

The Governance Board Meeting 013: 8th December 2022 via Zoom

MINUTES

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

In attendance: Ms Clíodhna Smyth (Secretary to the Board)
In attendance via Zoom to present particular items of business: Ms Nicola Robinson (Head of Finance) – Item 9 (Finance report / 2021 Year end accounts) Mr John Alderdice – Item 11 (Connexional Team report)

1. Opening Prayers

Tony O'Connor led the meeting in prayer.

2. Welcome and Apologies

All were welcomed to the meeting; apologies were noted.

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

D Campton (Item 3 administrative items, Sandy Row)

5. Past Decisions – Implementation

(013_22.12_5 GB Decisions Implementation Review as previously circulated)

T O'Connor reported on the progress of the projects within this document and updated the Board as to the status of them.

D Best reported on having approved the Dublin City Mission accounts on behalf of MCI via Zoom. It was noted that there are 3 sets of accounts combined in these – DCM, Mount Tabor and DCM Sheltered Housing. The 3 entities are set to be combined into one organisation next year.

6. President's Advisory Committee

There was no report, as it has not met or corresponded since the last Governance Board meeting.

7. General Secretary's Report

Dr Morris reported:

- Structural Changes within MCI – The Property Implementation Group who is charged with bringing the Working Party report to the GB in Jan 2023 is on track. It was noted that the culture of working to fixed budgets is underway and whilst it brings constraints it will be worthwhile and will help with strategic decision making. The Teams and Departments within Edgehill House have also been changed to reflect the new structural reporting arrangements, so full implementation is almost complete.

- A Working Party on Church Growth has been appointed and is charged with bringing a full report to the Connexional Team and ultimately to the Governance Board in 2023. The GB committed to pray for the members of this group.
- The Church Leaders Group are discussing the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and are planning on developing resources for congregational use.

8. Administrative Items

- 1) Edgehill Theological College incorporation into the MCI is now complete in law.
- 2) Because MCI is now one charity this has an implication for application to some charitable trusts. It was agreed that in future that all charitable applications need to be notified to head office, so that they can be co-ordinated.
- 3) Sandy Row - The General Secretary brought recommendations from the Connexional Team:
 - 1) Recognising that the Sandy Row Society will formally cease to exist at the end of December 2022.
 - 2) Granting provisional permission for the building to no longer to be regarded as a “preaching place” on the circuit and worship to cease at a point of time to be proposed by the Circuit Executive and notified to the General Secretary and Chair of the Governance Board.
 - 3) That, as per the request forwarded from the Sandy Row Congregation via the Circuit Executive, the General Secretary should discuss with the appropriate officers of BCM whether they would be interested in becoming the custodian of the Sandy Row premises for missional purposes.
 - 4) In the light of these discussions, formal proposals/options for the “disposal or retention” of this asset will be tabled for the Governance Board.

All above were agreed by the Board

- 4) Methodist Church of Britain Conference – A request has been received to reduce the numbers attending to 2 from 4 previously, now being either the Secretary of Conference or President and the Lay Leader. **Agreed**
- 5) Ballynafeigh Property – A project Team has been set up and given permission to do phase 1 costing. The costing when complete will be fed back to the Property Board who will then bring full details to the Governance Board by January or February 2023.
- 6) Disability Fund – Permission sought to change the name of this fund to the Absence Fund so that it can cover both Maternity pay and Sabbatical leave. Maternity pay – it was proposed that the cost for this be borne by the Connexion and not local Societies. MPPC and G Kingston to do additional work on this policy. **Agreed**
- 7) Warm Places – the information has not been sent out due to work required on the documentation.

9. Finance

Tony O’Connor welcomed Nicola Robinson to the meeting and expressed the appreciation of the Board for all the work that she and the Finance team were doing. Ms Robinson gave an update on the report (*013_22.12_09 Finance Report, previously circulated*), highlighting the following:

a) Audited Accounts

Auditors have been through the draft accounts and have agreed that it backs up all their audit work, they provisionally agreed Dec 14th as the date for final signoff with the audit committee, and the minutes of that meeting are to be circulated to the Governance Board in advance. The date of December 20th 2022 (subject to no further issues) has been given to sign off on the final 2021 accounts.

b) Closure of ROI Ulster Bank accounts

There are still problems moving accounts from Ulster Bank to new accounts, so some monies are being held in the MCI Trustees Euro account while this process continues.

c) New Finance System

A majority of circuits and societies are now submitting accounts to the new system, whilst those who are struggling have been offered support and further training. There is an ongoing issue with getting treasurers who have Excel skills. Consideration to be given to having only one treasurer per circuit.

d) Connexional Budget

There will be a Connexional budget ready for the Budget Committee in Jan 2023, and a quarterly report for yearend 2022 will be ready by February/March 2023.

It was noted that there will be a significant increase in Audit fees in 2023 and that a proposal for a tender for the audit for MCI going forward will be brought to the Governance Board by the Audit committee.

e) Risk Register report

The Risk Register report was postponed and will be brought to the Governance Board in February 2023.

11. Connexional Team report

(013_22.12_11 Connexional Team report as previously circulated)

The Connexional team report was accepted, and the Board's main concern is the overall strategic issues that the CT is looking at across the Methodist Church.

It was confirmed that the Rank Trust will be advised of the dropping of the designation of church development status, replacing it with a project has Missional Priority status. **Action J Alderdice**

12. Policy Reviews

It was agreed that the Communications Officer should look at the formatting and presentation of each policy to make sure it is consistent and up to date. **Action: S Mayes**

Charity disclosure preamble and the rationale should be included for all policies – there needs to be a standardised format for policies. **Action: H Morris**

The following policies presented for review were agreed

013_22.12_12 Income Procedures Society – Subject to a preamble explaining this is for the protection of finances plus the appendix being done for EUR as well as GBP **approved**

013_22.12_12b OM Applications to Serve with and Transfer to MCI - **approved**

013_22.12_12c OM Death of a Minister Policy – It was agreed that the title of this needed to change as it does not reflect the content, otherwise **approved**.

013_22.12_12d OM Married Couples Policy –To go back to RW for clarification.

013_22.12_12f OM Serving as Mission Partners Policy - **approved**

013_22.12_12g OM Time Wisdom Policy – **approved** but look at point 3.6 and 4.1.

Action: H Morris, R Waugh

13. Southern Board of Education

As a patron of schools within ROI, all bar one of the schools submit their reports and budgets to their Boards of Management and Governance Boards so the active involvement and consequent workload of MCI is reduced as a result. The process raised an issue of oversight with regards to one of the schools which is being dealt with.

The DS of the Southern District is looking for another person (preferably outside of Dublin) to sit on the SEC with David Lee.

The Church of Ireland Board of Education was approached to merge the two Boards of MCI and C of I, there was a very positive response to this, and the C of I (through the Covenant Council) thought that even more of this co-operation should be happening across the board. Further meetings to take place to address the details involved in this happening.

It was expressed that this was an excellent opportunity to leverage the expertise of the Church of Ireland, specifically in the area of training.

The awarding of outstanding grants is to happen as a matter of urgency.

The Northern Executive Board of Education is also willing to work with the Church of Ireland.

Resolution of this is to happen before Easter 2023– to be brought to the March meeting of the Governance Board. **Action: N Mackey**

14. General Assurance Committee Report

The GA committee is looking at the Associated Bodies that the MCI GB is responsible for, and the charity lawyer Jenny Ebbage has been contracted to look at the larger associated bodies, primarily the Missions. The GA committee is focusing on looking at a number of smaller bodies at a time and will report on these

as their investigations are completed. In the past constitutional structures were put in place to facilitate the obtaining of grants, as some of these are no longer required the constitutional structure may be able to change. An annual report is to be produced by April. **Action: J Clarke**

15. Governance Board Renewal Process

Under the constitution of MCI the Governance Board has 8 elected members for 3 years. As this is the first time that this structure has been in place, it is not advisable that all 8 resign at the same time. Replacement of members is to be staggered so that 1 or 2 members of the 8 drop out at a time, ensuring that continuity is maintained. Hence 1 or 2 new people will be required each year to replace them. Now at the end of the 2nd year it is proposed to set up a Nominations Committee in January for membership of the Governance Board and is advisable that the process begins now. There are options for people to leave after 2 years of service, or to opt for a further time of service. Those elected Board members who may wish to resign at Conference in 2023 are advised to approach the Chair directly.

16. Property Related Items – North West MM

The sale of an investment property in Londonderry is requested. Permission is given to sell with 10% returned to the Property Board and the remainder returned to the Circuit. **Agreed**

17. Any Other Business

Review of the role of the President and Lay Leader is to be postponed for at least a year until all the new structural changes have been bedded down, especially as Conference 2022 did not accept the proposals produced by the working party. The Working Party is to be advised of this decision of the Governance Board. **Action: H Morris**

To be noted in the GB Report to Conference for 2023 **Action: T O'Connor.**

18. Closing Prayer

T O'Connor expressed his thanks to the members of the Board, welcomed Ms Clíodhna Smyth to the proceedings and wished everyone a Happy Christmas, and there being no other business, he closed the meeting with prayer.

Tony O'Connor, Chairman
8th December 2022