

The Governance Board

Meeting 009: 5th May 2022, via Zoom

MINUTES

Present:		Apologies
Mr Tony O'Connor (Chair)	Mr John Clarke	Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu
General Secretary: Rev Dr Heather Morris (Convener)	Mr Paul Cummings	Ms Hazel Loney
Rev Harold Agnew	Ms Laura Griffith	Mr Tom Millar
Mr David Best	Ms Gillian Kingston	
Rev David Campton	Rev David Nixon	

In attendance: Ms Elaine Barnett (Secretary to the Board)
For particular items of business: Ms Sharon Brown (Finance Team, Accountant) – item 7 Ms Gillian Gilmore (Team Leader, Youth & Children's Team) – Item 8

1. Opening Prayers

Ms Laura Griffith led the meeting in prayer.

2. Welcome and Apologies

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies 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

Gillian Kingston is the Chair of the Wesley College Board of Governors Committee (item 6);

5. General Secretary's Report

Dr Morris reported on a wide range of issues:

- 1) European / World Methodism: A new denomination, known as the 'Global Methodist Church' (GMC), has been formed – a breakaway group of the United Methodist Church (UMC) in the US. The impact has already been seen on European Methodism which includes 4 UMC Dioceses. The Churches in Bulgaria and Romania have joined the GMC, and so have left the European Methodist Council. There is potential for a similar impact on some of the Methodist Churches in Africa which also have their roots in the UMC. Gillian Kingston (Vice Chair of the World Methodist Council) commented that, in forming a breakaway denomination, the GMC is no longer a member of the World Methodist Council and will need to apply if it wishes to join.
- 2) Conference: It is planned that the digital copy of 'Blue Book' will be circulated to Conference members at the end of next week. Business from the Governance Board and Faith & Order Committee will be dealt with on the Friday, and Council on Social Responsibility on Saturday. The conversation on the Work of God is being presented differently this year, and a city centre walk 'We make the way by walking' is planned for Friday. Saturday evening will focus on 'Hope' and the Ordination Service will take place on Sunday morning.
- 3) Working Party on Property: The implications arising from the report from the Working Party have been communicated with the Church Development Board and the Property Board, and Simon Kinghan, Estates Manager, is drawing together a small group to develop an implementation plan.
- 4) Discipline: The President's Advisory Group is dealing with a matter of Ministerial Discipline.

- 5) Finance: The Finance Team continue to work extremely hard, and are ‘holding the fort’ well until the time that Nicola Robinson, takes up her appointment as Finance Team Leader in June.

Administrative Items

- 1) Assessment Appeals Panel: The members of the Assessment Appeals Panel were proposed:
The President and Mr Tom Millar

Agreed

- 2) Conference Membership:

a. It was proposed that those Departments whose accounts are managed by the Finance Team and so no longer have a Lay Treasurer, be permitted this year to nominate another representative to Conference so that their representation isn’t reduced.

Agreed

b. The General Secretary requested permission for a review of Conference membership to be undertaken.

Agreed

6. **Wesley College Dublin Chaplaincy** (*Paper 009_22.05_06, previously circulated*)

The President, Lay Leader and the Southern District Superintendent had given consideration to the request from the College that Rev Nigel Mackey’s term as Chaplain be extended for a further 3 years. They had consulted with Nigel, the Principal, and the Chair of Board of Governors, Gillian Kingston. (Nigel did not attend the Board meeting; Gillian was present, but did not participate in the discussion).

Their report concluded that in the interest of continuity, when other senior staff roles will be changing over the next few years, it would be disruptive to replace the chaplain as well.

The Board agreed to the proposal, but expressed the view that the Connexional Team and Stationing Sub-committee are better placed to take a wider view of resourcing the Connexion, and should consider any similar requests in the future.

7. **Finance**

Ms Sharon Brown presented the report highlighting the following:

- a. 2021 Accounts Preparation: work has been started on the 70 Connexional bank accounts and will be continued by Nicola Robinson, the new Finance Team Leader, in June. Information has been received from 196 of the 210 Circuits/Societies, and of those 125 have been uploaded and reconciled. This represents approx. 50% of Circuit and Society bank accounts, and the aim is to have that work 95% complete by the end of May. The broad picture on information received to date shows an overall increase in assets in Circuit and Society accounts: from €2.8m to €3m, and from £7.7m to £8m
- b. 2021 Audit: the Auditors are starting the process of confirming accounts with the bank - all 70 of the Connexional accounts and 300 of the 1,000 Circuit/Society accounts. The main audit will begin on 8th August.
- c. Implementation of New Finance System: training will re-commence in June for the 10-15 Circuits and Societies not yet transferred to the new system. This training has needed to be put on hold while the Finance Team prioritise their work dealing with accounts and regular payments such as payroll.

In thanking Sharon for her report, Tony expressed the appreciation of the whole Board for all the extra work she and the Finance Team have been dealing with, and the importance to the Connexion that it represents.

In discussion, Board members were encouraged that Circuit and Society bank accounts show an overall increase, but recognised that this could mask any Societies where the income has fallen. The analysis Sharon gives to Tony in advance of Conference will help to assess this – however, the financial aspect is only one measure of how churches are ‘picking up’ post-pandemic. Statistical returns are recorded in the Book of Reports and Minutes of Conference, but the Board felt it would be helpful to gather information

on those attending worship services: are members returning? are there any age groups which are still reluctant to attend gatherings? District Superintendents are in contact with the ministers on their District and may be able to report on any trends they observe, but a more detailed analysis would be helpful.

Action: Heather to request a report from the Connexional Team for the Board meeting in September.

8. **IMYC report: Education Authority/Registration as a Regional Voluntary Youth Organisation (RVYO)**

Ms Gillian Gilmore presented a proposal that the Methodist Church in Ireland through IMYC becomes a recognised, funded Regional Voluntary Youth Organisation with the Education Authority in Northern Ireland (EA).

Background

In 2018 it had become clear that there was a shift in the EA approach to funding towards supporting voluntary youth work delivered at local level, and in 2019-20 the Regional Action Plan explicitly recognised faith-based youth work. Denominations (as RVYOs) could be funded substantially to support their own regional and local groups in Membership, Governance, Curriculum and Training rather than directly through EA or other external organisation.

What is an RVYO?

The purpose of an RVYO is to bring about positive change to the quality of local youth work delivery, therefore impacting the lives of young people and children. An RVYO has member groups and a responsibility for supporting those groups in the following areas and will receive funding to do so: Governance; Curriculum; Representation and Collaboration; Workforce Development; Safeguarding & Child Protection; Quality Assurance; and Youth Work Outcomes.

Potential Benefits to MCI and local churches

Funding

- access to regional funding to support the development of youth work locally
- access to local funding (once registered, local groups can access additional funding for specific projects, summer programmes, with support throughout the application process, without the need to provide additional compliance evidence)
- access to EA outdoor learning centres and activities at reduced rates

Support

- access to training and curriculum resources and the support of a EA local area youth officer.
- increased capacity for IMYC to support work locally and respond to needs and requests.

Recognition and relationship

- faith-based youth work receives recognition of its value and a 'seat at the table' to influence policy and funding decisions
- improved two-way communication with the EA

During the discussion, clarification was sought on any potential negative impacts of MCI/IMYC registering as an RVYO: assurances had been received from the EA that there would be no loss of ethos; as a voluntary organisation there would be some accountability to the EA, but not the full compliance required of statutory youth organisations. Gillian also acknowledged that registration itself will involve extra work and staff time, but considered that the potential long-term benefits would outweigh that. There was appreciation of the scheme directing funding towards local youth projects, along with significant funding being available to the regional/umbrella organisation in its role of supporting local youth work.

It was noted that IMYC has made use of the Youth Service Grant Scheme in RoI which has allowed them to support local groups. This scheme is currently undergoing a 4-year review process.

Proposal: that the Methodist Church in Ireland through IMYC becomes a recognised, funded Regional Voluntary Youth Organisation with the Education Authority in Northern Ireland.

Agreed

9. Governance Board Report to Conference (*Paper 009_22.5_09, previously circulated*)

There was broad agreement with the structure and content of the draft report which will be included in the Conference Agenda, and some key areas for the verbal presentation were discussed:

- re-state the way governance of the church is now managed
- clarify who reports to the Board
- this has been a transitional year, and the board is open to suggestions
- the work covered by the Board during the year has released time at Conference for vision/inspiration
- an opportunity to highlight the lack of returns identified in the report from the WP on property.

10. Board Appraisal Process

Three draft appraisal forms had been previously circulated. All were approved and will be used after Conference to help members of the Board assess, and comment on, how the Board has functioned over the past year.

11. Any Other Business

None

12. Next Meetings (2022-23)

2022

Thursday 15th September

Tuesday 11th October

Thursday 10th November

Thursday 8th December

2023

Thursday 19th January

Monday 13th February

Monday 20th March

Thursday 20th April

Thursday 25th May

13. Closing prayer

Mr O'Connor expressed his thanks to the members of the Board for their hard work over the year and, there being no other business, invited Laura Griffith to close the meeting in prayer.

Tony O'Connor
15th September 2022