

The Governance Board Meeting 018: 22nd May at Edgehill

MINUTES

Present:	Apologies
Mr Tony O'Connor (Chair)	Mr John Clarke
General Secretary: Rev Dr Heather Morris (Convener)	Mr Paul Cummings
Rev David Nixon	Ms Gillian Kingston
Mr Tom Wilson	
Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu	
Rev David Turtle	
Mr Tom Millar	

In attendance:

Ms Clíodhna Smyth (Secretary to the Board)

In attendance to present particular items of business:

Ms Nicola Robinson (Head of Finance) – Item 9 (Finance report and 2022 Year end accounts)

1. Welcome and Apologies

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted.

2. Opening Prayer

Rev. David Turtle opened the meeting in prayer.

3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Minutes were agreed, and there were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

4. Conflicts of Interest

Declaration of conflict of interest – David Campton and BCM – item 9 Missions Audit.

5. Past Decisions – Implementation

(018_23.05_5 GB Decisions Review May 2023 as previously circulated)

Progress was discussed on the projects within this document, and there was a discussion regarding which items to be disclosed in the Risk Register report.

6. President's Advisory Committee

It has not met or corresponded since the last Governance Board meeting.

7. General Secretary's Report

Dr Morris reported:

- The Coronation of King Charles – thanks were given to the President for his attendance and representation. Methodist College Belfast members sang at it, they were interviewed afterwards and were commended in a letter by the President for being superb ambassadors for the College.
- MCI Strategy – The Connexional Team is working on various lines of strategy which will drive current policies/priorities. The priorities are focusing on young people/IMYC and Pioneer Mission – these are not finalised yet but the strategy affects operational decisions.
- Working Party on Church Growth - WPCG are bringing an interim report to Conference – a key issue is how to implement strategy from the Connexional level down to church level, the difference is that this time resources are going to be put into the local Circuits, and they will be accompanied on this journey. It was noted that although Young People are to be a priority going forward that there is also work to be done with those aged 25-45 as well as older people. It was acknowledged that not everything can be done, and this is an ongoing challenge.

- Separated appointments – This applies to District Superintendents, the General Secretary and Heads of Ministry, each of whom are appointed for 7 years, and with a review can be extended for another 3 years. The length of notice of change is 2 years in the Manual of Laws but is unhelpful as is too long. It was proposed that:
 - o a) Ask MPPC to reduce notice to 1 year and including the power to make legislative change to review the effectiveness of roles, that review to take place in this Connexional year. **Agreed**
 - o b) A working party with TOC as chair is to formally undertake a review of the remit of the roles of District Superintendent. **Agreed**
- Past Cases review – a summary of the process of the report as compiled by Rev. Stephen Skuce was given.
- A press release will be made available on the morning of the Conference presentation.
- The Chair and the Governance Board:
 - o commended Rev Skuce on the report and reminded GB to keep it confidential until Conference.
 - o proposed to have a pause when this is announced at Conference – prayer/formal response and acknowledgement. **Agreed**
- Property and Governance It was reported that as Property responsibilities have moved from Home Mission to the Property Board, there is a need to implement change now. Processes and management of property must be rigorous in terms of Governance. All property changes will be brought to the MOL in the next Connexional year, as issues are very complex.
 - o In the meantime permission was sought from the GB by the General Secretary, Estates Manager and the DSs to develop a property policy for 23-24 Connexional year. It will be brought to the GB in September 2023. **Agreed**
- Charity Regulator An Amendment to the Manual of Laws (*018_23.05_7 Draft additional paragraphs for the Manual of Laws 17.5.23 as previously circulated*) is to be brought to Conference in order to ensure compliance with Charity Law in ROI. **Agreed**
- Stipends – With regards to Charity Law in ROI, Charity lawyers Mason Hayes Curran have stated that Office-holders in MCI can be Trustees as long as it's clear they are receiving payment for their work as an Office Holder, and not as a Trustee.

8. Administrative Items

Gift Aid / HMRC – Processing of Gift Aid now must go through MCI – the deadline is end 2023 for this and a new staff member must be hired to administer it as there is not capacity currently. However a post has been advertised 3 times and no response was received. It was suggested to send out to the Circuits and societies.

British Conference is reducing the numbers of its attendees – MCI offered to reduce from 4 to 2 representatives in future. The General Secretary of Conference and then either President OR Lay leader and in the year when the Lay leader attends, the President can still attend and just deliberate. Implementation of the changes will be in in 2025.

Lay Reps to Conference – The Governance Board nominated the following to attend Conference:

- Any lay member of the GB who is not already a member of Conference: John Clarke and David Best.
- Hazel Loney, Anita Gracie, Don Black, Harold Baird, Bruce Mullen, Greg McDaid, Irene Dixon.
- Any lay employees who are members of MCI – Tim Dunwoody, Simon Kinghan.

Reps to World Methodist Council – Gillian Kingston (currently VP of WMC) and Michael Briggs were proposed and it was proposed to nominate Gillian Kingston as President of the WMC. **Agreed**

Embrace NI organisation – it was proposed to give a grant of £5k for 3 years to help local churches welcome and integrate refugees. **Agreed**

9. Finance

Ms Robinson (Head of Finance) gave an update on the reports (018_23.05_9 Finance General Report, 018_23.05_9b 2023 Q1 Connexional Report, 018_23.05_9c Draft Conference Report 2022 previously circulated), highlighting the following:

Audit plan 018_23.05_9a Audit Plan

Auditors back start of June to complete the Circuits, Societies and Connexional audits. 99% of accounts are in and once final one is received then can get the final accounts issued. Missions - DCM complete, EBM waiting for them to come through, NWMM updated accounts will be signed soon, BCM auditor file ready for end June. Final accounts are on track for September 2023. The Head of Finance was commended for the work done – as it is well ahead from last year.

2022 accounts – can be used for Conference

Draft figures were presented for inclusion in the Conference report

For action in report:

- Salaries adjustment is required for end of year accounts and local (not central payroll) increased.
- Deloitte report pension liability costs are charged throughout the year – need to be listed out separately. The Chair and Finance will meet to talk separately about format of Conference report.
- Missions are to be included in Conference report.
- Mention the drop in giving – 5% - when this is adjusted for inflation it is even more.
- Action required to either reduce costs (not sustainable) and/or increase income.

Total loss is expected to be approximately £5.3m – the majority of this is loss on investments (i.e. a non cash item) of £2.5m

2023 report – Q1 2023 figures are available for the Connexion, only 9% ready for circuits and societies in. Head of Finance post audit will speak to circuits and societies regarding budget reports going forward. There are controls in place with regards to budgets in the form of Church Councils keeping track. Some budget variance is due to timings e.g. dividends out twice a year not being in the 1st quarter.

10. Policy Reviews

Connexional Team and reports to Conference

- a) MWI report to Conference – their structure does not conform to MCI structures.
- b) WDR report to Conference
- c) WMP report to Conference
- d) Southern Work of God
- e) North-West Work of God
- f) North-East Work of God
- g) IMYC report to Conference
- h) Home Mission report to Conference-structure follows IMYC pattern.

All reports were received and accepted.

11. Pension Review update

Review steps have been put into the Pension Review process so that costs don't escalate. A timetable of works as well as estimate of overall costing is required. **Action: Paul Cummings**

16. Southern Board of Education

Looking to merge with the Chaplaincy Board to get access to additional staff. Meeting is on 1st June. 2 new people are due to be appointed to the SEC Board, and they are looking to locate someone from the West of Ireland as a lot of SEC business is conducted online.

Grant awarding - getting access to funds has stopped, which needs resolution.

Questions and enquiries are being not responded to. It is anticipated to be completed by the September GB. **Action: Nigel Mackey**

12. WP on Central resources and Financing *018_23.05_12 WP on Central Services and Financing*

TOC will go to PCI and C of I to get benchmarks regarding centralised costs.

Role of General Secretary – it's not possible to do everything within the current remit at the moment, so the GB and General Secretary has to acknowledge that some things will not get done. Terms of reference and remit were accepted – **Agreed.**

13. WP on Conference

Apologies were made for the report which went into the Blue Book without it coming to the GB.

The objective is to keep membership of Conference at more than 100 Ministers and Lay looking for a balance between the connexion and the circuits and societies – collegial, collaborative and connexional.

Ministers proposal – All who are not retired are to be members of Conference, so retired Ministers attending will decrease. Lay members – in the past it was heavily weighted towards treasurers, the emphasis of Conference has changed– so lay membership is now Chair or Convenors.

Agreed

14. IMYC Strategy *018_23.05_14 Youth and Children's Strategy Document 2023*

The strategy document is for information only—it has been brought to the CT already and discussion on resources is ongoing. Consistency between the WPCG and IMYC strategies and ideally would have liked to have brought the 2 strategies together.

There was a comment on Measurements – between 2023-28 have a rolling 5 year plan and need to have annual reviews of improvements rather than waiting until 2028,.

Noted and approved and IMYC are to be commended upon it. Agreed.

15. ARB Committee

The ARB committee reported that its works was being done by its three sub-committees and that there was no longer a need for a separate ARB committee. It was proposed that the ARB committee be disbanded and appropriate changes be made to the Manual of Laws. The Terms of Reference for the three sub-committees have been checked to ensure that no functions are being missed. **Agreed**

17. Committee Reports *018_23.05_16 PROPERTY BOARD report to Conference 2023*

Property Board annual Report agreed – Southern Board of Education was dealt with under point 16.

18. Any Other Business

Two policies were brought for review

Expenses and Allowances policy. An update to the previous policy. Changes: hotel/Conference travel included and an allowance for packing to Ministers.

Honoria is uncontracted pay (should be expenses only) which is taxable nowadays – these are not claimed they are offered. This is a reducing list, and very few payments are made, MCI is moving towards claimed expenses instead.

Costing to be done once this year is over, as this is an experiment where Conference travel is borne centrally. **Action: NR**

Appendix 3. Manse furnishings – Some costs are unrealistic e.g. sofa, no fridge is included. Pitch at the middle end of the budget. **Action: HM to take it out and review for Conference as a CFO.**

Credit card policy – make clear that no personal expenditure is allowed, and that there is someone following up with checking the supporting documentation once it comes through. **Action: NR/GS**

19. Next Meeting: 14th September 2023 at Edgehill.

Governance Board meeting dates for 2023-24 are

14th September	18th Jan
16th Oct	15th Feb
23rd November	14th Mar
14th Dec	18th April
	23rd May

20. Closing prayer

The members who are leaving (Revs Sahr Yambasu and David Campton, and Laura Griffith) were thanked and commended for their contributions over the last two years. The end of the year was marked and the Chair was thanked for his leadership. There being no other business, he invited Rev David Turtle to close the meeting with prayer.

Tony O'Connor
22nd May 2023