

# PRESBYTERY OF PORT PHILLIP EAST

Minutes of Presbytery Meeting  
Wednesday November 23, 2022  
7.00 pm – 10.00 pm  
St Columba's Uniting Church, Noble Park



There were 93 attendees including 73 members and 20 visitors with 19 apologies.

## Part One in the Hall

### 1. Gathering

While the Presbytery members and visitors were gathering, they were asked to write their thoughts, emotions and prayers they bring to the meeting on whiteboards:

What do you bring, how do you feel

- as we gather for the first time since Covid began?
- to reconnect and release Duncan to go to eLM,
- as four others will resign or retire from roles and positions in the Presbytery,
- as we gather to talk about climate justice, indigenous people and our Church, Cornish College, and solar panels?

### 2. Welcome and acknowledgment of country

The Chairperson, Tom Spurling, welcomed Presbytery members and visitors, including Mark Zirnsak, Sue Clarkson and Nigel Hanscamp from eLM, and those who were attending via Zoom.

The Presbytery sang the first two verses of the song, "Gather Us In".

### 3. Acknowledgement of Country

Tom shared an acknowledgement of country written by Amelia Koh Butler. The Presbytery acknowledged that Aboriginal Elders hold knowledge (Law) that allows communities to care for places. With the Law, these sites can be understood and seen as sacred. Learning Law helps us all to regard the world around us as holy ground and honour God's purposes.

As we look upon the hills and valleys,  
we see the love poured out upon this land  
by those who have cared for this place  
since time beyond measure.

We honour those who have gone before  
and those who are yet to come.

May we be mindful of the calling  
God places on humanity to care for  
creation.

May we take the lead from the  
Wurundjeri and Bunurong peoples,  
whose stories are entwined with the  
stewarding of this place.

May we learn from them and walk with  
them.

### 4. Prayer

Anneke Oppewal, Presbytery Minister Pastoral, led a call to worship, "We Come as we are" (by Craig Mitchell), and led the Presbytery in prayers of adoration and confession.

## **5. Approval of Consent Agenda**

*It was resolved by consensus to approve the consent agenda which included*

*1) receiving Standing Committee Report*

*2) Receiving proposed 2023 Budget*

*3) Receiving Nominations Taskgroup Report*

*4) Receiving apologies*

*5) Approving minutes of August 20, 2022 meeting*

*6) Appointing returning officers: Neil Peters, Allan Easton, Sylvia Akaoula Tongotongo and Gary Richter.*

## **6. Climate Justice: Listening to First Peoples' Wisdom**

Andrea Mayes, convenor of the Presbytery Climate Justice Network, conducted the session.

Mark Zirnsak, Senior Social Justice Advocate (eLM) with VicTas Synod, introduced the resolutions made at the 2022 meeting of Uniting Church in Australia Assembly, including the challenge for all parts of the Uniting Church to be carbon neutral by 2040.

The Presbytery heard inspiring stories of environmental action from Chaplain Claire Dawe and Alex Parrington from Cornish College on rings of sustainability and the Five Leaf Eco Awards, and Ian Menzies from Hampton Uniting Church.

The Presbytery were asked to form small groups for discussion based on the questions below:

- What interested you or challenged you in the presentations?
- What practical actions would you or your congregation like to take to respond to climate change?
- What have you learnt about listening to first people's wisdom around climate justice?
- How might you take this further in your own context?
- How do you feel about moving towards net zero emissions by 2040?
- What could the Presbytery do to help our people and congregations move towards net zero emissions?

Andrea concluded the session by thanking the attendees for their participation and acknowledging Ian, Alex and Clare for their work on climate justice action.

## **7. Election of Presbytery office bearers**

Tom thanked Julie Ross, convenor of the Nominating committee for their work and introduced the process for a written ballot for members of Standing Committee and the Chair of the Finance Committee. It was noted that some positions were for one year, others for two years, to provide for continuity. There were three nominations for the two general places on the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee was able to co-opt two members. Members took part in a written ballot.

## **8. Approval of 2023 Budget**

Jeff Gardner, Presbytery Treasurer, presented the 2023 budget which includes significant funding for ministry and mission in the Casey Cardinia region. Congregations were invited to contribute to this project.

*The Presbytery approved the budget for 2023 by consensus.*

## **Part two in the Church**

### **1. Call to worship continued**

Anneke led Presbytery in the second half of a call to worship.

The Presbytery sang the third and fourth verses of 'Gather Us In'.

### **2. Bible Readings**

Kelly Skilton read from Isaiah 2:1-5, while Toko Ongoua read from Matthew 24:36-44 in Cook Island Maori.

### **3. Sermon**

Presbytery Minister: Team Leader Duncan Macleod preached on the theme of staying awake and being ready, referring back to the Presbytery's journey through COVID-related conditions, readiness to engage with climate change, the many challenges associated with being a people of the gospel of Jesus, and being prepared for the long haul. The sermon began with photographs of the Franciscan Friary in Ennis, Ireland, and the Bombed Out Church (St Luke's) in Liverpool, UK, and a 2.8 billion-year-old rock at the centre of a labyrinth in Canberra.

### **4. Acknowledgements of Presbytery Members**

Tom announced the election results as follows:

- Tom Spurling as Presbytery Chair (1 year),
- David Higham as Presbytery Deputy Chair (2 years),
- Jeff Gardner as Presbytery Treasurer (5 years),
- Ennis Macleod (2 years) as Mission Leadership Development Committee Chair,
- James Douglas as Pastoral Relations Committee Chair (1 year),
- Gavin Faichney as Property Committee Chair (1 year),
- Sam Joo (2 years) and Joy Blamires (2 years) as elected members of Standing Committee, and
- Chris Begg as Chair of Finance Committee (1 year).

The Presbytery noted that the Standing Committee would be able to co-opt two more people.

Fiona Winn led the Presbytery in prayer for those people who had been elected.

The Presbytery acknowledged people concluding in their committee roles.

Gavin Faichney spoke about Elizabeth Adam's encouragement of the Money for Mission program over the last three years as part of the Property Committee.

Jeff Gardner spoke about the contribution Pam Campbell had made to the Finance Committee over five years, bringing the perspective of congregations to the committee's work.

Craig Mitchell spoke about the leadership provided by Kelly Skilton in establishing the Mission & Leadership Development Committee.

Tom Spurling talked about the contributions of Fiona Winn to the work of the Standing Committee since May 2019, particularly during her time as Acting Deputy Chair.

Fiona Winn, on behalf of the Presbytery, acknowledged the ministry of Charles Sundaresan Bakhtar and Julie Ross who would be retiring in the coming month.

The Presbytery sang “In God’s love”, by Phil Newton.

#### **5. Release of Ties for Duncan Macleod**

Tom Spurling, Anneke Oppewal and Fiona Winn spoke about contributions Duncan’s had made as Presbytery Minister, and acknowledged the sadness felt by members of the Presbytery as Duncan prepared to move to the role of Executive Officer with eLM, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, in February 2023.

The Presbytery released Duncan from his responsibilities as of December 21. Duncan, in turn, released the Presbytery from loyalty to him as a member of the Presbytery Minister team.

Duncan reminded the Presbytery that the symbols presented at the induction of the team in June 2019 still belonged to the Presbytery. He would be handing back the master key to the Noble Park building when he finished in December, a symbol of his broad access to the life and work of the Presbytery.

Fiona Winn, on behalf of the Presbytery, presented Duncan with a liturgical stole with an indigenous design.

Anne Kim, Presbytery Secretary, led the Presbytery in a prayer of separation.

Members of the eLM staff (Sue Clarkson, Nigel Hanscamp, Mark Zirnsak, Dev Anandarajan, Sylvia ‘Akau’ola Tongotongo, Craig Mitchell, Kelly Skilton) were there to receive Duncan into his new role. Sue Clarkson and Nigel Hanscamp spoke on behalf of the Synod.

#### **6. A Few Minutes of Appreciation**

Helen Jackson from Sandringham, Lusi Varea from Melbourne Fijian Uniting Church, and Ineke Gyles from Endeavour Hills, brought words of appreciation for Duncan’s work in the Presbytery.

#### **7. Retrospective Film**

Presbytery Minister: Church Development Craig Mitchell presented a video with highlights from Duncan’s four years of work in the Presbytery.

#### **8. Final Song**

The Presbytery sang the hymn, “God who sets us on a journey”, by Joy Dine.

#### **9. Irish Blessing**

Tom led the Presbytery members in the Irish blessing and the meeting was concluded at 10:00 pm.

## Minutes of Appreciation

### Gavin Faichney re Elizabeth Adam

Elizabeth Adam, a member of the Mt Waverley Uniting Church, resigned from the Port Phillip East Presbytery Property Committee on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2022 after three years of valuable and diligent service. During the last three years Elizabeth has coordinated the Presbytery's involvement with the Synod Money for Mission Fund, assisting and overseeing the decisions of Port Phillip East congregations. She drew on her knowledge and experience to advise congregations which had property in excess of their missional need, and wished to invest the income from that property in the Money for Mission Fund, to assist in the wider work of the VicTas Synod.

In accepting Elizabeth's decision to resign the Property Committee unanimously by consensus resolved:

*“. . . to give thanks to God for the time that Elizabeth Adam has served as a member of this Committee and to wish her well for the future.”*

Thank You Elizabeth.

### Jeff Gardner re Pam Campbell

Pam Campbell, a member of the Heatherton-Dingley Uniting Church, resigned from the Port Phillip East Presbytery Finance and Risk Committee on October 28<sup>th</sup> 2022 after five years of valuable and diligent service. Pam's knowledge and experience and her focus on the impact of Presbytery's financial decisions on congregations were significant, valued and will be missed.

In accepting Pam's decision to resign, the Finance Committee would like to give thanks to God for the time that Pam Campbell has served as a member of this Committee and to wish her well for the future.

Thank you, Pam.

### Craig Mitchell re Kelly Skilton

Kelly, you have been a fantastic chair of the committee setting it up. You not only brought all those things, but also brought a sense of faith and passion to that. You actually believe God is doing something in our lives and world. You brought some vulnerability as we chaired as a team together. Kelly and I have been working together for the last few years and it was a great learning experience for both of us. We are delighted that she is going to work at eLM. I hope that churches think about discipleship and mission into the digital world particularly for young generations and also for broader than that. It is a fantastic calling and it would suit you well. We wish you are well and thank you.

### Helen Jackson re Duncan Macleod

The people of Sandringham Uniting Church say farewell to Duncan with these words:

Dedicated to the task  
Understood our needs  
Never let us despair

Consulted and listened  
Always helped us see the road ahead  
Now it's time to say goodbye

With our thanks and gratitude  
Best wishes for the years to come  
Every blessing Duncan

### **Lusi Varea re Duncan Macleod**

The Rev Duncan and Ennis Macleod, and friends.

On behalf of the Melbourne Fijian Uniting Church, I would like to express our deep gratitude to you for the leadership, advice and support, you gave us over the period you spent with us at Chadstone. We are honoured and privileged, to have had the experience of working under your leadership, and will certainly feel a vacuum at your departure. Your advice and guidance have provided us with a sense of direction, during this time of uncertainty in our future. It has been invaluable, and we now feel more confident about taking the next step in our journey.

I want to also take this opportunity to offer you our most heartfelt congratulations on your new appointment. I am sure you will bring to it the same dedication, wisdom and inclusiveness, you have shown in the ministry you are leaving. As you leave us to take up your new appointment, I would like to bid you and your family, a fond farewell, and to give you our best wishes for a rewarding and satisfying future. May God Almighty bless and guide you in your future endeavours!

### **Ineke Gyles re Duncan Macleod**

Yesterday Tom Spurling rang me and asked me if I would do a word of appreciation for you Duncan. I thought gee not much notice and they must be at the bottom of the barrel to ask me. I hesitated at first because I am still annoyed that you are leaving us. But I said yes. Better start thinking about what I am going to say. Having had a bad couple of weeks and very sad days, when I got home late last night, I thought I would turn on iView and watch the Paul Hogan roast. I smiled and thought what a wonderful way to do a word of appreciation.

A mutual friend of ours Duncan, rang me a few times to tell me how fortunate we were to have you come as team leader for our presbytery. He said you didn't know many people in Vic and would I consider asking you up for a meal, I thought what a great suggestion I could ask Tony Duncan and Tony Floyd important for him to meet the people who are the power brokers in the presbytery. That's when I first met you in our home.

Duncan we thank you for teaching us that we cannot live without Zoom and you helped us to connect. We thank you Duncan for your help in encouraging us to stream our worship services and zoom our social gatherings only to find out that you hoped it would be so successful you could sell all the churches and their properties.

We thank you for giving us a sense of how to dress properly, that you don't have to have your jeans sit at your waist they could go much lower and that it is actually trendy to always have your shirt hanging out.

We thank you Duncan for your gift in music – the Synod who pays your stipend were so afraid we would turn you into a guitar-playing pop star instead of what you were appointed to do. They put

you behind a huge flower arrangement at the opening of the synod service in Wesley church Melbourne so that we could not see you. Another of Synod's wasted ideas, the beautiful guitar music was actually coming from Mike You.

And I will still need your help as I don't know after you are gone what I am going to read on Thursday nights – think about that one.

Just a bit of fun

Duncan, I feel privileged to have been asked to do a word of thanks to you.

You came to our Presbytery at a crucial time.

You have dedicated yourself to the task of team leader, colleague, and friend. You have given us an example of how to work in a team, and we give thanks for Craig and Anneke.

Your presence, insight and wisdom has added to the task called for in many of our congregations who have so appreciated your gift and ability to listen carefully, and you have challenged, encouraged, and affirmed the gifts they themselves have. Especially in Casey Cardinia.

While listening to Paul Hogan's roast last night there were a group of ads that said that many of channel sevens soaps such as Home and Away have defined us all as Australians. I thought rubbish, Channel Ten's Bold and the Beautiful did that for me. Just joking.

We also give thanks for Ennis in the ways she has supported you and us. Thank you.

Duncan, we give thanks to God for all and who you are and have been to Port Phillip presbytery as you have defined for us what it means to follow Christ and serve God. Go in peace to serve further in your new position and know we love you and that you will always be upheld in prayer. Thanks be to God.