**2. Report from General Secretary including Matters Considered by Synod Standing Committee**

In my final report to Synod, I will use the Synod’s strategic framework being the Northern Synod Directions. The Standing Committee met on 23 September and 25 November 2017 and 28 April and

25 July 2018. Standing Committee members are:

Thresi Mauboy, David Mirrwana, Djawanydjawany Gondarra, , Frits Momuat, Helen Paine, Jemma Whittaker, Felicity Amery, Jenny Inmulugulu, Louise Macdonald, Wendy Beresford-Manning, Harry Garrawurra, Benjamin Quilliam, Barry Hansen, Peter Jones.

1. **ENACTING THE SYNOD/PRESBYTERIES PARTNERSHIP**

***Safe Church Officer:*** The goods news,Rev Helen Paine almost finished on our ***Safe Church*** manual. A quick look at the index of the manual shows that it is an overarching and comprehensive approach to a having all our UCA activities and places as “safe places” for everyone.

***Marriage Conversation:*** The Assembly meeting in July has approved a new statement on marriage that keeps the traditional view (a woman and a man) as well as allowing for a couple of the same gender to marry. It is recognised that some people are struggling with the decision while for others it is a matter of human rights and justice.

***National Cooperation:*** The Northern Synod has benefitted from sharing and cooperation from other Synods. The current work to develop the National Insurance Program will save our Synod a lot of money.

***National Schools Chaplaincy Program:*** With funding provided by the Commonwealth Government, five chaplains are employed to work ingovernment primary schools in the Darwin area. It is not known whether this funding will continue in 2019.

***Synod By-laws:*** Many of our Synod By-Laws are out of date. The FAPS Committee has revised Section 3 Finance and Section 4 Property and other responsible parts of the Synod are yet to revise other sections.

***Property Developments*:** The CBD Plaza for the Synod and the Leprechaun and Mitchell Centre properties for NRCC have delivered large amounts of money to support the work of the church.Further property developments in Broome and the Meeting Place in Alice Springs are being planned to provide additional income streams for future ministry activity.

***Ethical Guidelines for Commercial Decision-Making*:** Members of Synod may recall the development of our Synod policy *Guidelines for* *Decisions about Proper Use of Money and Doing Good Business for God.* This policy is used to conduct the positive and negative scans used to help us make decisions about property and how we use the resources God has given us.

1. **COORDINATE - SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS SCRIPTURES**

We remain in partnership with ARDS, AuSIL, Bible Society, MAF, NRCC and Nungalinya College so that further Bible translation work can occur. The great news for 2019 is that the Diploma of Translating will be offered at Nungalinya College. The Synod continues to prayerfully and financially support Coordinate so that more Aboriginal people can hear God’s Word speaking to them in their own heart language.

1. **SUPPORTING OUR SYNOD AGENCIES**

***Kormilda*** : As reported to Synod last year, Kormilda College could no longer be run by the Anglican and Uniting Churches due to ongoing under-funding of Aboriginal boarders. From 1 January 2018, Kormilda has been transferred to the Haileybury School from Melbourne. One of the key reasons for choosing Haileybury is that they have given a commitment to retain on-site boarding for Aboriginal students.

***Nungalinya***: With thanks to God we will farewell Principal Jude Long who has made an outstanding contribution to the College over the last eight years. Jude has worked hard with students, staff, the Board and supporters so that courses have been streamlined, student numbers stabilised and campus buildings are being upgraded. Thanks Jude.

***St Philips***The College continuesto attract high numbers of students and offer high quality education programs to the Alice Springs and regional community. The College has asked the Synod to support it changing from an entity of the Synod to becoming an incorporated company limited by guarantee.

***ARRCS***  Australian Regional and Remote Community Services has taken over the aged care facilities previously operated by Frontier Services. This has meant that Old Timers and Hetti Perkins in Alice Springs and aged care facilities in Docker River, Mutiljulu, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Palmerston and Darwin have continued to operate. ARRCS is having talks with ARDS as to how these two groups may work together to support each other.

***ARDS*** ARDS continues to seek funding from the Commonwealth and NT Governments so it can deliver programs that demystify confusing aspects of contact with non-Indigenous culture. Recently ARDS has been working with UnitingCare and ARRCS to provide for a stronger financial future.

***Somerville Community Services*** The expansion of financial services counselling and the other services, including supporting people with a disability through the NDIS remains a major focus of Somerville. It is hoped that in the future this agency may be able to work more closely with other Synod agencies, especially in relation to NDIS and other aspects of service delivery.

1. **ADVOCATING FOR JUSTICE**

***Kidney Disease in the Northern Synod*** The Synod Standing Committee has commissioned ARDS to prepare a report on dialysis provision in the top end. The Committee has received the report and asked that ARDS expand the report to include the Kimberley and Centre. It is intended to use the report to further advocate for dialysis on country for our Aboriginal members.

***Bring them Here*** In 2017the Standing Committee approved placing a large banner on the front fence of the Synod office which directly faces onto the Stuart Highway in support of the Assembly campaign about refugees in Manus Island and Naru. The Synod Social Justice group is considering further banners to make comment into the Darwin community on social justice issues.

***Closure of Homeland Centres*** This issue remains on the Standing Committee agenda as the concern about reduced government funding for homelands in the NT, SA and WA remains.

***Child Sexual Abuse Redress Scheme*** As a follow-up action to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses about Child Sexual Abuse, the Northern Synod, along with all other UCA Synods, has agreed to join the Commonwealth Government’s National Redress Scheme.

***Environmental Impact of Rocket Launch Facility at Gulkula, South of Nhulunbuy*** Due to concerns raised by some NRCC members from East Arnhemland, the Standing Committee is seeking further information as to the Social and Environmental Impact Study the NT Government is supposed to do concerning a range of issues should the rocket launch facility become operational.

1. **FURTHERING ECUMENICAL AND INTER-FAITH RELATIONSHIPS**

***Support for NTCC*** The Synod has continued to provide administrative assistance to support the continued operation of the NT Council of Churches.

***Assembly Disaster Recovery Officer*** Rev Stephen Robinson has made further visits to Darwin and a visit to Alice Springs to train ministers so they are recognised by NT Emergency Services should there by a major disaster like a cyclone or flood.

1. **STRENGTHENING OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNER CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS** This area has been carried by our Moderator, we have begun to discuss a MoU with GMIT in Indonesia.
2. **TELLING OUR STORY** Our small Communications Team (one person one day per week) has done a great job in re-establishing the *Northern Synod News.*

It is a privilege to serve in such a great Synod as the Northern Synod. My thanks go to those who have shared the load through being active participants. The Synod office team are outstanding, as are the members of our various committees and working groups. Being able to support our Synod agencies and the wider work of the Assembly has been most significant. May God bless you all as the journey continues.

What I have done, has been done;

What we have done together, we have done together;

What is not yet done but is God’s will, is over to you guys.

Blessings.

Peter Jones