

## The Governance Board Meeting 015: 13th February 2023 in DCM Dublin

### MINUTES

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

#### In attendance:

Ms Clíodhna Smyth (Secretary to the Board)

#### In attendance via Teams to present particular items of business:

Ms Nicola Robinson – Finance report – Item 9

#### 1. Opening Prayer

John Clarke opened the meeting in prayer with Acts 6 1-7.

#### 2. Welcome and Apologies

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted.

#### 3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Minutes were agreed subject to a small change, and there were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

#### 4. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

The Chair advised that he is going on the board of DCM in March – there are no conflicts of interest, but it was noted.

David Campton noted a *potential* conflict of interest with regards to Item 7 Downey House, as well as item 9 Finance report specifically regarding Missions financial figures.

#### 5. Past Decisions Review

TO'C reported that

- The communication of MCI Reserves Policy – the article has been written for the newsletter and is due to be published in March.
- The plan to produce a template of Health and Safety policies for local churches is underway.
- President & Lay leader on committees is part of a bigger project to do with the role of the President and Lay Leader that is under review.
- Property Board decision levels – getting legal opinion regarding the Governance Board's responsibility in this arena.

#### 6. PAC

The PAC has not met since the last meeting.

#### 7. General Secretaries Report

Dr. Morris reported that

- **God is on the Move** - There are good stories all across the Methodist church and it's to be celebrated from Community meals in Belfast to young people in Thomas Street, and a thriving

community in Richhill. The President and Lay Leader see this on the ground all the time, and the DSs are key in this. The Governance Board are to write to the District Superintendents and encourage them. **Agreed**

- **Conference** will take place 8-10<sup>th</sup> June – planned in this way so that lay members only need to take one day's leave, and flexibility is requested on an annual basis.
  - 115 Ministerial and 115 Ordained places allocation – **approved**
  - If there is a shortfall in lay people, according to the Manual of Laws the Governance Board elects any members of the Governance Board (who do not hold another office already) to attend and it is proposed that the convenors of the Northern & Southern members of the Boards of Education be elected to attend. **Agreed**
  - All stationed Ministers are compelled to attend, and younger people are to be encouraged to attend also.

### **Methodist College**

An update was given regarding the development proposal on preparatory provision at Methodist College. Three public representatives have been in contact with the Church through the General Secretary on behalf of parents objecting to the closure

The Governance Board regretted that the Chair of Governors had been subject to vitriol and personal attack and expressed its full confidence in Dr. Unsworth and the Board.

Role of MCI with regards to Methodist College – Chapter 23 of the Manual of Laws and the Methodist College Act 1928 both state It shall be lawful for Conference at any time to take the management of the College either wholly or partially into consideration.

Legal advice has been taken on the following specific issues:

#### **Actions:**

1. On what grounds would MCI be required to intervene? **HM**
2. Given the GB has expressed its full support for Board of Governors at Methody, are there any further actions that need to be taken in law which would allow the GB to stand over that assertion. **HM**

Notwithstanding the above, the Governance Board is satisfied that due process has been followed, and it continues to give the Board of Governors at Methody their full support. **Agreed**

**Faith & Order – Encounter** There are a series of events and talks planned to take place in March/April across the Connexion to do with the topic of Human Sexuality. This is the first stage in a process of listening, thinking and reflecting, and is designed to help equip lay people and Ministers to have this conversation about human sexuality in the context of Christian faith.

**Resignations** – This year there are 3 resignations from ordained Ministry, and a number of Ministers seeking to be without Pastoral Charge to serve other bodies. The MPPC is addressing this.

**Education** – The Department of Education in NI are challenging a High Court ruling which could be taken to construe the teaching of RE as “indoctrination” and conflates Assemblies with RE. Both Catholic Bishops as well as Protestant churches are to challenge this also and MCI is to share costs with the TRC.

**Safeguarding** - The Safeguarding officer is still on sick leave, and the situation is being managed with a combination of IMYC and the chair of the Safeguarding Board.

### **8. Administrative items**

**Ukraine** – MCI is to focus on supporting churches who are housing Ukrainian refugees rather than putting in place a system to house them with church members as costs were prohibitive.

**CSR** – Rev. Steven Foster will be speaking at the march in Dublin against racism. There will be groups there who do not express the same point of view as MCI but it is important to add the voice of MCI in this arena.

**Funding** - Garfield Weston are willing to look at a single funding registration for MCI with multiple lines.

**Bridging loan** A bridging loan has been requested by the Enniskillen circuit regarding the sale and purchase of a manse. This is against MCI Policy; however the loan is approved because of exceptional pastoral circumstances. Should a loss be incurred it will be shared equally between Enniskillen and the Connexion. It was noted that this is not to be taken as a precedent but as a one-off situation.

**Approved.**

**Mallard Hub** (015\_13.02\_08 Certificate of Incorporation) requested for John Clarke and legal team to be given permission to look at this. **Agreed**

**Reserves Policy** – the action regarding the reserves is ongoing.

**Koinonia House** – 015\_13.02\_08a Koinonia House the report is to be taken back to the Property Board and a recommendation to the Governance Board is to be made.

**Edgehill resourcing** - there were no applications for the Finance Team vacant position.

### 9. Finance Report (015\_13.02\_09 Financial Report Feb 23)

The Head of Finance reported that regarding December 2022 figures – circuits and societies have until end of February to present their information, and a majority of Connexional and 1/3 of Circuits have been processed. Following on from next month, it is anticipated to bring the figures to the GB quarterly.

**Missions** – their Audit request list/information (NB not fully audited accounts) is required by end of March and NR has followed through on a suggestion from the Auditors to do reconciliation work in advance of its submission to the Auditors as this will reduce the audit fee.

**Audit Plan** - The detailed audit plan is in process and is due to be completed by mid-April/May ahead of Conference in June, NR awaiting a definitive date from the auditors.

If fully audited accounts are not available from Mission in time for Conference, then the Governance Board needs to see what is practical to have available in time for June.

#### Actions

1. What information can be prepared in time for Conference. **The ARB are to look at this.**
2. Do the accounts have to be consolidated – can there be internal accounts, that are not consolidated? **ARB**
3. Speed at which the Missions can bring forward audited accounts – write to each Mission to ask when they can be made available, if beyond April/May ask why. **NR**

**10. Budget Process** – is ongoing, will submit overall budget for the Finance Committee, who then bring to the GB. A significant deficit is anticipated as discussed in January. Comprehensive Assessment to be ready to send out to Circuits and Societies by 8<sup>th</sup> April.

### 11. Risk Register – 015\_13.02\_11 Risk Register report and 015\_13.02\_11 MCI Risk Register Jan 23.

A preliminary Risk Register was presented. A wider discussion is required regarding how many risks to include on the register, 10 is standard.

#### Actions:

- The ARB is to identify initially 15-20 risks to be put on the Risk Register and bring this back to the GB. This may be reduced once numbers are crunched. **ARB**
- Team Leaders as well as IMYC, Trustees, Property Board are to be trained and quality assured on this. There is a training course that can be run to upskill the appropriate people. **HM and DB/NR**

### 12. Management Structure Review - 015\_13.02\_12 Management Structure Review.

It was acknowledged that the current structure is in transition and that there is no spare capacity at the top of the organisation.

- The General Secretary has too many direct reports
- the central office is under-resourced, for example the Operations Officer is also the Human Resources Manager, but these are two full time positions.
- The General Secretary has no designated deputy. This is a strategic threat to the organisation should anything happen to the General Secretary.

There is an acknowledgement that money spent on central resource is money simultaneously taken from local churches, and that a balance is required. There is a general lack of understanding and appreciation of the work done centrally and this needs to be addressed.

**Actions:** HM to bring in professional advice on the organisation of the office and the required level of Resources. **HM**

### **13. Volunteer Policy Review** - 015\_13.02\_13 Volunteer Policy Feb 2023 HM

Policy was reviewed and the following suggestions made.

**Actions:** It should be made clear exactly what roles are being referred to, and an explicit link back to the relevant section in the Manual of Laws included.

Problem solving steps are unclear – revisit and clarify.

Expenses – it should be made very clear that expenses are to be claimed so that no-one is prohibited from volunteering. **HM**

### **14. Committee Reports**

**14 Eastwell Residential Home** 015\_13.02\_14 Eastwell Conference Rep revised 2023, 015\_13.02\_14 Eastwell Financial Statements 2021, 015\_13.02\_14 Eastwell Board Details Return 2023

The report was accepted.

It was noted that the board of Eastwell have the building listed as an asset in their accounts, but in fact it is owned by MCI.

The following were noted:

- There are no reserves held in the accounts, is this the case?
- There are currently 11 people in care at Eastwell and there are 14 people on the Board
- After the meeting it was noted that some of the rooms are let to students. Have those students been vetted re Safeguarding as they are living in close proximity with vulnerable adults

**Action:**

- Clarify whether the property is vested in the Statutory Trustees or not. This is being looked at as part of the review of Associated Bodies. **HM**
- Contact the board with the above questions. **HM**

**14a Gurteen College** 015\_13.02\_14a 2023 MCI Conference Gurteen report, 015\_13.02\_14a Gurteen Committee Details Return 2023 – the report was accepted.

**14b Ministry of Healing Committee** 015\_13.02\_14b MoH Annual Report 2023, 015\_13.02\_14b MoH Committee Return 2023- the report was accepted.

**14c Prison and Health Care Chaplaincy** 015\_13.02\_14c P&HCC Committee Details Return 2023, 015\_13.02\_14c P&HCC Committee membership 2023, 015\_13.02\_14c P&HCC Conference Chaplaincy report 2023

The report was accepted.

**Action:** Given the changes in Healthcare Chaplaincy, the GB requested that they look at widening their remit and the numbers on their Committee. **HM**

**14d Methodist Childcare Society** 015\_13.02\_14d Childcare Committee details 2023, 015\_13.02\_14d Childcare Report for Conference 2023

The Report was accepted.

The Governance Board asked the following questions

- Is a Committee of two sustainable?
- Why is there such a disparity between the amounts of money given in the South versus the North
- Is the relationship with IMYC still in place- if so, it would be good to mention that link in the Report.

**Action:** HM to contact the board with these questions. **HM**

**14e Inter-Church Relations Committee** 015\_13.02\_14e Inter-church relations report to GB 2023

The Report was accepted.

**Action:** The Inter-Church Relations Committee is to be requested to let the GB know when their review is complete, and their recommendations regarding their role going forward. **HM**

The Governance Board is very appreciative of the work done by all of the above-named Societies and Committees.

**Action:** For all Associated Bodies in MCI consolidated accounts – on a bi-annual basis each one is to be asked to provide a proforma letter of assurance to the GB that there are no anticipated issues or change in underlying financial position that needs to be brought to its attention. John Clarke to look at this as part of the Audit & Assurance committee remit. **HM/JC**

**15. AOB** – Kilmore Road 015\_13.02\_15 Property Dublin North Circuit (76 Kilmore Road) - PB05 - 29221214 - Purchase Land or Property

The request to purchase Kilmore Road is **Agreed**.

In regard to property decisions coming before the GB It was proposed that in future a 1 page report be submitted including reasoning and Missional plan along with any request to the Governance Board.

There being no other business, the meeting closed with John Clarke leading prayer.

**Tony O'Connor, Chair**

**13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2023**