

Moderator,

I report briefly on my term as Assessor Elder to the Session of CEPC, primarily focusing on the financial aspects.

When Rev John Stasse and I were appointed we sensed the tensions within Session and Board meetings and dealing with the strained relationships became a priority. The Elwood Board and congregation continued to operate satisfactorily and almost independently throughout this time.

We took the roles of Secretary and Treasurer of the two Boards (Federal and Caulfield) and commenced the normal processes for changing signatories with the banks involved.

Our presence had an immediate calming effect and business could be conducted without the acrimony which has been reported and seen at Presbytery.

Although the finances were not in good shape, there were sufficient reserves to permit stipend payments to be maintained.

The Boards initially focused on rebuilding the finances by putting rental properties to use. Some steps had already been taken but we could now hasten the processes, and first the Federal Board and then the Caulfield Board properties were put into rentable condition. Both properties are now tenanted.

In this regard, since they are not members of Presbytery, I want to commend the work of Robert Belcher Session Clerk, Elder Fred Lake master electrician and money saver, and a lady member of the congregation King Eng Tan who supervised the internal refurbishment of the Caulfield hostel, along with real estate agent Marnie Proudfoot for their untiring efforts in support of the Boards' goals.

The second stage carried out concurrently was to ensure that payments were made on time and to that end electronic payment procedures were restored although this took some time in dealing with the two banks involved.

We understand that bank procedures are complex, and privacy factors drive a lot of this, but it was most cumbersome trying to deal with the home branches of ANZ and Westpac with the limited time available to us. (I even contemplated a wholesale change to some other bank more friendly to church organisations.)

Eventually most payments were under control, and it became rare for accounts to go astray and for reminders to be issued by electricity or gas authorities. This was despite the operation of scammers masquerading as AGL and sending out fake email accounts.

We also began to reduce the number of separate accounts so that we eventually had less administration overall.

Catching up with the record keeping was much slower and less successful than I had hoped. We set a goal to hold AGMs in approximately March or April this year but I regret to say that hasn't happened.

I consented to the Presbytery re-appointing me in December, unaware of what was to come in this year. Since February my personal circumstances have been thrown into a turmoil of busy-ness, which has abated somewhat now but much still remains.

At each stage the Presbytery's remit to refer certain matters to external accountants (recommended to be Seward Dawson) was narrowed by the stabilization of the parish's operations. Consequently the only remaining point to be addressed was the referral of tax matters and dealing with the ATO over the backlog of GST returns.

Consequently the scoping of the task for Seward Dawson had little or no attention, until an unresolved GST issue emerged via the Elwood Board recently. I had to apologise to the Elwood Board since I was no longer in a position to devote the requisite time or energy to the task of taking this up with Seward Dawson or the Tax Office.

Instead, Kingsley Davidson as bookkeeper for the Elwood Board offered to take up the matter on behalf of the Federal Board. I was greatly relieved to agree and see the last stage of our remit put into effect, albeit in a different way, and possibly at lower overall cost to the Parish.

Over the last few weeks, The Boards and I as Treasurer, with Kingsley Davidson, have been working on the transition steps to permit me to resign as Treasurer and request Presbytery to discharge me as an Assessor Elder. The last stage will be to change bank signatories which will depend on the Boards appointing new members and a new Treasurer. Rev Stasse and I have both agreed to continue acting as signatories until that happens.

I therefore request the permission of the Presbytery to stand down as an Assessor to the CEPC, and to conclude the transition process when bank signatories are changed.

I move that this report be received.