia, by supplying acceptable evidence to the Committee;
 - (ii) has relinquished his connection with his previous church; and
 - (iii) has been invited to accept a call to a congregation of the Church or to accept an appointment to a congregation or an institution of the Church made by the General Assembly, a State Assembly, or a committee or board thereof.
- (4) Thank the Rev. Guido Kettmiss for his service to the Reception of Ministers Committee from 1991, including serving as Convener 2001-2016.
- (5) Accept the application of the Rev. Doug Wannenburg, (Presbytery of Brisbane) subject to completion of studies and other requirements under GAA regulations and authorise the Reception of Ministers Committee to process his application through to completion.
- (6) Note that the Rev. Douglas Campbell (Presbytery of Melbourne East) has been received as a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, by the ROMC, under regulation 12.
- The Assembly resumed in open court.

29. Church and Nation: The report of the Church and Nation Committee was laid on the table.

At the invitation of the Moderator, Mr M. Kellahan, Executive Director of Freedom For Faith, addressed the Assembly.

The debate was adjourned (Min. 63).

30. Notices of Motion: Notices of Motion 37 and 38 were laid on the table.

31. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 7.00 p.m. whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.

BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

FOURTH SEDERUNT

32. Assembly Constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Tuesday, 10 September 2019 at 7.00 p.m. the Assembly met, pursuant to adjournment, and was constituted with praise, the reading of Scripture and prayer, the Moderator presiding.

33. Australian Presbyterian World Mission: The report of the Australian Presbyterian World Mission Committee was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. B. Graham submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) to (8) were approved.

The Rev. K.D. Murray withdrew from the Assembly.

Clause (9) was approved without dissenting voice.

The Rev. K.D. Murray returned to the Assembly and was advised of the decision of the Assembly concerning his reappointment to the role of National Director of APWM.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. K.D. Murray moved:

That the Assembly:

- (10) Request that representatives of the APWM National Committee meet with representatives of the State Home Mission Committees at the January 2020 meetings of the GAA Committees with the aim of seeking to establish an effective way of fulfilling those parts of Article 5 of the Articles of Agreement regarding cross cultural ministry in Australia, particularly Article 5(d) which reads "The General Assembly may by way of a consultative committee otherwise seek to encourage cross-cultural ministry within Australia."
- (11) Authorise the APWM Committee to hold an annual appeal throughout the Presbyterian Church of Australia, on the nearest Sunday to the conclusion of NAIDOC week, for funds for APWM's Aboriginal Ministry.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Thank Mr Alex Shaw for his service as Convener for nine years and Mr Alex Ralston for his service as Treasurer for six years.
- (2) Express its thankfulness to God for his continued blessing upon APWM in the provision of candidates, the sustaining of missionaries and the progress of the gospel throughout the world.
- (3) Praise God for those individuals and congregations who support the ministry of APWM.
- (4) Draw to the attention of ministers and elders the need to support Indigenous ministry in prayer and finance.
- (5) Urge ministers, sessions, mission committees and church members to set aside one or more Sundays in the year to promote the cause of cross-cultural mission in their congregations.
- (6) Call the Presbyterian Church of Australia to regular prayer for local and overseas mission.
- (7) Note that the APWM Committee seeks the establishment of:
 - (a) a National Safe Ministry policy for the Presbyterian Church of Australia
 - (b) a national database capable of holding the Safe Ministry records currently maintained by the separate State Assemblies and which would be accessible for appropriately qualified officers from those State Assemblies.
- (8) Approve the following Terms of Appointment for the National Director of the Australian Presbyterian World Mission:
 - (a) The appointment of the APWM National Director shall be made by the General Assembly of Australia. The appointment may be terminated by three months' notice in writing by either party.
 - (b) The APWM National Director shall be responsible to APWM for administrative and promotional purposes.
 - (c) If ordained, the APWM National Director shall be a member of the relevant Presbytery.
 - (d) The remuneration package for the APWM National Director shall be:
 - (e) Considerations determined by the NSW General Assembly from time to time, being:
 - Salary equivalent to the Basic Stipend with 30% being sacrificed in favour of

- fringe benefits of equivalent value;
 - Manse provided, or at the request of the Director, in lieu of a manse allowance fringe benefits will be provided equivalent in value to the NSW General Assembly manse allowance, or such other value as negotiated;
 - Fringe benefits in lieu of, and equivalent in value to:
 - the City travelling allowance
 - plus the NSW General Assembly cents per kilometre rate for car travel beyond the boundaries of the presbyteries of Sydney, Sydney South, Sydney North and The Hawkesbury plus
 - reimbursement of all other APWM travel expenses as approved by the Convener;
 - In lieu of computer resources, fringe benefits will be provided equivalent in value to the NSW General Assembly 'technology allowance';
 - Superannuation contribution to an approved fund at a rate set by the NSW General Assembly from time to time;
 - Long Service Leave assessment;
 - Personal sickness and accident insurance;
 - One week's study leave per annum, cumulative to a maximum of four weeks. At the end of the appointment, any unused study leave will be held forfeit and will not entitle the APWM National Director to be paid in lieu of such leave;
 - Four weeks' annual leave;
 - Removal expenses;
 - Payment of all professional expenses for the conduct of APWM business including postage, stationery, telephone rental, calls and hospitality.
- (9) Reappoint the Rev. Kevin Murray to the position of National Director of the Australian Presbyterian World Mission for a period of three years from 1 January 2020.
- (10) Request that representatives of the APWM National Committee meet with representatives of the State Home Mission Committees at the January 2020 meetings of the GAA Committees with the aim of seeking to establish an effective way of fulfilling those parts of Article 5 of the Articles of Agreement regarding cross cultural ministry in Australia, particularly Article 5 (d) which reads "The General Assembly may by way of a consultative committee otherwise seek to encourage cross-cultural ministry within Australia."
- (11) Authorise the APWM Committee to hold an annual appeal throughout the Presbyterian Church of Australia, on the nearest Sunday to the conclusion of NAIDOC week, for funds for APWM's Aboriginal Ministry.

At the request of the Moderator, the Rev. J.P. Wilson led the Assembly in prayer for the ministry of Australian Presbyterian World Mission.

34. Overseas Aid and Development: The report of the Overseas Aid and Development Committee was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. D. Carroll submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) to (4) were approved.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Give thanks to God for the generosity of his people in supporting the Easter and Christmas PresAID Appeals, and for the privilege of assisting PCA missionaries and our sister churches in their endeavours to extend the Kingdom of God.
- (2) Request all sessions and boards or committees of management to give sympathetic consideration to supporting future Easter and Christmas PresAID Appeals.
- (3) Direct the Clerk to write to Mr John Vandenberg, PCV Accountant, thanking him for blessing the PCA and all recipients in the way he has received and disbursed PresAID funds since the inception of the committee in 2005, and particularly over the last 3 years.
- (4) Amend regulation 10.14.2 so that it reads:
 - The Committee shall consist of:
 - A Convener elected by the Assembly
 - One minister, elder or communicant from each state
 - The Convener and the National Director of the APWM Committee
 - The Convener of the Relations With Other Churches Committee

35. Relations With Other Churches: The report of the Committee on Relations With Other Churches was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. Andrew Nugteren, Ecumenical Secretary, Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, addressed the House.

The Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) to (5) were approved.

The Moderator and the Rev. Andrew Nugteren signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) approved in Clause (4).

At the request of the Moderator, the Rev. C. Markham led the Assembly in prayer for the ministry of the Relations With Other Churches Committee.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Thank God that the committee, on behalf of the PCA, has been active in initiating, maintaining and fostering relationships with both Australian and overseas churches of like mind, and that a warm, meaningful and practical relationship exists with many world churches as a result.
- (2) Continue with the practice of directing GAA committees wishing to invite representatives of other churches to attend meetings of the General Assembly, to process those invitations through this committee in cooperation with APWM Committee and the Business Committee.
- (3) Encourage the committee to continue promoting the ministries of the World Reformed Fellowship (WRF), and thank the Rev. Dr John McClean and the Rev. Robert Benn for their services on the WRF Board.
- (4) Agree to, and authorise the moderator to sign, the MoU of co-operation between the PCA and the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA), as follows:

“This Memorandum of Understanding is between the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) and the Presbyterian Church of Australia (PCA). As reformational and confessional churches this Memorandum of Understanding seeks to foster a closer and more formal relationship between our two denominations within the Australian cultural context. Formal recognition would grant bilateral work more authority and provide greater impetus and stimulus to our churches to work together in God’s kingdom.

Such a relationship would be focussed in terms of engagement.

At a local level, such engagement would include:

- *combined services where suitable and desired;*
- *receiving of one another’s members;*
- *recognition of one another’s ministers for preaching duties;*
- *working together in local evangelism;*
- *focussing church planting work with consideration for one another;*
- *combining and/or assisting with local diaconal/mercy ministries where possible.*

At a broader level, such engagement would include:

- *cooperation and mutual encouragement between denominational diaconal/mercy ministries;*
- *overseas mission information exchange and cooperation;*
- *cooperation with Presbyterian Inland Mission;*
- *working together on societal challenges that face us: e.g. marriage equality, safe church issues; as well as submissions to government on various ethical and moral issues;*
- *exchange of greetings and delegates at broader church Assemblies;*
- *provide a foundation for closer relationships with other reformational churches throughout Australia.*

It is understood that this MoU is subservient to and must comply with current and future decisions of the Synods of the CRCA and General Assemblies of the PCA. Where any conflict occurs the formal decisions of the broader Assemblies of each denomination takes precedence.”

- (5) Review the MoU at the meeting of the General Assembly in 2025; instructing the RWOC Committee to engage with the CRCA in the preparation of that review.

36. Presentation to Representatives of Partner and Overseas Churches and Representatives of other Churches: The Moderator presented to the representatives of Partner and Overseas Churches and representatives of other Churches on behalf of the Assembly a gift consisting of the book *Not Home Yet: how the renewal of the earth fits into God's plan for the world* by the Rev. Dr I.K. Smith.

37. Notices of Motion: Notices of Motion 39 to 41 were laid on the table.

38. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 9.30 a.m. tomorrow Wednesday, 11 September 2019 whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

FIFTH SEDERUNT

39. Assembly Constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Wednesday, 11 September 2019 at 9.30 a.m. the Assembly met, pursuant to adjournment, and was constituted with praise, the reading of Scripture and prayer, the Moderator presiding.

40. Trustees: The report of the Trustees of the Presbyterian Church of Australia was laid on the table and received.

41. Finance: The report of the Finance Committee was laid on the table and received. Ms M. Mackenzie, Convener, submitted the deliverance.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Receive the Financial Statements for the years ended 31 December 2016, 2017 and 2018.
- (2) Receive the Audit Reports from –
 - (a) Ernst & Young, on the accounts of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.
 - (b) Robert J Nixon & Associates, on the accounts of the Presbyterian Inland Mission (2016 only).
- (3) Appoint the Official Auditor of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales to audit the accounts of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.
- (4)
 - (a) Authorise the Finance Committee to pay the accommodation costs of Commissioners not resident in the city in which the General Assembly is held.
 - (b) Request the Secretary of the Finance Committee and the Clerk of the Assembly to secure advantageous accommodation rates for lodging Commissioners during the General Assembly.
 - (c) Authorise the Finance Committee to pay the accommodation costs of the Moderator, Clerks and Business Convener during the course of the General Assembly.
 - (d) Approve the reimbursement of the actual expenses incurred for Commissioners travelling to the General Assembly (excluding the Presbyteries of The Central Coast, Hawkesbury, Sydney East, Sydney Inner West, Sydney North and Sydney South) on the following basis:
 - Commissioners who travel more than 750km - return airfares at a rate authorised by the Clerk.
 - Commissioners who travel 750km or less - return fares by train (or coach, where a train does not run).
 - Commissioners using their own car - a payment of 32 cents/km (maximum 1500 km).
 - (e) Remind all Commissioners travelling by air that they should make their bookings in advance to achieve the cheapest flight possible.
- (5)
 - (a) Approve payment of the following honoraria until such time as the General Assembly determines otherwise:

Clerk of Assembly	<i>See (c) below</i>
Deputy Clerk	\$850 for each General Assembly
Assistance to Clerks	\$400 for each General Assembly
Business Convener	\$1,000 for each General Assembly
 - (b) authorise the Finance Committee to pay appropriate honoraria to one or more persons acting in the positions listed above.
 - (c) Approve the remuneration for the Clerk being amended from the former payment of an honorarium to become a stipend plus travel allowance and that the payment will be equivalent to one day per fortnight on the stipend amount.
- (6)
 - (a) Approve the following provisions for the Moderator assuming office in September 2019 and for succeeding Moderators until such time as the General Assembly determines otherwise:
 - (i) An allowance of up to \$48,000 to cover costs of travel, accommodation, telephone, postage, stationery plus an honorarium of \$2,500 per annum;

- (ii) An allowance sufficient to cover the cost of Moderatorial dress, and;
 - (iii) Costs of pulpit supply during Moderator's absence on Moderatorial duty.
- (b) Declare that when the Moderator is invited to special congregational and institutional functions the parties concerned should as a general rule meet all relevant Moderatorial expenses.
- (c) Authorise the Finance Committee to approve any necessary additional expenditure in respect of the Moderator.
- (7) (a) Reappoint the Rev. M. Wharton as Webmaster for the Presbyterian Church of Australia for a period of twelve months from the close of this meeting of the Assembly with accountability to the Assembly Clerk.
- (b) Request the Assembly Clerk to continue his review of the Church's communication needs across multiple media in consultation with the Finance Committee, the Webmaster and the Clerks of the Assemblies of NSW, QLD and VIC and to make recommendations concerning an interim communication strategy.
- (c) Authorise the Finance Committee to adopt an interim communication strategy and make consequential decisions about the technical and personnel requirements of that strategy, including the appointment of a webmaster on suitable terms and conditions.
- (d) Direct the Finance Committee to report to the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly concerning its communication strategy, any personnel appointed pursuant to these resolutions and the relevant terms of any and all such appointments.
- (8) (a) Approve the following expenditure for the 2020-2022 triennium:

	2020 Budget	2021 Budget	2022 Budget	Triennium Total Budget
Code Committee	1,405	1,415	1,440	4,260
Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee	1,600	1,600	1,600	4,800
Reception of Ministers Committee	3,700	3,700	3,700	11,100
Mission to Australia	830	845	865	2,540
Church & Nation Committee	16,500	16,500	16,500	49,500
College Committee	12,250	12,250	12,250	36,750
Presbyterian Inland Mission	0	0	0	0
Relations with other Churches Committee	8,500	8,500	8,500	25,500
National Journal Committee	12,500	13,000	13,500	39,000
Total Expenses Committees	57,285	57,810	58,355	173,450
NSW Historical Records & Library Committee (GAA archives)	7,500	7,500	7,500	22,500
Website Maintenance	12,000	12,000	12,000	36,000
Procurator's Retainer	500	500	500	1,500
Moderator's Expenses (incl. Honoraria)	18,500	18,500	18,500	55,500
General Expenses	25,000	25,000	25,000	75,000
Office Services	10,273	10,273	10,273	30,819
Grants - contingency	10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
PresAid Administration	2,000	2,000	2,000	6,000
Assembly Costs	0	0	105,000	105,000
Honoraria/allowance*	8,250	8,460	8,676	25,386
Total expenses Other	94,023	94,233	199,449	387,705
Total GAA Expenditure	151,308	152,043	257,804	561,155

- (b) Approve the reimbursement of travelling expenses incurred by members of Committees attending Committee meetings on the same basis as determined for meetings of the General Assembly of Australia with incidental expenses as determined by each Committee.

- (c) Authorise the Finance Committee to approve additional expenditure that may arise, after consultation with any Committee, reporting details to State Finance (or equivalent) Committees.
- (d) Authorise the Finance Committee to approve payment of audit fees, office service charges and other necessary administrative expenses and include such costs with Committee expenses to be recovered from State Assemblies.
- (e) Request the State Assemblies, when called upon to do so, to reimburse the Finance Committee without delay expenditure in connection with the holding of the 2019 General Assembly of Australia, the expenses of Committees of the General Assembly of Australia and expenditure of the Moderator, in the proportion set out in the Finance Committee regulations.
- (f) Request the NSW Trustees to finance expenditure authorised by the Finance Committee pending reimbursement by State Finance (or equivalent) Committees.

42. Code: The report of the Code Committee was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. B.M. Meller submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) to (3) were approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

(4) Rescind GAA BB 1988. Min. 115:5 forthwith.

(5) Declare that the regulations of Assembly committees may be enacted, repealed or amended by a motion of which notice has been given for at least one sederunt, and which has been moved and seconded, and approved by an ordinary majority of the Assembly members present and voting, this declaration to have effect forthwith.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

(6) Delete from the regulations of the College Committee, the paragraph numbered 1(a) containing the words, "A Convener elected by and from the members of the Committee."

(7) Renumber the subsequent sub-clauses.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. C. Garrett moved:

That the Assembly:

(8) Request the Code Committee to consider the appointment and reappointment of committees other than standing committees and report to the next meeting of the Assembly.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The report of the Code Committee concerning Reference (iv) of 2016 from GANSW anent the Eldership was received.

Clause (9) was approved.

It was resolved to suspend so much of the Standing Orders as is necessary to permit the Assembly to take questions with respect to the report of the Code Committee concerning Reference (iv) of 2016 from GANSW anent the Eldership. (Ref. Min. 48)

Clause (10) was approved.

Clause (11) was moved and seconded.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. C. Garrett moved:

That the Assembly:

Amend the wording of clause (11) by replacing the words "ought to" with "must", and deleting the words "according to their gifts" so that the clause will read:

Declare that teaching is, and always has been, a vital part of an elder's duties and that all elders must be competent to teach.

The motion was seconded.

As a motion of procedure, the Rev. B.M. Meller moved that the amendment be taken in two parts:

(a) replacing the words "ought to" with "must", and

(b) deleting the words "according to their gifts".

The procedural motion was seconded and approved.

The amendment to the motion to replace the words "ought to" with "must" within clause (11) was approved.

The amendment to the motion to delete the words “according to their gifts” within clause (11) was disapproved.

Clause (11) was approved as follows:

- (11) Declare that teaching is, and always has been, a vital part of an elder’s duties and that all elders must be competent to teach according to their gifts.

Clauses (12) to (13) were approved.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Record its thanks to God for the ministry of his servant, the late Rev. Ron Clark, whose service to the Presbyterian Church of Queensland and the Presbyterian Church of Australia, particularly through the Code Committee, was marked by faithfulness, creativity, breadth of interest, generosity, wisdom, human kindness and gospel-driven passion.
- (2) Record its thanks to God for the service rendered to the Code Committee over a period of 12 years by Mr Malcolm Beveridge.
- (3) Accept the advice of the Code Committee, in response to Min. 97 of the meeting of the Commission of Assembly held on 4/9/18, that the formation of a standing commission of the Assembly in 2001 has rendered the formation of a judicial commission unnecessary inasmuch as the Commission is comprised of members from all states and can be convened by the Moderator on short notice with power to finalise any matter referred to it by the Moderator, and discontinue consideration of the formation of a judicial commission.
- (4) Rescind GAA BB 1988. Min. 115:5 forthwith.
- (5) Declare that the regulations of Assembly committees may be enacted, repealed or amended by a motion of which notice has been given for at least one sederunt, and which has been moved, seconded and approved by an ordinary majority of the Assembly members present and voting, this declaration to have effect forthwith.
- (6) Delete from the regulations of the College Committee, the paragraph numbered 1(a) containing the words, “A Convener elected by and from the members of the Committee.”
- (7) Renumber the subsequent sub-clauses.
- (8) Request the Code Committee to consider the appointment and reappointment of committees other than standing committees and report to the next meeting of the Assembly.
- (9) Thank State Assemblies for their adherence to the request made of them in GAA BB. 2016, Min. 68(1)(e) and thus refraining from making any substantial changes to state Codes in relation to eldership.
- (10) Require that in the making of any future changes, the functional distinction between ministers and elders must be respected and upheld.
- (11) Declare that teaching is, and always has been, a vital part of an elder’s duties and that all elders must be competent to teach according to their gifts.
- (12) Declare that elders occupy a pastoral office to which belongs the spiritual oversight of the Church. Under the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, elders shepherd and serve the church by sharing in its government, teaching the word of God, praying with and for God’s people, and modelling life in Christ, according to their gifts.
- (13) Augment the advice given at GAA 2016, Min. 68(1)(a), (d) and (e), by informing the GANSW, that:
 - (a) The expectation that elders should be able to teach according to their gifts (which role does not necessarily include preaching), is not new to the Church’s understanding of the eldership and, of itself, does not impose a uniform or exclusive view of the duties and functions of the eldership;
 - (b) While the proposal (as a whole) contained in the overture appended to Reference (iv) does preserve the Church’s historic distinction between ministers and elders in their complementary roles within the Session, the proposed rule 4.01 could be expressed more clearly so that it could not be interpreted to equate the roles of ministers and elders; and
 - (c) While most elders can be expected to, and should be ready to, lead the congregation in worship, that cannot be required of all elders, nor may that privilege be demanded by any or all of the elders. Likewise, elders (and other members of the congregation) may be invited to offer public prayer in the context of gathered worship, but this, too, may not be demanded as a right.

43. Safe Ministry Framework: The report of the Code Committee concerning the Safe Ministry Framework was laid on the table.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Receive the draft National Safe Ministry Framework prepared in response to GAA Commission 2018, Min. 96 in which the Assembly resolved to “request the Clerk to progress, in conjunction with State churches, the production so far as is possible of a uniform set of child protection procedures and practices within those State churches.”
- (2) Thank the following representatives of the child protection units of the Presbyterian Churches of New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria (Messrs Jon Flood, Wayne Knapp and Mrs Fiona Bligh, respectively), together with the Assembly Officers, for their cooperative endeavour to prepare the National Safe Ministry Framework.
- (3) Adopt the National Safe Ministry Framework as a statement of the principles, policy and procedures of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. L. Isham moved:

That the Assembly:

- (4) Request the Clerk, before publishing the National Safe Ministry Framework, to number its paragraphs and dot-points in order to simplify navigation, reference and communication.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

- (5) Request the State churches to adopt the National Safe Ministry Framework as a statement of their own principles, policy and procedures while recognising the need for the State churches to augment or amend the stated procedures to ensure that they remain fully compliant with secular legislation in their respective States.
- (6) Request the State churches, through the leaders of their child protection units, to maintain close liaison with one another and with the Clerk of Assembly in order that maximal uniformity might be maintained in the practices of Presbyterian Churches across Australia, and so that recommended changes to the National Safe Ministry Framework might be presented to the GAA with one voice.
- (7) Request the State churches, through the leaders of their child protection units, to share with one another, and with the Clerk of the Assembly, their experience in using the National Safe Ministry Framework in order to bring recommended changes to the next meeting of the GAA.
- (8) Until the next ordinary meeting of the GAA, empower the Commission of Assembly, if necessary, to consider and effect changes to the National Safe Ministry Framework.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. Dr J. McClean moved:

That the Assembly:

- (9) Adopt the following as the apology of the Assembly to victims of sexual abuse as children in churches and ministries of the Presbyterian Church of Australia:

With deep sorrow the Presbyterian Church of Australia offers an apology to all who, as children, have been sexually abused in our congregations, ministries and institutions. We acknowledge that we have failed you and your families and we unreservedly apologise.

Sexual abuse of a child is appalling and wickedly violates Christ’s words, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” It is a breach of trust to those who have taken part in church activities, to their families, and to the wider community.

We acknowledge failures where people in churches or our ministries have known or suspected abuse and failed to act, where those in authority have failed to report accusations to the authorities, and allowed those accused of abuse to evade prosecution. For these sins, we are deeply sorry.

The scandal of sexual abuse in the Christian church is one of the deepest stains that we own and bear.

We regret the hurt caused when our response as a Church has denied or minimised the pain that victims have experienced or caused them to experience further pain.

Although too late to prevent the harm already done, the Presbyterian Church has taken steps to respond to child sexual abuse.

- *Each State Church is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and we encourage all victims of child sexual abuse to make use of this scheme.*
- *The Church is willing to know the full extent of the problem of abuse and the causes of such behaviour within the church. It commits itself to making a timely and compassionate response to all allegations of child sexual abuse.*
- *The Church has adopted the National Safe Ministry Framework to ensure all State Churches have uniform principles for child protection policies consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.*
- *The Church commits itself to full co-operation with the civil authorities in dealing with accusations of child sexual abuse.*
- *The Church commits itself to ensuring that ministers, elders and other leaders in the church are aware of the danger of child sexual abuse and that they are trained to implement approved policies and equipped to respond appropriately to any and all allegations of abuse.*

The motion was seconded.

The debate was adjourned (Min. 98).

44. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 2.00 p.m. whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

SIXTH SEDERUNT

45. Assembly Constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Wednesday, 11 September 2019 at 2.00 p.m. the Assembly met, pursuant to adjournment, and was constituted with praise, the reading of Scripture and prayer, the Moderator presiding.

46. Thanks: On behalf of the Assembly, the Assembly Clerk thanked the Rev. D. McDougall, Mrs Maisie Liu, Mr Andrew Mills and other members of the Hurstville congregation for their assistance in facilitating the smooth operation of the Assembly and presented those named in this motion with copies of the book *Not Home Yet* by the Rev. Dr I.K. Smith.

47. Bible Exposition: The Rev. D. McDougall gave an exposition of Isaiah 55 on the theme *Come to the Waters: Great Invitation; Great Opportunity; Great Explanation*.

48. Standing Orders: Standing Orders were reinstated. (Min. 42.)

49. Private Sitting: The Assembly sat in private.

50. Petition (iii): A petition from the Rev. J. Playfoot seeking relief from decisions made by the Presbytery of North East Victoria was laid on the table and received.

The Rev J. Playfoot appeared as the petitioner.

Questions were asked of the petitioner.

As a matter of procedure, the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Allow the Rev. J. Playfoot to remain in the House during consideration of his petition.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Grant the prayer of the petition.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Empower the Commission of Assembly to:

(1) Review the actions of the Presbytery of North East Victoria and the reasons behind the decisions it made during the consideration of matters pertaining to the Rev. James Playfoot.

(2) Authorise the Commission of Assembly to reopen the case if it deems that to be necessary for relational restoration and procedural fairness.

(3) Determine, with finality, the ultimate outcome of the prayer of Petition (iii).

The motion was seconded and approved.

The petitioner was advised of the decision and removed from the bar.

51. Prayer: At the request of the Moderator, the Rev. B.M. Meller led the Assembly in prayer.

52. Open Court: The Assembly resumed in open court.

53. College: The report of the College Committee was laid on the table and received. The Rev. Dr I.K. Smith submitted the deliverance.

Clause (1) was approved.

The report of the College Committee concerning Eschatology and the Millennium in the Westminster Confession of Faith was received.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. Dr J. McClean moved:

That the Assembly:

Declare that the tenets of Dispensational Premillennialism are at such variance with this Church's doctrinal standards that no person adhering to Dispensational Premillennialism should either sign the Formula or continue in office after signing the Formula.

The motion was seconded.

Arising from debate, the Rev. S. Bonnington moved that the Assembly:

Amend the motion so that it would read:

Declare that the tenets of classic Dispensational Premillennialism are at variance with this Church's doctrinal standards.

The motion was seconded.

By leave of the Assembly, the motion was fallen from.

By leave of the Assembly, the Rev. S. Bonnington moved that the Assembly:

Declare that the tenets of Dispensational Premillennialism are at variance with this Church's doctrinal standards.

The motion was seconded and approved as follows:

(2) Declare that the tenets of Dispensational Premillennialism are at variance with this Church's doctrinal standards.

The debate was adjourned (Min. 68).

54. Notices of Motion: Notices of Motion 42 to 45 were laid on the table.

55. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 7.00 p.m. whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

SEVENTH SEDERUNT

56. Assembly constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Wednesday, 11 September 2019 at 7.00 p.m. the Assembly met, pursuant to adjournment, and was constituted with praise, the reading of Scripture and prayer, the Moderator presiding.

57. Moderator: The Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson assumed the Chair.

58. National Journal: The report of the National Journal Committee was laid on the table and received.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Note that AP magazine and the Supplement have been produced regularly and within budget for each issue since the 2016 General Assembly of Australia up until the end of 2018, being then replaced by the online AP website at ap.org.au from February 2019.
- (2) Note that AP magazine and website and the Supplement have consistently supported the confessional position of the Presbyterian Church of Australia on matters of life, ministry and doctrine.
- (3) Commend Mr Walter Bruining for his secretarial service to the National Journal Committee for many years up to 2019.
- (4) Commend Mr Mike Timmins, the Yearbook editor from May 2013 onwards, for his loyal and efficient service to the wider church through the successful production of the Yearbook at a surplus year after year and also for his business and accounting support for AP on a volunteer basis.
- (5) Congratulate the editorial and production team of AP, as well as the regular contributors, for the work that they produce for the Presbyterian Church of Australia – particularly the Rev Dr Peter Barnes (Editor), Peter Hastie (formerly interviewing editor) and Mr Barney Zwartz (formerly production editor).
- (6) Strongly encourage ministers, elders and congregational members to subscribe to the new AP website at ap.org.au

59. Moderator: The Rev. Dr P.E. Barnes resumed the Chair.

60. Christian Education: The report of the Christian Education Committee was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. A. Vines submitted the deliverance.

Clause (1) was approved.

Clause (2) was moved and seconded.

Pursuant to notice Dr M. Whitelaw moved:

That the Assembly:

Amend Regulation 4 within clause (2) so that it will read:

4. **Convener:** The Convener of the Training and Discipleship Committee shall be elected by the Assembly.

The amendment was seconded and disapproved.

Clause (2) was approved.

Clauses (3) to (5) were approved.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Noting with appreciation those who have worked hard over many years, thank and discharge the Committee, and withdraw its current regulations.
- (2) Establish a special committee for Training and Discipleship, with the following regulations:
 1. **Establishment:** There shall be a special committee of the General Assembly of Australia entitled the Training and Discipleship Committee (“the Committee”).
 2. **Composition:** Notwithstanding any regulation which may be approved by the General Assembly for the composition of other committees, the Training and Discipleship Committee shall be comprised as follows:

- (a) The Directors of Youth Ministry from those states where a Director or equivalent is appointed.
 - (b) The Directors of Christian Education from those states where a Director or equivalent is appointed.
 - (c) The Convener of the state Christian Education committee (or the Convener's deputy) from states where no person is appointed as the Director of Youth Ministry or of Christian Education.
3. **Quorum:** The quorum of the Committee shall be four persons (of whom at least two shall be ministers) drawn from at least two states.
4. **Convener:** The Convener of the Training and Discipleship Committee shall be appointed by the Committee from among its own members as soon as possible after each ordinary meeting of the General Assembly. Should the appointed Convener be unable or unwilling to act, the Clerk of Assembly shall appoint, from among the members of the Committee, an Acting Convener who shall convene a meeting of the Committee by telephone or internet conference for the purpose of electing a Convener.
5. **Function:** Whilst acknowledging the powers of State Assemblies set forth in Article 10 of the Articles of Agreement, it shall be the function of the Committee to bring together those working at the state church level in Youth Ministry, Christian Education or equivalent who shall meet for the purpose of:
- (a) mutual encouragement
 - (b) sharing of ideas and resources
 - (c) looking for strategic opportunities for the represented state-based ministries to assist one another
 - (d) administering a youth leadership scholarship scheme
 - (e) bringing the financial needs of state-based ministries to the GAA.
- (3) Transfer to the Code Committee the role of ensuring that key constitutional documents (such as the Westminster Confession of Faith) continue to be published in both paper and digital form.
- (4) Donate existing publication stock to the NSW Ministry & Mission Committee, to sell or dispose of as it sees fit.
- (5) Allocate the Committee's funds as follows: \$20,000 to the GAA Code Committee for publication of key constitutional documents (including the Westminster Confession of Faith and other documents related to the constitution and government of the Presbyterian Church of Australia); and \$20,000 to the Training and Discipleship Committee; with the remainder to be applied to GAA general funds.

61. Moderator-General's Church Planting Taskforce: The report of the Moderator-General's Church Planting Taskforce was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. D.N. Jones submitted the deliverance.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

- (1) Call on all congregations throughout Australia to pray fervently for the growing ministry team serving the Church in Adelaide and for new churches to be planted there by conversions from the world.
- (2) Request those State Churches with training colleges to consider sending exit students to South Australia when appropriate
- (3) Request the Mission to Australia Committee to assume the responsibilities of the Task force.
- (4) Thank and discharge the taskforce.

62. Mission to Australia: The report of the Mission to Australia Committee was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. G.J. Ware submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) to (5) were approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. C. Garrett moved:

That the Assembly:

- (6) Amend the regulations of the committee as follows:

- (a) Replace the words “Convener of the committee on home missions” in regulation 10.10.2.a with “Conveners of the committees on home missions and church planting” so that the clause will read:
The Conveners of the committees on home missions and church planting from each State Assembly and the Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee (PIM);
- (b) Replace the words “Directors or Superintendents of the committees on home missions” in regulation 10.10.2.b with “Superintendents (however titled) of the committees on home missions and church planting” so that the clause will read:
The full-time Superintendents (however titled) of the committees on home missions and church planting in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria;
- (c) Add the words “and church planting” to the end of regulation 10.10.5.b so that the clause will read:
Promote mutually supportive interaction between the state committees responsible for home missions and church planting;
- (d) Add the words “and church planting” after the words “home mission” in regulation 10.10.5.f so that the clause will read:
- (e) Receive, at least annually, from each state committee on home missions and church planting or from each State assembly, reports on issues pertaining to the work and welfare of the Church within the jurisdiction of that State assembly;
- (f) Add the words “and church planting” after the words “home mission” in regulation 10.10.5.j so that it will read:
- (g) Maintain close relations with the PIM so that gospel ministries can be developed and advanced in urban areas through the home mission and church planting committees and in remote areas through the PIM.

The motion was seconded.

As a procedural motion, the Rev. P.W. Phillips moved that the Assembly:

- (6) Refer the following motion to the Code Committee and authorise the Commission of Assembly to approve the proposed amendments contained within the motion:
Amend the regulations of the committee as follows:
 - (a) Replace the words, “Convener of the committee on home missions,” in regulation 10.10.2.a with, “Conveners of the committees on home missions and church planting” so that the clause will read:
The Conveners of the committees on home missions and church planting from each State Assembly and the Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee (PIM);
 - (b) Replace the words “Directors or Superintendents of the committees on home missions” in regulation 10.10.2.b with “Superintendents (however titled) of the committees on home missions and church planting” so that the clause will read:
The full-time Superintendents (however titled) of the committees on home missions and church planting in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria;
 - (c) Add the words “and church planting” to the end of regulation 10.10.5.b so that the clause will read:
Promote mutually supportive interaction between the state committees responsible for home missions and church planting;
 - (d) Add the words “and church planting” after the words “home mission” in regulation 10.10.5.f so that the clause will read:
Receive, at least annually, from each state committee on home missions and church planting or from each State assembly, reports on issues pertaining to the work and welfare of the Church within the jurisdiction of that State assembly;
 - (e) Add the words “and church planting” after the words “home mission” in regulation 10.10.5.j so that it will read:
Maintain close relations with the PIM so that gospel ministries can be developed and advanced in urban areas through the home mission and church planting committees, and in remote areas through the PIM.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. C. Garrett moved:

That the Assembly:

- (7) Reappoint the committee for a further term in accordance with Article 4.2.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

- (1) Give thanks to God for the churches planted and replanted over the last three years, including at: (NSW) Homebush (“Cornerstone”); Green Square (“Redemption Hill”); Hornsby; Auburn (replant); Sydney City (“Scots” - replant); Goonellabah (“Southern Cross”); and Thurgoona (part of Albury); (QLD) Moorooka; Redland Bay; Bargara; Emerald; and Aura; and (VIC) Officer.
- (2) Direct the Committee to give consideration of the formula which uses sanctioned charges only as the basis for representation at GAA as stated in the articles of agreement and report back to the next meeting of the GAA.
- (3) Request State Assemblies, when revising their rules, to consider the adoption of uniform titles for various types of charges.
- (4) Request State Assemblies and presbyteries to encourage ministry workers and their spouses to consider participation in Renewal Retreat Groups and intentional mentoring processes.
- (5) Authorise the Committee to facilitate support for appropriate church planting initiatives in the smaller states.
- (6) Refer the following motion to the Code Committee and authorise the Commission of Assembly to approve the proposed amendments contained within the motion:
Amend the regulations of the committee as follows:
 - (a) Replace the words “Convener of the committee on home missions” in regulation 10.10.2.a with “Conveners of the committees on home missions and church planting” so that the clause will read:
The Conveners of the committees on home missions and church planting from each State Assembly and the Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee (PIM);
 - (b) Replace the words “Directors or Superintendents of the committees on home missions” in regulation 10.10.2.b with “Superintendents (however titled) of the committees on home missions and church planting” so that the clause will read:
The full-time Superintendents (however titled) of the committees on home missions and church planting in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria;
 - (c) Add the words “and church planting” to the end of regulation 10.10.5.b so that the clause will read:
Promote mutually supportive interaction between the state committees responsible for home missions and church planting;
 - (d) Add the words “and church planting” after the words “home mission” in regulation 10.10.5.f so that the clause will read:
Receive, at least annually, from each state committee on home missions and church planting or from each State assembly, reports on issues pertaining to the work and welfare of the Church within the jurisdiction of that State assembly;
 - (e) Add the words “and church planting” after the words “home mission” in regulation 10.10.5.j so that it will read:
Maintain close relations with the PIM so that gospel ministries can be developed and advanced in urban areas through the home mission and church planting committees, and in remote areas through the PIM.
- (7) Reappoint the committee for a further term in accordance with Article 4.2.

63. Church and Nation: Debate was resumed on the report of the Church and Nation Committee (Min. 29).

The Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson assumed the Chair.

The report was received.

The Rev. Dr J. McClean submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) to (3) were approved.

Clause (4) was moved and seconded.

Pursuant to notice, the Rev. G. Ware moved:

That the Assembly:

Amend part (a) of the motion to read as follows, and renumber subsequent clauses as necessary:

- (a) Amend *Constitution, Procedure and Practice* Chapter 9, section 2, sub-section 2.1 by adding “Church and Nation” to the list of Committees that are elected under their own

regulations.

- (b) Amend Chapter 10.5. by deleting clauses 2 and 3 and replacing them with a new clause 2, renumbering subsequent clauses as necessary:

2. Membership:

2.1 Assembly elected/appointed members:

Ten (10) elected members, a convener, and ex-officio members shall be elected/appointed according to the provisions of 9.2.3 – 9.2.6 and 9.3.1.

2.2 Committee appointed members:

The Committee may add up to three (3) non-elected members to the Committee. Such members should be qualified and gifted to help with the Committee's work and fulfil the eligibility criteria set out in 9.4.6. Members appointed under this provision will be entitled to vote and their term of membership shall expire at the General Assembly subsequent to their appointment. The Committee shall report to the Assembly any additional members appointed.

- (c) Delete regulation 10.5.4, and renumber the following regulations as necessary.

- (d) Amend the current regulation 10.5.7 so that it will read as follows:

7. Statements:

(a) Statements may be issued on the Church's behalf either by General Assembly, or between meetings of the General Assembly by the Moderator-General and/or the Convener or by their nominated representatives. This may include producing a joint statement with other persons or bodies or endorsing a statement prepared by another person or body.

(b) Such statements may only be issued between meetings of the General Assembly with the authorisation of the Committee. In authorising a statement, the Committee shall ensure that it is consistent with the doctrinal basis of the Church and any relevant statements of the Assembly and is likely to reflect a consensus or clear majority position of the Assembly. All such statements are to be reported to the Assembly.

(c) Any statement by the Moderator-General or the Convener, or any other member of the Church, which is not so authorised must be identified as a personal opinion and not the policy or position of the Church. The Moderator-General, Convener and the Clerk of Assembly shall not issue or sign a statement identifying them by their office without authorisation by the Assembly or, between meetings, by the Committee.

(d) Statements may be issued with the aim of equipping Church members and other Christians to make an informed contribution to the discussion/debate on issues concerning the nation's life from a Christian, biblical, reformed position; or of informing government, other authorities and the public of the Church's position.

The motion of the Rev. G. Ware was seconded.

As a procedural motion, the Rev. P.W. Phillips moved that the Assembly:

- (4) Refer the following motion to the Code Committee and authorise the Commission of Assembly to approve the proposed amendments contained within the motion:

(a) Amend *Constitution, Procedure and Practice* Chapter 9 section 2, sub-section 2.1 by adding "Church and Nation" to the list of Committees that are elected under their own regulations.

- (b) Amend Chapter 10.5. by deleting clauses 2 and 3 and replacing them with a new clause 2, renumbering subsequent clauses as necessary:

2. Membership:

2.1 Assembly elected/appointed members

Ten (10) elected members, a convener, and ex-officio members shall be elected/appointed according to the provisions of Chapter 9 2.3 - 9 2.6 and 9 3.1.

2.2 Committee appointed members

The Committee may add up to three (3) non-elected members to the Committee. Such members should be qualified and gifted to help with the Committee's work and fulfil the eligibility criteria set out in 9 4.6. Members appointed under this provision will be entitled to vote and their term of membership shall expire at the General Assembly subsequent to their appointment. The Committee shall report to the Assembly any additional members appointed.

- (c) Delete regulation 10.5.4, and renumber the following regulations as necessary.
- (d) Amend the current regulation 10.5.7 so that it will read as follows:

7. Statements:

- (a) Statements may be issued on the Church's behalf either by General Assembly, or between meetings of the General Assembly by the Moderator-General and/or the Convener or by their nominated representatives. This may include producing a joint statement with other persons or bodies or endorsing a statement prepared by another person or body.
- (b) Such statements may only be issued between meetings of the General Assembly with the authorisation of the Committee. In authorising a statement, the Committee shall ensure that it is consistent with the doctrinal basis of the Church and any relevant statements of the Assembly and is likely to reflect a consensus or clear majority position of the Assembly. All such statements are to be reported to the Assembly.
- (c) Any statement by the Moderator-General or the Convener, or any other member of the Church, which is not so authorised must be identified as a personal opinion and not the policy or position of the Church. The Moderator-General, Convener and the Clerk of Assembly shall not issue or sign a statement identifying them by their office without authorisation by the Assembly or, between meetings, by the Committee.
- (d) Statements may be issued with the aim of equipping Church members and other Christians to make an informed contribution to the discussion/debate on issues concerning the nation's life from a Christian, biblical, reformed position; or of informing government, other authorities and the public of the Church's position.

The procedural motion was seconded and approved.

The debate was adjourned (Min. 83).

64. Notices of Motion: Notices of Motion 49-50 were read to the Assembly by the Clerk and laid on the table.

65. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 9.30 a.m. on Thursday, 12 September, 2019 whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

EIGHTH SEDERUNT

66. Assembly constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Thursday 12 September 2019 at 9.30 a.m. the Assembly met, pursuant to adjournment, and was constituted with praise, the reading of Scripture and prayer, the Moderator presiding.

67. Presbyterian Inland Mission: The report of the Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. L.G. Fowler submitted the deliverance.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Give thanks to God for the opportunities that we have to proclaim Christ in the Inland.
- (2) Thank the whole church for its ongoing prayer and financial support for the ministry of PIM and encourage the whole church to continue its commitment to this essential ministry.
- (3) Thank the retired committee members the Rev. Alan Clarkson, Mrs Heather Ross and the Rev. Derek Bullen for their commitment and support to the ministry of PIM as members since 2004, 2007 and 2010 respectively.
- (4) Thank Mrs Evelyn Mill, upon her retirement from the committee, for her enthusiasm, support and active involvement in the ministry of PIM as a member of the committee since 2004.
- (5) Declare that the New Dunesk proposal from the PIM Committee falls within the mandate of the committee's regulations and authorise the committee to pursue the implementation of the proposal.
- (6) Authorise the PIM Committee to reallocate up to 50% of its long-term investments portfolio towards the purchase and set up of New Dunesk.
- (7) Request the PIM Committee to communicate to the congregations of the PCA, in due course, the opportunities at New Dunesk that are available to their members.
- (8) Request the PIM Committee to bring a report on the progress of New Dunesk to the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly.

At the request of the Moderator, the Rev. R. Ward, Clerk of Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, explained the origins of the ministry at Dunesk (S.A.) and led the Assembly in prayer for the Presbyterian Inland Mission.

68. College: Debate on the report of the College Committee was resumed (Min. 53). The report of the College Committee concerning paedocommunion (including the attached "Survey of presbyteries: practices regarding paedocommunion") was received.

Notice had been given by the Rev. M. Powell of his intention to move:

That the Assembly:

Declare that baptised children of any age may be permitted to participate in the Lord's Table under the discretion of their believing parents and the authority of the session.

The Moderator was asked to rule on the character of that motion and several clauses of the College Committee's deliverance (which appear below as clauses (3) to (11)).

The Moderator ruled that Mr Powell's motion and the said clauses of the College Committee's deliverance were not counter motions.

The Rev. Dr J. McClean moved dissent from the Moderator's ruling.

The motion was seconded and approved, and the Assembly departed from the Moderator's ruling.

As a procedural motion, the Rev. B.M. Meller moved that clauses (3) to (11) be taken in two parts: clauses (3) to (5), and clauses (6) to (11).

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Moderator ruled that Mr Powell's proposed motion and clauses (3) to (5) of the deliverance were counter motions.

Clauses (3) to (5) were moved and seconded.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. M. Powell moved:

That the Assembly:

Declare that baptised children of any age may be permitted to participate in the Lord's Table under the discretion of their believing parents and the authority of the session.

The motion was seconded.

The Rev. P.M. Campbell moved the Previous Question on clauses (3) to (5) and Mr Powell's motion. The Previous Question was seconded and disapproved. The debate was adjourned (Min. 74).

69. Prayer: The Assembly received news of the death of Mr Rick Fairhurst and, at the request of the Moderator, the Rev. Dr A.M. Bain prayed for Mr Fairhurst's family, and the many ministries in which he had been involved.

70. Ballot: A ballot was held for the following positions: Reception of Ministers – Members Victoria.

71. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 2.00 p.m. whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

NINTH SEDERUNT

72. Assembly Constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Thursday, 12 September 2019 at 2.00 p.m. the Assembly met, pursuant to adjournment and was constituted with prayer, the Moderator presiding.

73. Bible Exposition: The Rev. D. McDougall gave an exposition of Isaiah 66 on the theme *Evangelical Ethics: In Life; In Church; In leadership*.

74. Colledge: Debate on the report of the Colledge Committee was resumed (Min. 68). As a procedural motion, the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:
That the Assembly:

- (1) Refer the report of the Colledge Committee concerning child communion to State Assemblies, presbyteries and sessions together with clauses (3)-(11) of the deliverance and Mr Powell's notice of motion for consideration with reports to be in the hands of the Clerk by 31 December 2021.
- (2) Request the Clerk, in remitting this matter to the State Assemblies, presbyteries and sessions, to provide alternative definitions of paedocommunion and further provide an opportunity for junior courts to respond by survey to identify their current experience and their preferred practice.
- (3) Request the Clerk, having received the responses from the State Assemblies, presbyteries and sessions to send them to a committee consisting of Mr Mark Baddeley (Chairman), the Rev. Dr Allan Harman, Dr Jared Hood, Andrew Bain, John Macintyre and Mark Powell in order that the ad hoc committee might bring a relevant report to the next meeting of the Assembly.

The motion was seconded.

Pursuant to a procedural motion, the Assembly resolved into a committee of the whole with the Moderator as Chairman and the Clerk as Secretary.

The committee of the whole resolved to report to the Assembly that it does not favour remitting the question of paedocommunion to subordinate courts but recommends, instead, that the counter-motions be debated by the Assembly.

The Clerk reported to the Assembly accordingly and the report was received.

Upon the resumption of debate, the previous question was moved, seconded and approved in relation to the motion of the Rev. Mark Powell.

Clauses (3) to (5) were put to the vote and approved without dissenting voice.

Clauses (6) and (7) were put to the vote and approved without dissenting voice.

Clause (8) was approved.

Clauses (9) to (11) were approved without dissenting voice.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Continue to grant approval for candidates from Western Australia to undertake studies at Trinity Theological College, Perth, subject to the continued approval of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Church of Western Australia and the annual approval of a full curriculum by the Colledge Committee, such training to be under the oversight of the Faculty of the Presbyterian Theological College of Victoria.
- (2) Declare that the tenets of Dispensational Premillennialism are at variance with this Church's doctrinal standards.
- (3) Affirm the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith that in the Lord's Supper "worthy receivers ... inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death", which implies that a person must exercise faith in order to receive the Supper in a worthy manner.
- (4) Determine that, because of necessity of faith, and in accord with the mainstream of the Reformed tradition, as expressed in the Larger Catechism, the Supper should only be offered to those who "are of years and ability to examine themselves" and who have made a profession of faith and who are baptised.
- (5) Affirm that there is no set age at which a person is able to examine themselves and make a profession of faith.

- (6) Remind sessions that they have a responsibility for the admission to the Lord's Table, as well as suspension from it, and that admission to the Table should not be left entirely to the decision of individuals or families.
- (7) Affirm that the responsibility of a Session with regard to admission to the Lord's Table is discharged by the preaching of the word and may also be by means of admonition, course of instruction and other mechanisms.
- (8) Instruct sessions which wish to provide for children to receive the Lord's Supper to ensure that children are instructed in the faith and about the nature of the sacrament and that children have either made a public profession of faith, or that the Session has confirmed in consultation with their believing parent/s or guardians that they have made a credible profession of faith.
- (9) Encourage sessions to clarify their understanding of the theology and practice of the Lord's Supper, including admission to the Supper; and communicate this clearly to the congregation.
- (10) Encourage sessions to deal carefully and charitably with members who transfer to their congregation and have been used to a different pattern of admission to the Lord's Supper.
- (11) Request the State Assemblies to ensure that their codes are structured in conformity to the decisions of the GAA.

The Moderator led the Assembly in prayer for the ministry of the College Committee.

75. Ballot: The report of the Ballot Committee was laid on the table and received.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Confirm the following elections, with the proviso that the Convenership of the Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee shall remain with the Rev. Peter Phillips until 31 December, 2019, to allow for necessary notification to, and response by, the Department of Defence.

Australian Presbyterian World Mission

Convener Rev. Brett Graham
 Members Mr Peter Burke
 Rev. William Morrow
 Mr Bob Quinn
 Mrs Sheryl Sarkoezy
 Mrs Stephanie Schwarz

Church and Nation

Convener Rev. Dr John McClean
 NSW Mr Peter Christopher
 Rev. Sandy McMillan
 Mrs Sheryl Sarkoezy
 QLD Prof. Nicholas Aroney
 Mrs Robyn Bain
 SA Rev. Gary Ware
 TAS Mr Martin Webb
 VIC Mrs Moira Deeming
 Rev. Chris Duke
 WA Rev. Ross Fraser

Code

Convener Rev. Bruce Meller
 NSW Rev. Justin Ang
 Rev. John Irvin
 Dr Rod Yager
 QLD Rev. Matthew Viney
 Mr Daniel Whitmore
 SA Rev. Gary Ware
 TAS Rev. Greg Munro
 VIC Rev. Peter W Phillips

WA Rev. Dr John P Wilson
Mr Bill Macrae

Defence Force Chaplaincy

Convener Rev Martin De Pyle (from 31/12/19)
NSW Rev. Paul Harris
Rev. Garry Hooper
Rev. Richard Quadrio
QLD Rev. Daniel Cassidy
Rev. John Nicol
SA Rev. Joshua Bouzanquet
TAS Rev. Ian McKendrick
VIC Rev. Peter Owen
Rev. Barry Porter
WA Rev. Ross Fraser

Finance

Convener Chairman of Trustees (Miss Margaret McKenzie)
NSW Mr Jeof Falls
Rev. John Irvin
Miss Margaret McKenzie
QLD Mr Greg Rodgers
SA 1 standing vacancy
TAS Mr Graeme K Roberts
VIC Mr Andrew Letcher
Rev. Richard O'Brien
WA Mr Chris Woonings

National Journal

Convener Mr Duncan Parker
Members Rev. Stuart Bonnington
Rev. Andrew Clarke
Rev. David Cook
Rev. Peter Hastie
Rev. Guido Kettniss
Rev. Mark Powell
Rev. Jason Summers
Rev. Dr John Wilson
Mr Neville Taylor
Mr Barney Zwartz

Overseas Aid & Development

Convener Rev Dean Carroll
Elected Members:
NSW Mr Bill Thompson
QLD Rev. Trevor Cheetham
SA Rev. Gary Ware
TAS Rev. Phil Simmonds
VIC Miss Geraldine Goswell
WA Rev. Stuart Bonnington
Ex Officio Convener, APWM Committee
National Director, APWM Committee
Convener, RWOC Committee

Presbyterian Inland Mission

Convener Rev. Les Fowler
NSW Rev. Peter Barber

	Rev. Sam Smith
	1 standing vacancy
QLD	Rev. Andrew Clausen
	1 standing vacancy
SA	Rev. Josh Bouzanquet
TAS	Rev. Peter Williamson
VIC	Rev. Martin de Pyle
	Mr Dennis Wright
WA	Rev. Ross Fraser

Public Worship and Aids to Devotions

Convener	Rev. Scott Kroeger
NSW	Rev. Stuart Andrews
	Rev. Andrew Campbell
	Dr Michael Whitelaw
QLD	Rev. Andrew Clarke
	1 standing vacancy
SA	Rev. Gary Ware
TAS	1 standing vacancy
VIC	Rev. Luke Isham
	Matthew James
WA	Mr Bill MacRae

Reception of Ministers

Convener	Rev. David Burke
NSW	Rev. Moses Hahn
	Rev. Matthew Oates
	Mr Jim Park
QLD	Rev. Dr Gary Millar
	Rev. Andrew Richardson
SA	Rev. Gary Ware
TAS	Rev. David Jones
VIC	Rev. Chris Siriweera
	Rev. Gerald Vanderwert
WA	Mr Bill MacRae

Relations With Other Churches

Convener	Rev. Dr John Wilson
NSW	Rev. Dr John McClean
	Rev. Corie Nel
	Rev. Kamal Weerakoon
QLD	Mr Mark Baddeley
	Mr Robert Thompson
SA	Rev. Gary Ware
TAS	Rev. Greg Munro
VIC	Rev. Chris Duke
	Rev. Matthew James
WA	Rev. Stuart Bonnington

- (2) Authorise the Assembly Clerk to destroy the ballot papers.
- (3) Thank and discharge the Ballot Committee.
- (4) Instruct the Clerk to notify the Minister of Defence that the Rev. M. de Pyle has been appointed as Convener of the General Assembly of Australia Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee with effect from 1 January 2020.

The motion was seconded and approved.

76. Paedocommunion Report: By leave of the Assembly, Mr R. Holvast moved:

That the Assembly:

Make available to State Assemblies, presbyteries and kirk sessions, upon request, the portions of the report of the College Committee relating to paedocommunion and the associated resolutions of the Assembly.

The motion was seconded and approved.

77. Public Worship and Aids to Devotion: The report of the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion was laid on the table.

The debate was adjourned (Min. 84).

78. Church and Nation - Public Worship and Aids to Devotion concerning the conduct of marriage services: The joint report of the Church and Nation Committee and the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion concerning the conduct of wedding services apart from the Marriage Act was laid on the table.

The debate was adjourned (Min. 83).

79. Notices of Motion: Notices of Motion 51 to 54 were laid on the table. The Clerk read Notice of Motion 53.

80. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 7.00 p.m. whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

TENTH SEDERUNT

81. Assembly Constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Thursday, 12 September 2019 at 7.00 p.m. the Assembly met, pursuant to adjournment and was constituted with prayer, the Moderator presiding.

82. Thanks: The Moderator thanked Mrs Julie Murray for her assistance as a pianist for the evening sessions of the Assembly and presented her with a copy of the book *The Whole Armour of God* by Iain M. Duguid as an expression of the Assembly's thanks.

83. Church and Nation - Public Worship and Aids to Devotion concerning the conduct of marriage services: Debate on the joint report of the Church and Nation Committee and the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion concerning the conduct of wedding services apart from the Marriage Act was resumed (Min. 78).

The report was received.

The Rev. C.S. Kroeger submitted the deliverance.

Clauses (1) to (3) were approved.

Clause (4) was moved and seconded.

Pursuant to notice, the Rev. C. Markham moved:

That the Assembly:

Not prevent ministers and home missionaries who are not authorised to solemnise marriages under the Marriage Act from conducting wedding services outside the Act, while the Assembly makes a further determination about such action.

The motion was seconded.

The Moderator declared Clause (4) and Mr Markham's motion to be counter-motions:

Upon being put to the vote, Clause (4) was the preferred motion.

Clause (4) was approved.

Dissent was recorded by the Rev. J. Walz.

Dissent was recorded by the Rev. C. Markham with the following reasons:

The motion contravenes Westminster Confession of Faith 20:2 and may prevent couples whose consciences preclude them from marrying under the Commonwealth Marriage Act from being married in a Christian wedding service.

Clause (5) was approved.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

- (1) Request the committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion and the Church and Nation committee jointly to:
 - (a) consider further the theological, legal and pastoral implications of allowing ministers and home missionaries who are not authorised to solemnise marriages under the Marriage Act to bear witness to and attest unions outside the Marriage Act, and
 - (b) report to the Commission of Assembly with possible arrangements for such unions should such a course of action seem desirable.
- (2) Empower the Commission of Assembly to receive, consider and determine the outcome of the joint recommendation of the above committees and request the Moderator to convene a meeting of the Commission upon receipt of the combined report of the committees.
- (3) Invite commissioners and others who have an interest in the possibility of allowing ministers and home missionaries who are not authorised to solemnise marriages under the Marriage Act to bear witness to and attest unions outside the Marriage Act, to communicate their view/s to the above committees via either of the conveners by 1 December 2019.
- (4) Direct ministers and home missionaries who are not authorised to solemnise marriages under the Marriage Act not to conduct any 'marriage' service outside the Act, unless and until the Assembly makes a further determination permitting such action.
- (5) Note that ministers and home missionaries are entitled, now, to conduct a service of worship to recognise and celebrate a marriage that has previously been solemnised under the Act or a marriage contracted overseas and recognised in Australia.

84. Public Worship and Aids to Devotion: Debate on the report of the Committee on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion was resumed (Min. 77).

The report was received.

The Rev. C. S. Kroeger submitted the deliverance.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly

- (1) Note the long service to this Committee of the Rev. Michael Wharton, Andrew Unwin, Joy Bartholomew, David Seaman, Prof. Judith Brown, and Mrs Marion Andrews, thanking the Lord for their service to his church and this Committee.
- (2) Note the PWAD Committee's website and publications, and recommend them as useful tools to ministers, home missionaries, lay preachers, and elders in their conduct of public worship, and as an aid to the Church in general for private and family devotion and in encouraging the regular prayerful reading of the Bible.
- (3) Note the development of the *Congregation Connect* (electronic conference software) to bring together small congregations, and the use of the same software for remote participants in Bible Study groups. Note, also, the interest of the PWAD committee in the quality of the resultant worship services and encourage the PWAD committee to continue to expand this work, and to audit the quality of the outcome so that it might be pleasing to God.
- (4) Commend the PIM's *Congregation Connect* programme to churches and presbyteries as a means for accomplishing long-distance ministry in parishes with limited resources.
- (5) Commend to all churches and presbyteries the Congregational Survey and ask that each congregation engage in the survey.
- (6) Adopt the proposed Guiding Principles and the Orders of the Marriage Service for inclusion in *Worship - The Book of Common Order of the Presbyterian Church of Australia*, replacing the current Marriage Orders.

85. Church and Nation: Debate was resumed on the report of the Church and Nation Committee (Min. 62).

Pursuant to notice the Rev. Dr J. McClean moved:

That the Assembly

- (5) Thank the Attorney General and the Government for their work to secure religious freedom in Australia in the proposed Religious Discrimination Bill 2019. Religious people and organisations, including Christian churches, make an enormous contribution to the good of Australian society. We are concerned that attempts to protect freedom of religion by codification may prove counter-productive and urge the Government to allow maximal freedom with minimal regulation. We urge the Government to continue to improve the proposed legislation so that it best secures freedom of religion. We raise the following concerns about the exposure draft.
 - (i) It is not clear that religious organisations which do not require employees to share their religious convictions will be able to prefer employees who share those convictions. This may inhibit the ministry of our schools, pre-schools, aged care facilities and hospitals.
 - (ii) Similarly, the definition of religious bodies may exclude schools, pre-schools, aged care facilities and hospitals, all of which we consider to be expressions of our ministry in Christ's name.
 - (iii) It is not clear that the legislation would protect good-faith expressions of moral teaching (such as on matters of sexuality, gender and marriage) which some might claim to be "vilification".
 - (iv) The provision for employers to limit expression of opinion by employees on the basis of "unjustifiable financial hardship to the employer" seems to open the way for powerful commercial interests to censor reasonable private expressions.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Express thanks to Mr Michael Kellahan for the work of Freedom for Faith and encourage congregations in prayerful support of that ministry.
- (2) Request the Church and Nation Committee to review the 1967 declaration on "Guiding Principles concerning the Remarriage of Divorced Persons" and prepare a report for the Commission of Assembly, which could serve as a basis for consultation prior to the next meeting of the General Assembly.

- (3) Empower the Commission of Assembly to receive a report on the 1967 declaration on “Guiding Principles concerning the Remarriage of Divorced Persons” and to distribute such a report for comment, and request the Moderator to convene a meeting of the Commission upon receipt of such a report.
- (4) Refer the following motion to the Code Committee and authorise the Commission of Assembly to approve the proposed amendments contained within the motion:
- (a) Amend *Constitution, Procedure and Practice* Chapter 9 section 2, sub-section 2.1 by adding “Church and Nation” to the list of Committees that are elected under their own regulations.
- (b) Amend Chapter 10.5. by deleting clauses 2 and 3 and replacing them with a new clause 2, renumbering subsequent clauses as necessary:
2. **Membership:**
- 2.1 Assembly elected/appointed members
Ten (10) elected members, a convener, and ex-officio members shall be elected/appointed according to the provisions of Chapter 9 2.3 - 9 2.6 and 9 3.1.
- 2.2 Committee appointed members
The Committee may add up to three (3) non-elected members to the Committee. Such members should be qualified and gifted to help with the Committee's work and fulfil the eligibility criteria set out in 9 4.6. Members appointed under this provision will be entitled to vote and their term of membership shall expire at the General Assembly subsequent to their appointment. The Committee shall report to the Assembly any additional members appointed.
- (c) Delete regulation 10.5.4, and renumber the following regulations as necessary.
- (d) Amend the current regulation 10.5.7 so that it will read as follows:
7. **Statements:**
- (a) Statements may be issued on the Church’s behalf either by General Assembly, or between meetings of the General Assembly by the Moderator-General and/or the Convener or by their nominated representatives. This may include producing a joint statement with other persons or bodies or endorsing a statement prepared by another person or body.
- (b) Such statements may only be issued between meetings of the General Assembly with the authorisation of the Committee. In authorising a statement, the Committee shall ensure that it is consistent with the doctrinal basis of the Church and any relevant statements of the Assembly and is likely to reflect a consensus or clear majority position of the Assembly. All such statements are to be reported to the Assembly.
- (c) Any statement by the Moderator-General or the Convener, or any other member of the Church, which is not so authorised must be identified as a personal opinion and not the policy or position of the Church. The Moderator-General, Convener and the Clerk of Assembly shall not issue or sign a statement identifying them by their office without authorisation by the Assembly or, between meetings, by the Committee.
- (d) Statements may be issued with the aim of equipping Church members and other Christians to make an informed contribution to the discussion/debate on issues concerning the nation’s life from a Christian, biblical, reformed position; or of informing government, other authorities and the public of the Church’s position.
- (5) Thank the Attorney General and the Government for their work to secure religious freedom in Australia in proposed Religious Discrimination Bill 2019. Religious people and organisations, including Christian churches, make an enormous contribution to the good of Australian society. We are concerned that attempts to protect freedom of religion by codification may prove counter-productive and urge the Government to allow maximal freedom with minimal regulation. We urge the Government to continue to improve the proposed legislation so that it best secures freedom of religion. We raise the following concerns about the exposure draft.
- (i) It is not clear that religious organisations who do not require employees to share their

- religious convictions will be able to prefer employees who share those convictions. This may inhibit the ministry of our schools, pre-schools, aged care facilities and hospitals.
- (ii) Similarly, the definition of religious bodies may exclude schools, pre-schools, aged care facilities and hospitals, all of which we consider to be expressions of our ministry in Christ's name.
 - (iii) It is not clear that the legislation would protect good-faith expressions of moral teaching (such as on matters of sexuality, gender and marriage) which some might claim to be "vilification".
 - (iv) The provision for employers to limit expression of opinion by employees on the basis of "unjustifiable financial hardship to the employer" seems to open the way for powerful commercial interests to censor reasonable private expressions.

86. Overture (i) and Overture (v): The following Overtures were laid on the table and received:

- (a) Overture (i) from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland concerning the administration of the sacraments by unordained persons in addition to elders and home missionaries.
- (b) Overture (v) from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales concerning the administration of the sacraments by civil chaplains.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. C. Garratt moved:

That the Assembly:

Refer Overture (i) and Overture (v) to the Code Committee requesting the committee to report to the next meeting of the General Assembly concerning the circumstances under which the sacraments may be dispensed by those other than a Minister of the Word lawfully ordained (WCF XXVIII.iv as amended), in the light of BB 1914 Min 61, BB 1916 Min 71 and any subsequent decisions of the General Assembly.

The motion was seconded and approved.

87. Moderator: The Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson assumed the Chair.

88. Overture (ii): An overture from the Presbytery of North Western Victoria concerning the status of Roman Catholic baptism was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. J. Walz and Mr C. Morrow presented the overture.

Questions were asked of the overtureists.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Sustain the overture.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Refer the question contained in the Overture to the College Committee and request that it report with recommendations to the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly.

The motion was seconded.

The Rev. D. R. Schwartz moved the previous question.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Dismiss the overture.

The motion was seconded and approved.

89. Moderator: The Rev. Dr P.E. Barnes resumed the Chair.

90. Overture (iii): An overture from the Church and Nation Committee concerning sex, gender and marriage was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. Dr J. McClean and C. Duke presented the overture.

Questions were asked of the overtureists.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. Dr J. McClean moved:

That the Assembly:

(1) Sustain the overture.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. Dr J. McClean moved:

That the Assembly:

(2) Amend the statement at 3.1 to add to the phrase 'conveyed to all their posterity' the words 'descending from them by ordinary generation'.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. Dr J. McClean moved:

That the Assembly:

(3) Adopt the Statement on Sex, Gender and Marriage as a declaration of the Assembly.

The motion was seconded.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. J. Walz moved:

That the Assembly:

Amend clause (3) by inserting the words "with the following changes" after "Assembly":

(a) In clause 3.2 inserting "as are some men by women" after "women are often mistreated and abused," so that the clause will read:

"From the Fall, human sin and God's curse have disordered and frustrated God's good creation pattern (Gen. 3:14-19; Rom. 8:19-21). Humans have sought to make sense of their world and establish their identities apart from God (Prov. 1:7; 12:23; Rom. 1:21-29; 7:5,14-18; Eph. 4:22). Relationships between husband and wife are spoiled (Gen. 3:7,12,16; 4:19,23); women are often mistreated and abused, as are some men by women (Gen. 34:7-31; Dt. 22:28-29; Jdg. 19:22-20:7; 2Sa. 13:1-32; Zec. 14:2; 1 Pt. 3:7); men and women are tempted to, and participate in, sexual immorality (Gen. 39:6-12; 2 Sa. 11:2-5; Mt 5:27-28; 1 P. 4:3; 2 Pt 2:14-18) including homosexual sex (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10); people transgress the boundaries of their sex (Dt. 22:5; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Cor. 11:4-5, 13-15).

(b) Insert new clause 3.6: "We deny that sex can be changed by any medical means, whether surgically, through hormonal treatments, or other means. Those "treatments" are wrongly termed "sex-reassignment surgery," "sex-affirming surgery," "sex-change surgery" or any other terms suggesting sex can be changed." and renumber the subsequent clauses.

(c) In clause 6.6. inserting ", regardless of the sex of the perpetrator," after "heinous sins" so that the clause will read:

"The Church should teach that God opposes abuse and violence in marriage and in the family. He particularly warns husbands to be considerate to their wives and treat them with respect (Eph. 5:28-30; 1 Pt. 3:7). Acts of domestic violence and abuse are heinous sins, regardless of the sex of the perpetrator. In providing pastoral care, church leaders should be alert for signs of domestic and family violence, and teaching in churches should address these issues. Domestic violence may be a valid ground for divorce, along with adultery and desertion (WCF 24:6)."

(d) In clause 6.7, deleting "or natal sex" and replacing with "(i.e. natal) sex" So that the clause will read:

"Biological (i.e. natal) sex is the relevant basis on which the church makes decisions about qualifications for marriage, church membership and church office."

The motion was seconded and disapproved.

The motion was approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. Dr J. McClean moved:

That the Assembly:

(4) Instruct the Code Committee to include the declaration in Chapter 5 of *Constitution, Procedure and Practice*.

The motion was seconded and approved.

91. Overture (iv): An overture from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales concerning the use of honorific titles for Moderators was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. K. D. Murray and Mr J. Greig presented the overture.

Questions were asked of the overturists.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. K. D. Murray moved:

That the Assembly:

Sustain the overture.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. K.D. Murray moved:

That the Assembly:

Discontinue the use of the titles "Right Reverend" and "Very Reverend" for its Moderators.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. K.D. Murray moved:

That the Assembly:

Request State Assemblies to review the contents of their state Codes, including any appendices thereto, and remove any recognition of the titles Right Reverend (Rt Rev.) and Very Reverend (V. Rev.) from their Codes insofar as they might refer to the Moderator-General.

The motion was seconded and approved.

92. Overture (vi): An overture from seven members of the Assembly seeking an amendment to Standing Order 23 was laid on the table and received.

The Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson and C. Garratt presented the overture.

Questions were asked of the overturists.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson moved:

That the Assembly:

Sustain the overture.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson moved:

That the Assembly:

Remit the Overture to the Code Committee with a view to enacting, at the next meeting of the General Assembly, any amendment that may be recommended by that Committee.

The motion was seconded and approved.

93. Minutes: The Clerk moved that the Assembly:

Approve the Minutes of sederunts one to seven.

The motion was seconded and approved.

94. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 9.30 a.m. tomorrow Friday, 13 September 2019 whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

ELEVENTH SEDERUNT

95. Assembly Constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Friday, 13 September 2019 at 9.30 a.m. the Assembly met, pursuant to adjournment and was constituted with prayer, the Moderator presiding.

96. Appointment Next Assembly: Pursuant to notice the Clerk of Assembly moved: That the Assembly:

- (1) Resolve to meet on Monday 5 September 2022 at 7.00 p.m. within the Presbyterian Church, corner Park Rd and MacMahon St, Hurstville, or at such other place in Sydney as the Business Committee might determine if it should find a more convenient facility where the Assembly could operate with greater effectiveness, efficiency and comfort.
- (2) Authorise the Business Committee to appoint another time or date of meeting should it become impracticable for the Assembly to discharge its functions at the time or on the date appointed.

The motion was seconded and approved.

97. Thanks to the Rev. D. McDougall: Pursuant to notice the Rev. L.J.F. Hall moved: That the Assembly:

Give thanks to God for the biblical expositions delivered to the Assembly by the Rev. D. McDougall and thank Mr McDougall for his contribution to the Assembly through his expositions of Scripture and also his extensive efforts to optimise the Hurstville church to accommodate the Assembly.

The motion was seconded and approved.

98. Safe Ministry Framework: Debate on the Safe Ministry Framework was resumed (Min. 43).

By leave of the Assembly, the Rev. Dr J. McClean fell from the wording of the proposed apology, and moved in its place:

That the Assembly:

- (9) Adopt the following as the apology of the Assembly to victims of sexual abuse as children in churches and ministries of the Presbyterian Church of Australia:

“With deep sorrow the Presbyterian Church of Australia apologises to all who have been affected by sexual abuse through their involvement in the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Sexual abuse of a child is appalling and wickedly violates Christ’s words, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

It is a breach of trust to those who have taken part in church activities, to their families, and to the wider community.

We regret the hurt caused when our response as a church has denied or minimised the pain that victims have experienced or caused them to experience further pain.

The Presbyterian Church has taken steps to respond to child sexual abuse.

- *Each State Church is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and we encourage all victims of child sexual abuse to make use of this scheme.*
- *The Church commits itself to making a timely and compassionate response to all allegations of child sexual abuse.*
- *The Church has adopted the National Safe Ministry Framework which seeks to be consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.*
- *The Church commits itself to full co-operation with the civil authorities in dealing with accusations of child sexual abuse.*
- *The Church commits itself to processes of education and training in relation to response to child sexual abuse.”*

The motion was seconded.

The Debate was adjourned (Min. 106).

99. Adjournment: Thereafter the Assembly adjourned to meet at 2.00 p.m. whereof public intimation having been given the sederunt was closed with prayer.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

TWELTH SEDERUNT

100. Assembly Constituted: At Sydney and within the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, 43 Park Road, Hurstville, NSW on Friday, 13 September 2019 at 2.00 p.m. the assembly met, pursuant to adjournment and was constituted with prayer, the Moderator presiding.

101. Appeals (i) and (ii): The Assembly sat in private during sederunts 11 and 12 to consider Appeals (i) and (ii). By resolution of the Assembly, the minutes of those proceedings were retained in a record apart.

Appeal (i) from Mrs Rhonda Aubert against a decision of the 2017 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (GAV BB 2017, Min. 25) was dismissed.

Appeal (ii) from Mrs Rhonda Aubert against a decision of the 2017 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria (GAV BB 2017, Min. 26) was sustained.

102. Purchase of church property: Arising out of its consideration of Appeal (ii), the Assembly considered principles that should apply in the disposal of church property.

The Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Without implying that any such behaviour had occurred, remind State Assemblies that church members should not purchase church property at anything other than market value and in an arms-length transaction.

The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

103. Moderator: The Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson assumed the Chair.

104. Dissent and Complaint (i): A Dissent and Complaint from seven members of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales (GANSW) against a decision of the 2019 meeting of that Assembly was laid on the table.

Parties to the complaint were placed at the bar.

Dr. M. Baddeley challenged the competence of the General Assembly to consider this complaint.

At the request of the Moderator, the Procurator addressed the Assembly and advised that the Assembly had jurisdiction in this matter.

The Moderator ruled that the Assembly was competent to consider the complaint.

The Rev. D. Maher and M. Powell appeared on behalf of the complainants.

The Rev Dr J. McClean and J.R. Irvin appeared as respondents for the GANSW.

Questions were asked of the complainants and the respondents.

The Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Allow the parties at the bar to remain in the House during the debate on the dissent and complaint.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Rev. B.M. Meller moved.

That the Assembly:

Sustain the dissent and complaint.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

(1) Instruct the GANSW not to proceed with the implementation of its resolution (recorded in BB 2019 Min. 89 (3)) until the General Assembly of Australia has considered the practical and theological implications of the said resolutions.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

(2) Appoint a committee consisting of the present and former Moderators-General, with the Rev. Dr P.E. Barnes as convener, to examine the practical and theological implications of permitting Welcome to Country or Acknowledgment of Country rituals in activities of the Presbyterian Church.

The motion was seconded and approved

The Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

- (3) Request the committee to liaise with the APWM Committee, together with the Rev. and Mrs R. Manton, in its consideration of the matter remitted to it.

The motion was seconded and approved

The Moderator reported the decision of the Assembly to the complainants and respondents and removed them from the bar.

The Rev. Dr J. McClean made a personal explanation.

Arising from a question raised by the Rev. J.R. Irvin, and at the request of the Moderator, the Procurator addressed the Assembly.

105. Moderator: The Rev. Dr P.E. Barnes resumed the Chair.

106. Safe Ministry Framework: Debate on the Safe Ministry Framework was resumed (Min. 98).

Pursuant to notice the Rev. P.M. Campbell moved:

That the Assembly:

Amend the proposed apology by replacing the word “all” where first appearing with the word “any” so that the apology will read, in relevant part, “the Church offers an apology to any who as children have been sexually abused ...”

The amendment was seconded and disapproved.

The motion was approved without dissenting voice.

For ease of reference, resolutions pertaining to the Safe Ministry Framework are collated here:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Receive the draft National Safe Ministry Framework prepared in response to GAA Commission 2018, Min. 96 in which the Assembly resolved to “request the Clerk to progress, in conjunction with State churches, the production so far as is possible of a uniform set of child protection procedures and practices within those State churches.”
- (2) Thank the following representatives of the child protection units of the Presbyterian Churches of New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria (Messrs Jon Flood, Wayne Knapp, and Mrs Fiona Bligh, respectively), together with the Assembly Officers, for their cooperative endeavour to prepare the National Safe Ministry Framework.
- (3) Adopt the National Safe Ministry Framework as a statement of the principles, policy and procedures of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.
- (4) Request the Clerk, before publishing the National Safe Ministry Framework, to number its paragraphs and dot-points in order to simplify navigation, reference and communication.
- (5) Request the State churches to adopt the National Safe Ministry Framework as a statement of their own principles, policy and procedures, while recognising the need for the State churches to augment or amend the stated procedures to ensure that they remain fully compliant with secular legislation in their respective States.
- (6) Request the State churches, through the leaders of their child protection units, to maintain close liaison with one another and with the Clerk of Assembly in order that maximal uniformity might be maintained in the practices of Presbyterian Churches across Australia, and so that recommended changes to the National Safe Ministry Framework might be presented to the GAA with one voice.
- (7) Request the State churches, through the leaders of their child protection units, to share with one another, and with the Clerk of the Assembly, their experience in using the National Safe Ministry Framework in order to bring recommended changes to the next meeting of the GAA.
- (8) Until the next ordinary meeting of the GAA, empower the Commission of Assembly, if necessary, to consider and effect changes to the National Safe Ministry Framework.
- (9) Adopt the following as the apology of the Assembly to victims of sexual abuse as children in churches and ministries of the Presbyterian Church of Australia:

“With deep sorrow the Presbyterian Church of Australia apologises to all who have been affected by sexual abuse through their involvement in the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Sexual abuse of a child is appalling and wickedly violates Christ’s words, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

It is a breach of trust to those who have taken part in church activities, to their families, and to the wider community.

We regret the hurt caused when our response as a church has denied or minimised the pain that victims have experienced or caused them to experience further pain.

- The Presbyterian Church has taken steps to respond to child sexual abuse.
- Each State Church is participating in the National Redress Scheme, and we encourage all victims of child sexual abuse to make use of this scheme.
- The Church commits itself to making a timely and compassionate response to all allegations of child sexual abuse.
- The Church has adopted the National Safe Ministry Framework which seeks to be consistent with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.
- The Church commits itself to full co-operation with the civil authorities in dealing with accusations of child sexual abuse.
- The Church commits itself to processes of education and training in relation to response to child sexual abuse.”

107. Reference (i): A reference from the Presbytery of Moreton Bay concerning the condition and state of the reprobate in hell was laid on the table and received.

Mr P.G. Cotton and the Rev. J.C. Nicol stated the reference.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. C. Garrett moved:

That the Assembly:

Sustain the Reference.

The motion was seconded and approved.

The Rev. G.J. Ware moved:

That the Assembly:

Advise the Presbytery of Morton Bay that the Westminster Confession of Faith, read in the light of the declaratory statement, is clear and that the Assembly does not wish to provide any additional advice or express any additional opinion on this matter.

The motion was seconded and disapproved.

Pursuant to notice, the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Refer the question contained in the Reference to the College Committee and request that it report with recommendations to the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly.

The motion was seconded and approved.

108. Reference (ii): A reference from the General Assembly of NSW seeking guidance concerning deacons was laid on the table and received.

Mr M. Smith stated the reference.

Questions were asked of Mr Smith.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. J.R. Irvin moved:

That the Assembly:

Sustain the Reference.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. J. Irvin moved:

That the Assembly:

Confirm the accepted practice that deacons, along with ministers and elders, hold office in accordance with the doctrine of the Church, and that admission to that office, after proper election, is by means of ordination which ordination is for life unless voided by resignation or deposition.

The motion was seconded.

As a procedural motion, Mr J. Greig moved:

That the Assembly:

(1) Refer the following motion to the Code Committee:

Confirm the accepted practice that deacons, along with ministers and elders, hold office in accordance with the doctrine of the Church, and that admission to that office, after proper

election, is by means of ordination which ordination is for life unless voided by resignation or deposition.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. J.R. Irvin moved:

That the Assembly:

Confirm that, for the office of deacon; induction, appointment, setting apart or commissioning to a particular position may be for a limited term.

The motion was seconded and approved.

Pursuant to notice the Rev. J.R. Irvin moved:

That the Assembly:

Advise the NSW Assembly of the above resolutions.

The motion was seconded and approved.

For ease of reference, resolutions pertaining to Reference (ii) anent deacons are collated here:

That the Assembly:

- (1) Refer the following motion to the Code Committee:
Confirm the accepted practice that deacons, along with ministers and elders, hold office in accordance with the doctrine of the Church, and that admission to that office, after proper election, is by means of ordination which ordination is for life unless voided by resignation or deposition.
- (2) Confirm that, for the office of deacon; induction, appointment, setting apart or commissioning to a particular position may be for a limited term.
- (3) Advise the NSW Assembly of the above resolutions.

109. Commission to approve changes to regulations: Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

In view of the potential for Article 3.2(e) to give rise to divergent opinions about the competence of the Commission of Assembly to enact regulations even if specifically authorised to do so by the Assembly; and in recognition of the potential established in Standing Order 102 for the Assembly to appoint commissions for particular purposes; and to ensure that decisions involving the amendment or enactment of regulations which have been assigned to the Commission of Assembly for determination do not fail for want of power, appoint a special commission consisting of the members of the Commission of Assembly with the Moderator as Chairman and the Clerk as Secretary with responsibility to consider and determine relevant matters assigned to the Commission of Assembly, particularly those contained in Minutes 61(6) and 62(4).

The motion was seconded and approved.

110. Bible Society – sale of *Passion Translation* disapproved by GAA: Pursuant to notice the Rev. C Garrett moved:

That the Assembly:

Write to the Bible Society of Australia (BSA) expressing its deep sadness that the BSA through Koorong is making available to men, women and children a counterfeit Scripture, viz. the so called 'Passion Translation', and call on the BSA to remove this distortion of God's Holy Word from its shelves for the good of the Church.

The motion was seconded and approved.

111. Sacraments: who may administer? Pursuant to notice Mr J Greig moved:
That the Assembly:

- (1) Appoint a committee to investigate whether a conflict exists between the Westminster Confession of Faith, our current practice, and biblical doctrine on the matter of who may celebrate the sacraments compared to who may preach.
- (2) Request the committee to report to the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly, either by a report or if the committee deems fit with an overture to address this issue.
- (3) Appoint the following persons to the committee: the Rev. William Morrow, Vaughan Smith, Kamal Weerakoon (ministers), Messrs Mark Baddeley, Murray Smith, and John Greig (elders) with power to co-opt.

The motion was seconded.

As a motion of procedure, the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Refer the motion to the Code Committee for consideration in consultation with the College Committee, and report to the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly.

The motion was seconded and approved.

112. Panel of Assessors: Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

In terms of Article 13 of the Articles of Agreement appoint the following persons to the panel of assessors:

Ministers: The Rev. Dr J.P. Wilson, J.R. Irvin, D.J. Hassan, R. Vandervelden, S.M. Bonnington, C. Garrett, P. Strong, G. Ware; and

Elders: Messrs M. Baddeley, C.M. Langford, C. Morrow, I. Putt, G.K. Roberts, W. MacRae.

The motion was seconded and approved.

113. Minutes Commission: Pursuant to notice the Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly:

Appoint the Moderator, Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Business Convener, the Rev. K.D. Murray, J.R. Irvin, J.P. Wilson, P.W. Phillips, S.M. Bonnington, G.J. Ware and Mr G. Roberts a Commission with the Clerk of Assembly as Chairman to examine, correct and confirm the minutes of the Assembly.

The motion was seconded and approved.

114. Business Committee: Debate on the report of the Business Committee was resumed (Min. 7).

The deliverance as a whole was approved as follows:

That the Assembly:

- (1) (a) Determine the hours of meeting to be:

Morning Sederunt	9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.
Lunch Interval	1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.
Afternoon Sederunt	2.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.
Tea Interval	5.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.
Evening Sederunt	7.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.
- (b) Determine that morning and afternoon tea breaks may be taken for up to 30 minutes, the taking of each recess to be at the discretion of the Moderator.
- (2) Declare speeches to be limited as follows:

Convener of Committee speaking to report	15 mins.
All other speakers	5 mins.
Overturists and Petitioners (per overture or petition)	15 mins.
Appellants, Complainants, and Respondents - per party	15 mins.
- (3) Declare that the total time allowed for questions during the presentation of each report, overture, petition, appeal, or complaint be limited to 30 mins., such time to be subject to extension by resolution of the house.
- (4) Appoint the Ballot Committee as follows: Mr R. Holvast (Convener), the Rev. D. McDougall, M. Viney, and Mr W. Thompson with power to co-opt.
- (5) Appoint the members of the Ballot Committee as Tellers of the Assembly.
- (6) Declare that notices of motion must be submitted in duplicate on the form provided or by email.
- (7) Declare that video and/or audio recording of Assembly business (except for the opening service and the communion service) shall not be permitted for the purposes of reproduction or broadcasting (including via social media) without the express permission of the Assembly.
- (8) Approve the Order of Business as follows for Tuesday 10th September, 2019:

Tuesday 10th September, 2019

SECOND SEDERUNT

9.30 a.m.
The Lord's Supper

THIRD SEDERUNT

2.00 p.m. Constitute
2.05 p.m. (OD) – Presbyterian Women's

11.00 a.m.	Assn
Report of Retiring Moderator	2.15 p.m. (OD) – Biblical Exposition
Returns to Remits	3.15 p.m. (OD) – Book Launch
Petitions (i) & (ii) – reception?	Church and Nation
Defence Force Chaplaincy	5.15 p.m. (OD) – Freedom for Faith
Notices of Motion	Unfinished Business
	Notices of Motion

FOURTH SEDERUNT

7.00 p.m. Constitute
 Australian Presbyterian World Mission
 PresAID
 Relations With Other Churches
 Unfinished Business
 Notices of Motion

(9) Approve generally the Order of Business as follows:

Wednesday 11th September, 2019

FIFTH SEDERUNT

9.30 a.m. – Constitute
 9.35 a.m. (OD) – Close of Nominations for
 the Ballot
 Trustees
 Finance
 Code
 Safe Ministry Framework
 Christian Education
 Church Planting Taskforce
 Mission to Australia
 Unfinished Business
 Notices of Motion

SIXTH SEDERUNT

2.00 p.m. – Constitute
 2.10 p.m. (OD) – Biblical Exposition
 2.30 p.m. (OD) – Petition (iii)
 Unfinished Business
 Notices of Motion

SEVENTH SEDERUNT

7.00 p.m. – Constitute
 Reception of Ministers
 National Journal
 Unfinished Business
 Notices of Motion

Thursday 12th September, 2019

EIGHTH SEDERUNT

9.30 a.m. – Constitute
 PIM
 College
 College (Eschatology)
 Unfinished Business
 Notices of Motion

NINTH SEDERUNT

2.00 p.m. – Constitute
 2.10 p.m. (OD) – Biblical Exposition
 Public Worship and Aids to Devotion
 PWAD/Church and Nation (Marriage)
 Unfinished Business
 Notices of Motion

TENTH SEDERUNT

7.00 p.m. – Constitute
 Overture (i)
 Overture (ii)
 Unfinished Business
 Notices of Motion

Friday 13th September, 2019
ELEVENTH SEDERUNT (and following)

9.30 a.m. – Constitute
Ballot Result
9.45 a.m. (OD) – Appeals (i) & (ii)
Reference (i)
11.30 a.m. (OD) – Petition (i)
12.00 p.m. (OD) – Petition (ii)
College (Paedocommunion)
Unfinished Business
Close

- (10) Declare that the Assembly should not receive, as a communication, a document which could be submitted in another form but may receive as a communication,
(a) the resignation of an Assembly Officer;
(b) any other communication which has been approved by the Business Committee.
- (11) Appoint the Moderator-General or his representative as the Assembly's representative to the Assemblies of overseas churches without any commitment to costs.
- (12) Suspend sufficient of the Standing Orders as may be necessary to enable the Assembly to receive and deal with the reports of Special Committees at this Assembly.

115. Thanks: The Rev. B.M. Meller moved:

That the Assembly record its thanks to the following persons

The Rev. Dr Peter Barnes (Moderator-General); Peter Barber, Graham Barnes, Stuart Bonnington, Campbell Markham, Andrew Vines and Gary Ware (Moderator's Chaplains); Lesleigh Hall (Deputy Clerk); Peter Barson (Business Convener); Mr Simon Fraser (Law Agent); Mr Gregory Burton (Procurator), the Rev. M. Wharton (webmaster), Dr Rod Yager (audio-visual system), Mr Mick Quirk (sound system), Miss Sophie Hu (assistance to the Clerks); Elders Tom Cunneen, Steven Harris, Wayne Richards, John Rolland and John van Breda, (assistance with the Lord's Supper); Mr Andrew Mills, Mrs Alison Mills, Mrs Margaret Stolfa, Eva Weng, Tanya Hannah, Mr Chi Un, Mr Paul Miller, Mrs Lorraine Meller, Mr & Mrs Steve and Naomi Lilley, Mrs Yanni Hu, Mr Ian Lau, Mrs Sunny Zhou, Dr Ralph Patrick, Mr Jason Solanki, Mrs Julie Davies, Miss Ruby Hu, Mr David and Mrs Christine Kerr, Mr Ashish Solanki, Mrs Helena Zhang, Mrs Jenny Crawford, Miss Jenny Lee (provision of refreshments and all other necessary assistance in the operation of the Assembly throughout each day); Mrs Christine Kerr and Miss Lagilagi Taisia (floral arrangements), Ms Elise Angel (assistance with travel and accommodation), the Rev. David McDougall (generosity of access to, and thoughtful preparation of the facilities of the Hurstville congregation); Mr Ken Martin (organ), Mrs Maisi Martinus, Mrs Julie Murray and Miss Alina Tee (piano); and the elders, managers and members of the Hurstville congregation.

116. Moderator's Closing Address: The business of the Assembly being completed, the Moderator addressed the House.

117. Close: After prayer, the Assembly joined in singing Psalm 122 verses 6 to 9. The Moderator then intimated in pursuance of the General Assembly's appointment that the next session of the General Assembly will be held at 7.00 p.m. on Monday, 5 September 2022, in the Hurstville Presbyterian Church, corner Park Road and MacMahon Street, Hurstville or at such other date, time and place as may be decided (Min. 95).

Thereafter the Moderator in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and head of the Church, declared this session of the General Assembly closed and pronounced the benediction.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

The minutes of the first to the twelfth sederunts, having been carefully corrected are confirmed as authorised in terms of Min. 112 thereof.

PETER E. BARNES, Moderator.
BRUCE M. MELLER, Clerk.
LESLEIGH J. F. HALL, Deputy Clerk.

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