

## The Governance Board

### Meeting 003: 9th November 2021, Edgehill House

### MINUTES

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

<b>In attendance:</b> Ms Elaine Barnett (Secretary to the Board)
<b>To present particular items of business:</b> Ms Gillian Laney (Chief Financial Officer) – Items 8 & 10 Rev Sam McGuffin – Item 11

#### 1. Opening Prayers

Rev David Campton led the meeting in prayer.

#### 2. Welcome and Apologies

Mr Tony O'Connor welcomed all to the meeting and apologies were received.

#### 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

Heather Morris and Gillian Kingston, members of the Mission Partnership Forum: with reference to discussion on the Alternating Ministry Scheme.

#### 5. General Secretary's Report

Dr Morris introduced her report with two 'good news stories':

##### a. Service

She expressed gratitude for the way in which God had used the Service of Reflection and Hope, and appreciation of those who took part in the Service. She, along with several others in the meeting, commented on the President's inspirational sermon. Members also paid tribute to the hard work done by the organising Secretaries, including Heather, in planning the service.

In discussion, it was recognised that the work of reconciliation is ongoing, and that deep division in viewpoints remains.

##### b. Autumn Soul

Heather commented that it was good to see 250 young people gathered in Bangor on the last Saturday in October, with a further 80 joining online. A particular focus was placed on affirming the role of youth leaders who have done great work through the difficult months of the pandemic. Even though there were some great initiatives to keep young people connected with churches, some momentum has been lost, so there will be a focus on rebuilding.

Heather then updated the Board on areas of work in progress:

##### c. Strategy Process

Following a meeting of the Connexional Team, a series of consultations are planned with a view to a detailed document being presented to the January meeting of the Board.

There will be a forward planning meeting with the 3 District Superintendents. Another connexional Prayer meeting is planned for 30th November.

d. Charity Registration Processes

This matter, due for discussion under item 10, has proved to be of great value for the Connexion, because the process had highlighted governance issues which will need to be addressed.

e. Ghana

The Methodist Church in Ghana is supporting the 'Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill'. It is recognised that within Irish Methodism there are shades of opinion regarding human sexuality, but the issue of concern is that the proposed Bill further criminalises those who are same sex attracted, and this in turn could promote antagonism and violence against them.

The proposal before the Board was for:

- i) a conversation to take place with Presiding Bishop Paul Boafo
- ii) the statement (previously circulated to the Board) would be sent to him, and placed on irishmethodist.org
- iii) MCI would seek ongoing conversations with him and the Methodist Church in Ghana
- iv) the hope is to honour long-standing partnerships, whilst expressing a differing viewpoint within that relationship.

**The statement and the proposal were both agreed.**

**6. Administrative Items**

a. Consequential changes to the Manual of Laws

The paper (003\_21.11\_6a) which had been previously circulated, contained minor changes so that the Manual is consistent with changes that have already been approved and taken place. Further changes will be brought as necessary, with more substantive changes being brought to Conference.

**The changes outlined in the paper were agreed**

b. Chair of Safeguarding Board

It is hoped to bring a name to the next meeting.

**7. President's Advisory Committee (PAC)**

Dr Morris updated the Board on 3 matters being dealt with by the PAC:

a. Legal Case

In the legal case previously reported, it is understood that a further claim has been lodged relating to payments – although no paperwork has been received to date.

b. Alternating Ministry Scheme

Because of the process of denominational Charity Registration, the 3 congregations of the Alternating Ministry Scheme can no longer continue under joint governance. They need to become either a Presbyterian congregation or a Methodist Society. The Mission Partnership Forum is working with the congregations, supporting them through the complex issues of property and governance, aiming to complete the process by the end of April 2022. The final resolution will come to the Governance Board, and the equivalent body in PCI, before that date.

**Action:** Heather to keep the Board updated in the meantime

**8. Finance**

Ms Gillian Laney (CFO) updated the Board on several matters:

a. Accounting System Implementation

Over 20 Circuits have now been trained on the submission of reports for the new system, although the process is highlighting some challenges which may need ongoing support over the next couple of years. In addition, the accounts of connexional teams continue to be brought onto the new system, and it is hoped that an initial set of figures will be available for the next meeting of the Finance Committee.

b. Pension Scheme Accounts

The team have been liaising with the auditors over the last couple of months, and it is anticipated the accounts will be signed off of by the pension scheme trustees on 22 November.

c. Associated Bodies

Progress has been made enabling Dublin Central mission to comply with their reporting requirements for the charity regulator. Work will continue in relation to DCM lease agreements and other related matters with the General Assurance Committee.

d. Fraud reporting

There are no instances of Fraud or significant financial incidents which have been brought to the attention of the CFO since the last report.

## 9. Sub-committee Reports

a. Audit, Risk & Budget Committee (ARBC)

Mr David Best reported that the first meeting had been held on 20th September when Terms of Reference and an outline of the work for each sub-committee was discussed. At the second meeting, on 26th October, the Charity Regulator Compliance documentation had been examined and it was reported that all sub-committees had met, or had dates set for the meeting.

b. Finance Committee (FC)

Mr Paul Cummings reported that the FC had met via Zoom when the key areas had been identified as pensions, finance & budgeting, and supporting the finance team in the rollout of the new accounting system. A further 5 dates have been planned covering the next 6-7 months

c. Audit & Assurance (AAC)

David Best informed the meeting that a key area of work will be the development of a Risk Management Policy for MCI, along with Standard Risk Registers for use across the connexion. The aim is to minimise bureaucracy and provide something that will be relevant and useful.

d. General Assurance Committee (GAC)

In the absence of John Clarke, David Best indicated that the key areas initially for the GAC will be Child & Vulnerable Adults and Associated Bodies. The need to identify areas requiring assurance was highlighted.

## 10. Charity Regulator Compliance

Ms Laney and Mr O'Connor highlighted the 3 documents which had been previously circulated:

*003\_21.11\_10a CCNI Submission-Charity Reg*

was the submission to the Charity Commission NI which had been finalised by the ARBC and the CFO.

*003\_21.11\_10b CRA Compliance Record form*

was the 47 page document completed for the Charity Regulatory Authority. This had been very useful in identifying areas where MCI are fully compliant, and those areas where the Church is only partially compliant – which helps to identify work that still needs to be done

*003\_21.11\_10c CRA Submission-Charity Governance Code*

Is the Annual Report which had been submitted to the Charity Regulatory Authority.

## 11. Policy Appraisal Update

Mr O'Connor reported that initially 4 documents are being worked on:

The Governance Board Policy (which will cover the regulations regarding the work of the Board); the Conflicts of Interest Policy, and the Risk Policy should all be ready for the December meeting. It is hoped the Strategy Document will be presented at the January meeting.

More will be added as time goes by, and the aim is to form them into a central register for MCI.

**12. Working Party on the Role of the President and Lay Leader**

Rev Sam McGuffin, Chair of the Working Party, was welcomed to the meeting and presented an interim report. As he explained, the WP had been set up to re-examine the role of the President in the light of the appointment of 3 full time District Superintendents and changes in our governance structures, and to clarify how the role of the President relates to this new context.

He reported that the discussions of the WP have been deep and far-ranging with various options being considered: keeping it as a 1-year appointment or changing to a longer term part-time appointment. A feasibility study has been undertaken and further work needs to be done on the potential impact on the minister and her/his family life, and also on the local congregation, if a part-time appointment were to be introduced.

Following on from the direction of the Governance Board at a previous meeting, the group will now begin an examination of the role of the Lay Leader in the Church's changing context. To help with this work, the current Lay Leader and a past Lay Leader have been co-opted on to the WP.

The aim is to bring a further report to the Board in March and to Conference in June 2022. The Board, however, indicated that the WP could extend its final report date to Conference 2023, if they felt it necessary.

**13. Any Other Business:** None**14. Next Meeting:**

9th December at 10.30am in Dublin Central Mission

**15. Closing prayer**

There being no other business, Mr O'Connor invited Rev David Campton to close the business part of the meeting in prayer.

**16. Trustee Training**

The afternoon session was given over to a charity trustees training session led by Amira Graham of Worthington Solicitors.

Tony O'Connor  
9th December 2021