



Synod of the International Presbyterian Church

Synod Standing Committee/BCO Editorial Committee

Minute of meeting

Friday 13th October 2017 at London City Mission at 11am

Sederunt: Leo Proot (Moderator), Chris Hatch (UK English Spkg), Chris Craddock (UK English Spkg), Joel Rinn (Euro), Puk Kyong Kim (UK Korean Spkg), Sunghyun Yoon (UK Korean Spkg), Simon Barker (Clerk).

Apologies: Geoffrey Decan (Euro), Byounghun Hwang (South Korea).

1. The meeting was opened in prayer by the Moderator
2. The draft minute of Synod 2017 was considered. Further comments to the Clerk. The minute is to be formally approved at Synod 2018.
3. The agenda was approved with a request from CH to consider how best to facilitate inter-Presbytery interactions at Synod meetings.
4. Nominations were invited for a Moderator to take office from close of Synod 2018 onwards. UK English Speaking Presbytery nominates Matthew Roberts to take up the role of Synod Moderator.
5. Nominations were invited for a Clerk to take office from close of Synod 2018 onwards. No nomination yet received.

The committee considered that diversity in officer roles from different Presbyteries would be desirable if possible. Nominations to be sought from all Presbyteries. The need to develop a mature approach to Synod roles and building relationships was noted.

6. Remuneration of TEs

Request by Paul Meiners to consider this issue:

BCO 3.7.1 on Members Meetings states that "special business" requiring a ¾ majority includes 4 things: 1) appointment of church officers, 2) remuneration of church officers, 3) sale or purchase of major capital assets and 4) separation from the denomination. I understand the need for a large majority on 1, 3 and 4, which are significant decisions for the direction of a congregation, but would like to know the intent of 2), which is a recurring budget decision.'

SB explained there have been issues with achieving the ¾ majority for decisions on salary. It is also noted that where a Trust or other legal entity (independent of the congregation's oversight) is responsible for financial



Synod of the International Presbyterian Church

arrangements, it is not possible for them to be bound by members in this way. It was noted that the remuneration of church officers should not be a divisive issue within the Church.

The committee also discussed church budgets which are variably subject to congregational scrutiny within the denomination.

The need to avoid Elders making decisions about their own remuneration in isolation from their church members was recognised.

It was suggested that 3.7.1 (ii) should be removed from the BCO. Doing so would not compromise access to Presbytery appeal for concerned Church members. Consideration of including some alternate mechanism for broader scrutiny and 3.7.2 (iii) should be strengthened to include the word 'scrutiny' as well as presentation of the budget to the congregation.

Recommendation:

- a) That 2.2 (iii) and 3.7.1 (ii) should be **removed** from the Book of Church Order.
- b) and to amend 3.7.2 (iii) to read **the presentation and scrutiny of the annual accounts and budget of the church by the Treasurer.**

7. Liturgy Book

Received: That copyright permissions are now in place and publication has now taken place.

8. Subordinate Standards Book

Received: That copyright permissions are now in place and publication has now taken place.

9. Elders out of bounds voting status

Noted that UK Korean Presbytery does not grant voting status to OOB Elders – to do so would cause significant quorum issues in their Presbytery and they consider an OOB Elder should not influence church related matters. This contrasts with BCO and practice of other Presbyteries. The committee considered whether the status of an OOB elder is thereby diminished.

It was asked if the Korean Spkg Presbytery could consider voluntary ceding of voting rights by OOB Elders rather than mandating non-voting status.

This concept was extended to consider that quorum issues across the courts of the church could be addressed by allowing any individual or court to voluntarily cede its voting eligibility at a given meeting by notifying the clerk of that meeting in advance.

Concern was expressed that this would unhelpfully excuse participation in church courts.

Recommendation:

To amend section 7.2 of the BCO to include the following:



Synod of the International Presbyterian Church

Elders working out of bounds may voluntarily rescind their normal voting rights at a given meeting by notifying the Clerk before that meeting. This would effectively reduce the quorum necessary for those voting at that meeting.

It was noted that English Spkg Presbytery had submitted rationalized classes of Elder to Synod 2016 and progress on this issue remains with Presbyteries who should bring their views to Synod.

10. Synod quorum

The mandate of Standing Committee from Synod 2016 concerning required participation in its meetings is extended to bring proposals to Synod 2018. Presbyteries are to provide feedback and proposals to the Standing Committee by September 2017

Standing Committee noted the need to make final recommendations to Synod 2018 and these will need to be with Presbyteries by mid-November to permit consideration.

Perspectives received from each Presbytery on this issue were considered:

SK Presbytery – request for capacity to voluntarily reduce the number of voting members to 10% of whole Presbytery (currently 3 members) to attend Synod. Desire not to use VC.

UK Korean Spkg Presbytery – Desire to remain united with single Synod. Suggested use of VC.

UK English Spkg Presbytery – Four options:

- a) OOB elder votes being reduced noted to be a temporary relief only.
- b) Considered it might be desirable to lay responsibility and requirement onto Presbyteries to guarantee 1/3 attendees or voluntarily reduce voting rights if it could not achieve this.
- c) A delegates system was also suggested.
- d) Finally several Synods with General Assemblies every few years has been suggested.

European Presbytery – Note implications of decisions are wider than the issue of quorum to include the theology of the church. Committee to look at the issue suggested. Alternate yearly Synods also suggested for next 6 years. Another option to expect attendance but accept that quorum might be lowered to avoid inquorate meetings.



Synod of the International Presbyterian Church

The Standing Committee noted that there is diversity of views on how to proceed within the denomination. It has been noted that some see a minimalist role for Synod whilst others see a more expansive role. Time investment priorities differ.

The idea of delegates was noted to have some merit and has been pursued in other denominations.

A working group to investigate the longer-term future of Synod (our theology of church and mission perspective and other aspects of IPC inter-Presbytery relationships) was thought to be a helpful suggestion. The need to maintain representativeness of the current spectrum of IPC experience was noted. The answer as to why we should put effort into Synod should be addressed.

It was suggested that church members and individual sessions should be encouraged in their awareness of Presbytery and Synod business.

Suggestions for the immediate pressure on Synod Quorum were considered.

Recommendations:

- a) To reduce the Quorum of Synod to 20% of elders who are members of constituent Presbyteries. It is noted that this is likely to require revisiting in due course.**
- b) To require Presbyteries to actively identify Presbyters to ensure they meet or exceed their contribution to quorum.**
- c) To allow Elders working out of bounds to voluntarily rescind their normal voting rights at Synod by notifying their Presbytery Clerk in time for the roll to be submitted to the Synod Clerk.**
- d) To convene a stand alone single issue Synod committee to consider the practical, philosophical and theological implications of different models of Synod composition with regard to our international identity and to bring a report to Synod. The committee should have at least 2 representatives from each constituent (proto)Presbytery and has the power to coopt additional members.**

The BCO changes to be considered at Synod 2018 to bring effect to these recommendations are:

- a) Insertion of additional text to article 2.2 (para 3) of the BCO such that it would read:



Synod of the International Presbyterian Church

'A quorum of any Church council, committee or commission shall be one third of those eligible to vote, with a minimum of 2; **excepting Synod where one fifth of those eligible to vote shall constitute a quorum.**

b) – no change required

c) To amend article 8.2 (para 2) by insertion of additional text: '**Elders working out of bounds may voluntarily rescind their normal voting rights at a given meeting of Synod by notifying their Presbytery Clerk before the roll is submitted to the Synod Clerk for a given meeting.**'

d) – no change required

11. It was noted that no BCO amendments have been received to date for consideration for Synod 2018.

12. Relationships with other 'bodies'

a) CC noted that a group of English Spkg churches in SE Asia have approached UK Eng Spkg Presbytery. The Eng Spkg Presbytery has established a working group to look at how support might be offered and recognizes that ultimately this would be Synod business.

b) The committee considered the suggestion of joining **World Reformed Fellowship** (see website <http://wrfnet.org>) noting Synod remitted this to the Standing Committee for further consideration. It was noted that membership is self-policed. We noted the statement of faith is consistent with IPC beliefs. It was noted that for 2000 communicant members this would be £200 per annum. It was questioned what value would lie in joining.

Recommendation: Clerk to clarify from Neal Williams what value there is in joining to the denomination in general; or if it is specific to a member church then that church should join and be responsible for financing any associated costs.

c) The committee heard from CC regarding IPC/EPCEW relationship. It was noted that there are mixed views within EPCEW about the value of increased fraternal relations. IPC English Spkg Presbytery has not actively pursued increased links but has been open to dialogue.

13. Synod 2018 Meeting

It was noted that several Presbyters from UK (English and Korean spkg) Presbyteries have expressed a desire to move the proposed venue from Brussels BE to Kingston UK.

PK confirmed that Korean UK Church offers their Kingston Church for Synod 2018. It was noted that more Korean brothers would come on this basis.

LP gave a contrasting perspective that Europeans often come to UK.



Synod of the International Presbyterian Church

It was suggested that we rotate the venue on a 3 yearly basis between a UK Eng Spkg then UK Korean Spkg then European 'hosted' meetings. This would effectively deliver 2 London based meetings and one Mainland Europe based meeting.

Noted that we are likely to need 33 to make a quorum on this occasion. Realistic numbers are SK x2, EU x10, SKUK x6, UKES x17 to achieve this. This is recognized to be a challenge.

Venue: Following a comprehensive discussion of the relative merits of the options available it was resolved that

- a) The Synod should rotate on a 3 yearly basis
- b) The next meeting in line with 8.4.1 of the BCO has been determined to be **Brussels OM Centre at Zaaventem.**

Date confirmed: **2nd March 2018 11-5pm**

Simultaneous translation: This is considered desirable and should be in place – to ask Taero re headphones/arrangements.

Agenda:

Synod address/worship	11-12.30
Lunch	12.30-1.30
Synod business	1.30-5
Evening meal	6.30

Host church to be responsible for worship session.

Jae Yoo (SK Presbytery) to be approached to give an address.

14. Financial requirements of Synod 2018

Synod expenses shall be authorised by the Standing Committee and shall be the responsibility of its constituent Presbyteries and proto-Presbyteries.

Budgetary areas considered:

- (i) Room hire and catering for Synod 2018
- (ii) Travel costs for Standing Committee
- (iii) Equipment hire / IT costs
- (iv) Any other meetings or anticipated expenses

Resolved: There are no identified costs of Synod at this point however the Standing Committee asks each (proto)Presbytery Treasurer to be prepared to



Synod of the International Presbyterian Church

refund Synod expenses which will be divided up and sent out to them if and when they arise.

15. Open prayer

16. Close of meeting

Appendix 1

Remit of Standing Committee

'Synod mandates the formation of a Standing Committee to be appointed on an ongoing basis to meet between Synods to:

- a) build relationships and deepen understanding between Presbyteries.
- b) fulfill the functions of the BCO Editorial Committee,
- c) support the Synod Moderator in his work,
- d) nominate a Moderator and Clerk for the next session of Synod.

The Standing Committee should be responsible for investigating, recommending and maintaining formal and/or fraternal relationships with other churches and external organisations.

This committee shall include two representatives of each Presbytery or proto-Presbytery, one of whom is nominated by the Presbytery and the other is the Presbytery moderator or his deputy.

The Synod Moderator and Clerk shall be ex-officio members of the committee.

The committee shall be chaired by the Synod moderator.'

Synod 2017