

The Governance Board
Meeting 006: 10th February 2022, via Zoom
MINUTES

Present:		Apologies
Mr Tony O'Connor (Chair)	Rev Harold Agnew	Rev David Campton
General Secretary: Rev Dr Heather Morris (Convener)	Mr David Best	Rev Dr Tom McKnight
President: Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu	Mr John Clarke	
Lay Leader: Ms Hazel Loney	Mr Paul Cummings	
President Designate: Rev David Nixon	Ms Laura Griffith	
Chair of the Standing Committee of the Statutory	Ms Gillian Kingston	
Trustees: Mr Tom Millar	Rev Nigel Mackey	

In attendance: Ms Elaine Barnett (Secretary to the Board)
To present particular items of business: Ms Gillian Laney (Chief Financial Officer) – Item 7 Rev Dr Janet Unsworth (Chair, Methodist College Board of Governors) – item 10

- 1. Opening Prayers**
Rev David Nixon led the meeting in prayer.
- 2. Welcome and Apologies**
Mr Tony O'Connor welcomed all to the meeting.
- 3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**
The Minutes were agreed, and there were no matters arising which would not be covered by the agenda.
- 4. Conflicts of Interest**
Nigel Mackey and Gillian Kingston with regard item 6b
Heather Morris, John Clarke and Tom Millar with regard item 8a.
- 5. General Secretary's Report**
Dr Morris reported on a wide range of issues:
 - 1) The Discipleship Development Group have presented to the Connexional Team their plan for encouraging the church to live out the MCI theme 'Living Wholeheartedly as followers of Jesus for the transformation of the world', and this will be interwoven with the President's and Lay Leader's themes for Conference this year. Resources for Easter will be available and the focus will be on prayer.
 - 2) Conference Arrangements Committee has begun its work. Conference will take place in The Spires (PCI) in Belfast which offers good space for social distancing and has good tech facilities. Conference will be shorter, starting on Thursday rather than Wednesday.
 - 3) Covid restrictions have eased in RoI and it is anticipated there will be a move from regulation to guidance in NI. MCI continues to recommend basic mitigations be in place in churches, including the wearing of masks when moving around and when singing. The bigger challenge facing the Church is how best to move forward after the pandemic.
 - 4) The 'Head of Finance' post (replacing CFO) has been advertised, and someone has been appointed in a temporary accountant-level post for a period of six months.
 - 5) Heather reported that IMYC led a weekend for volunteers in Dromantine. She commented that supporting our volunteers is something the church needs to keep in focus.

6. Administrative Items

a. Methodist College Proposal

Paper 005_2022.01 6a, which had been considered at the January Board meeting, set out the proposed scheme 'Methodist College Act 1928 – Alteration of restricted funds and ancillary matters' whereby a number of historic endowments would be amalgamated into a single fund, the 'Methodist College Foundation Fund'. As agreed at that meeting, legal advice had been sought, and assurance given, that there would be no unintended consequences from the change.

The proposal was therefore agreed.

b. Wesley College

Nigel Mackey withdrew from the meeting. A request had been received from the Principal of the College that his term as Chaplain be extended for a further 3 years. The Constitution of the College states that the appointment of the Chaplain to be agreed by Conference to ensure close working relationship between the Church and the College.

It was proposed that a small group: the President, Lay Leader and Rev Andrew Dougherty (Southern District Superintendent), bring a recommendation to the March meeting of the Board after consulting with Nigel, the Principal and Gillian Kingston (Chair of Board of Governors).

Agreed

c. Inter-charity Transfers (*Paper 006_22.02_6c previously circulated*)

A draft framework for a partnership programme between the Methodist Church in Ireland (CSR), the Trussell Trust, and Christians Against Poverty had been tabled at the December meeting of the Board where it was broadly welcomed, but it was felt clarity should be sought around any declared shared interests under our current charitable status. Paper 006_22.02_6c set out the response from Ms Hazel Baird (Lay Secretary CSR Northern Executive) which clarified the situation that it doesn't create a problem in law.

7. Finance (*Paper 006_22.02_7*)

Ms Gillian Laney (CFO) presented the report which had been previously circulated, highlighting the following:

a. The new accounting system is working well for connexional funds and the team have set up the Statements for Investments held through the Trustees to come directly from the system and these are currently being distributed. There has been an incredible level of response in terms of Circuit returns, with the majority of circuits having already submitted files or made queries. This has involved a huge workload for the Finance Team and appreciation was expressed for the work being done by Sharon Brown in this regard.

b. The figures for Investments through Statutory Trustees in Managed, Equity and Fixed funds were presented, showing an overall increase of 15.9% in value of the portfolio from December 2020.

Action Gillian Laney to provide a breakdown of the figures for holdings of Connexional funds in response to a request for further detail.

c. Confirmation has been received that the decision on registration by the Charity Commissioners for Northern Ireland is likely to be made by March and that the staff recommendation is that registration be granted. Some information has to be re-submitted in a specific format, and the CCNI system can be frustratingly slow at times.

d. There are currently two new entities in process – Ardfallen Grove and Mallard Hub and draft constitutions are being reviewed and will be shared with the General Assurance Sub Committee once they are finalised.

e. Work continues on putting leases in place for the DCM properties Margaretholme, Mount Tabor and Ailt an Óir.

8. Policy Reviews

a. Statutory Trustees Investment Policy

The paper *006_22.02_8a Investment Policy* had been previously circulated and in discussion several suggestions for clarity were made.

It was agreed that Tony O'Connor and David Best meet together with Tom Millar and one other member of the Statutory Trustees to work through the document in detail.

Action Tom Millar to convene.

9. Proposal on larger Circuits (*Paper 006_22.02_9 previously circulated*)

Heather introduced the paper from the Connexional Team *Developing Stronger Circuits and Mission Areas* which highlighted the issue of single minister circuits as well as circuits with external superintendency. Although it will take time and energy to work through the process, the risks of not proceeding far outweigh the potential benefits and are unsustainable. In a wide-ranging discussion there was broad appreciation of the document, but that there should not be a definitive time line for implementation.

Proposal: Way Forward

1. The Connexional Team proposes to the Governing Board that MCI should no longer operate with one minister or one church circuits. This proposal to be reported to Conference 2022.
2. The District Superintendents will seek to identify the new mission areas and the proposed larger circuits in consultation with circuit superintendents.
3. Once identified the DS shall facilitate a process with societies and circuits to enable the amalgamation to take place.
4. Proposals shall be considered by the Connexional Team

Agreed

10. Principal of Methodist College

Rev Janet Unsworth (Chair) outlined the selection process for the post of Principal which had been undertaken by the Board of Governors. Manual of Laws 23.11 states the College shall make the appointment "Provided always that no appointment of the Principal of the College shall be final until the same shall have been submitted to and approved by the Conference" therefore approval was sought from the Governance Board.

Approved: Having heard the thoroughness of the process and the quality of the person proposed, the Board had no hesitation in giving its approval.

11. Any Other Business

It was noted that the proposed date of 2nd June for the Governance Board to examine the accounts will fall within new extended Jubilee Bank Holiday. The date was therefore changed to Wednesday 1st June.

12. Next Meeting:

10th March, venue to be arranged.

13. Closing prayer

Mr O'Connor thanked everyone for their participation and, there being no other business, invited Rev David Nixon to close the meeting in prayer.

Tony O'Connor
10th March 2022