PRESBYTERY OF PORT PHILLIP EAST

Minutes of Presbytery Meeting 16 March, 2024

9.30 am – 12.35 pm

St Columba’s Uniting Church, Noble Park

There were 38 attendees including members and visitors with 28 apologies.

# Part One in the Church Worship space

1. **Welcome & Acknowledgement of Country**

The Chairperson, David Higham, welcomed Presbytery members and visitors.

David acknowledged Country using the following words:

*We acknowledge the sovereign First Peoples of these unceded lands and waters where we meet, the Boon Wurrung-Bunurong Peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their elders past and present and to all descendants of this Nation who have cared for this place since creation. We pray for the future of their communities. We also honour all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples here today.*

*May we walk gently on this land and work for the reconciliation of all people.*

# Worship

* 1. **Prayer**

Anneke Oppewal, Presbytery Minister Pastoral, led us in a prayer.

# Music

Jay led us praise the Lord by singing ‘We are marching’ accompanied by Riak Kiir playing the drum. The members danced and marched around the worship space in time with the beats of the drums.

# Bible Reading

Paulo read the scriptures of Book of John chapter 12 verses from 20-33 in Arabic. The English version was shown on screen.

# Preaching – Wanting to See Jesus

Jay reflected that the message from the bible reading was what God’s new covenant looked like and what the deliverer of that covenant, Jesus, must go through to make this new and everlasting covenant a reality. The reading was placed at the beginning of John’s telling of Jesus’ final discourse for the world and for his disciples filled with theological content in “see,” “hour,” “glorify,” and the reference to being “lifted up”

Jay discussed the message that few have ears to hear and many didn’t recognise that Christ was the unmediated voice of God. As the result of his crucifixion people would see that he and God were always one. Jesus held out hope that these events would reveal him to those who could not previously recognize him as the only Son of God. Jay concluded the sermon saying that the end of the story had helped the who heard Jesus, to see what they had been looking at all along. John wrote so that it would be the same for us: “These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God,” he says, “and that believing, you may have life in his name”.

# Approval of Consent Agenda

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

* 1. *approving minutes of November 23, 2023 meeting*
  2. *receiving apologies*
  3. *receiving Annual Report 2023*
  4. *receiving responses to the Faithful Futures project*
  5. *receiving Communications Strategy*

# Introductions & Thanks

Riak Kiir (Pakenham, new member of Standing Committee), Lisa Stewart (Minister of SMPUC) and Ailsa Drent (member of Hampton UC) were welcomed as new members of the presbytery.

David acknowledged that a number of our presbytery members had been recognised for their achievements as graduates of Pilgrim Theological College including Duncan Turuva (Minister of Mt Waverley), Niki Oostwoud (Pastor of Hampton Park), Andreana Reale (who would be ordained on 17 March) and Joy Han (recognised as a Vice Chancellor Scholar).

# Plenary Feedback & Celebration on Annual Report for 2023

David thanked all who contributed to writing and producing the Presbytery Annual Report for 2023 including last year’s committee chairs and members of Standing Committee.

The SC members were asked to share their thoughts, opinions and feedback about the report. Presbytery members were asked to discuss the report in small groups.

Feedback from the group talks included:

* Value of in-person meeting and what support would presbytery provide for small and large congregations for their future moves.
* Projects that are working for people such as new communities
* Best practice: encouraging congregations and ministry agents to seek and learn from best practice
* Discipleship how to encourage people to make commitment in faith
* Encouraging commitment
* Providing information on Money for Mission program – need to hear what had happened with M4M program and feedback
* Acknowledging work of lay people, members were encouraged to take booklets and information resources about lay education and lay leadership from eLM (equipping Leadership for Mission).
* Equipping resources for people in the Presbytery
* Cultural diversity exploring more about it and its impact on the presbytery more widely, space for walking with First people
* Appreciation of the work of Presbytery last year
* Outcomes from Act2, Assembly and Synod Faithful Futures, appreciation of having different cultural groups in the presbytery and having Korean Church of Melbourne being a largest church in UCA, having representatives of many other cultural group and

should be involved with them how to work together and expand our mission, future for smaller congregations, actively inviting people for lay leadership workshop and education program.

* leadership education, encourage to put lay preachers in the leadership placement.

# Proposals

Name change for Mission Leadership Development Committee (MLDC) MLDC proposed the name change for *ML****D****C (Development to* ***Discipleship****).*

Ennis explained about the background of the name change for MLDC (Development to

Discipleship) that replacing the word ‘development’ to ‘discipleship’ would increase people’s faith and understanding of people in congregations of need to be involved in mission and of the need for spiritual growth and nourishment. The committee would be focused on discipleship providing resources and opportunities for churches to be able to be equipped. The other rational was that there was not enough acknowledgement for young people for both in and outside of congregations but we needed to foster young people to give them opportunities to grow up in leadership position.

*The Presbytery resolved to accept the name change of Mission Leadership Development Committee to Mission Leadership* ***Discipleship*** *Committee.*

* 1. Extension of current Presbytery Minister Placement

Jay informed that the Presbytery Standing Committee formally agreed to extend the ***Presbytery Minister – Pastoral*** placement until the end of the year to allow the Standing Committee to conduct a review at a good presence of time. This process would anticipate that the final decision to be made at the Presbytery in Council meeting in August.

*The Presbytery agreed to accept the decision of Standing Committee.*

# Part two in the Hall

1. **Presbytery Vision & Strategy**
2. Feedback on Faithful Futures Project

David explained about the background of Faithful Future project that a small team of committee chairs and the presbytery ministers had a meeting to work together and consider what our responses should be to the 13 items in the document. The response was then approved by the Standing Committee.

The presbytery members were asked to reflect on the responses to each item and it was subsequently agreed to submit the Presbytery’s response to the Moderator.

1. Updates about the Casey Cardinia Regional Mission Project

Robin delivered an update on the progress of the project on behalf of Ji Zhang, the interim project team leader. The Casey Cardinia project was an innovative project with a different approach to the current ongoing programs or projects breaking ground in many ways.

Robin talked to the report. The project was the embedded presbytery commitment to build in church for the future which was a presbytery led project to build with original 6 congregations in one network, one regional ministry team led by one regional council.

The circular diagram on the first page in the report explained the stages of the project.

Last year, the presbytery had worked hard clarifying vision, mission and value and governance. At present, we were finalising strategy and budget and focusing on management and implementation aspect. The presbytery was excited to see the implementation stage.

Some highlights of the work were:

* + sharing supply ministers in the region preaching and leading worship in all the different congregations,
  + establishing regional ministry team with ministers, pastors and retired ministers
  + focusing on laity- equipping and encouraging lay people to offer their gifts and skills across the region.

The current stage of in 2024 we were moving from **Management** to **Implementation**, such as working on an outreach program (collecting cans to raise fund), establishing one regional social media platform. These kind of important possible practical projects in the implementation phase would invite to collaborate across the entire region.

Robin thanked Ji for his leadership, all the different groups including the Casey Cardinia Steering Committee, Reference Committee and Standing Committee for their work and assistance. Robin said the project would be updated time to time.

***Questions raised were:***

**Q**. How would we work on transition from supply to placements?

**A**. Once the budget was finalised a number of key placements would potentially be available to move into Regional positions, these included: Interim Team Leader, Pastor positions Packenham and Hampton Park

Concerns raised what would be happening to ‘me’ regarding having own placement to non-existence placement.

**Q**. Village vicar model?

**A**. As the traditional model of having one minister with one congregation was getting more difficult to afford, the idea was to set up regional ministry team that will cover all congregation utilizing different skills and capacities of different ministry agents by sharing those skills across the region. Ministers would be building relationship with congregations.

**Comment**. This model could be shared more widely and the model itself was already being adopted in the UCA.

**Comment**. The money pool had been already used for supporting regional ministry team in Casey Cardinia and other works in the Presbytery.

Presbytery members were asked to consider the questions below for a table discussion:

* What are your thoughts and dreams on what the Church will look like in the near future?
* What do you think your congregation will be like?
* What are your dreams for your congregation over the next 5 years?
* What needs to happen now to be ready to hand over to the next generation?
* Anything else you want to say…..

*The responses from the tables were collected and the presbytery ministry team would summarise them for the SC to reflect on them.*

# Communications Strategy

Jay talked about the communications strategy emphasising that the Presbytery in Council itself would be the one of our biggest communication tools.

She proposed action steps for each of the presbytery communication channels: Newsbeat, Social Media, Weekly Update emails, UCAPPEP Website and Presbytery in Council meetings.

The members were encouraged to feed the presbytery by sharing their thoughts and ideas and learning about what was happening in the presbytery.

Jay also shared that the presbytery would encourage each committee to spend its final 10 minutes of their meetings to consider if there would be anything that could be communicated to the wider presbytery if appropriate, consider

Jay informed that the presbytery had been looking for a new communications officer since Sarah Manase left the position. The Position Description had been uploaded on the presbytery website.

# Walking with First Peoples - Indigenous Land

Jay shared her experience of hearing the conversation between Mark Kikett (Chair of Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress UAICC) and Sharon Hollis (President, UCA) at the Pilgrim Theological College Orientation 2024 Welcome Ceremony. She spoke about how Mark’s comment, ‘how we know about the story of our land we stand on’ had inspired Jay and David who attended at the event, to learn the story of the land we were meeting on.

Presbytery members watched the video ***‘Aboriginal Culture and Spirituality ‘***, produced by Craig Mitchell as part of his production task which he had started at the beginning of last year, a set of six videos showing conversations with Garry Deverell (Lecturer of University of Divinity), which was about the history of the land on which we stood. Jay informed the presbytery to inform the release of other series of videos and the time and space to share.

John Tansey recommended the book ‘The Years of Terror: Kulin and Colonists at Port Phillip, 1835-1851 (Marguerita Stephens, with Fay Sterwart-Muir)’ which explored the history of cross- cultural interaction between the Indigenous Kulin peoples and the invading colonists at Port Phillip from 1835 to 1851 particularly Wurundjeri and Bunurong People we are on.

# Closing Reflection

David informed everyone that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 19 June (on Zoom). He thanked the catering team at Noble Park congregation, Riak Kiir for playing drums, Paulo Kwajakwan for reading, Esta Waqabaca-Meneilly for leading dancing in worship space, and all the Presbytery Ministers for helping with worship and the business of the day. He then reflected on the meeting.

# Close with Blessing

The meeting was closed with benediction at 12.20pm.