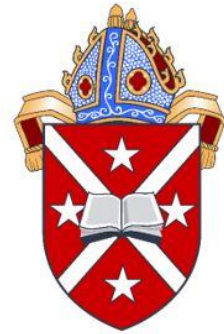




Anglican
Diocese of Dunedin
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Full Report on Governance Conference 2023

Over August-September 2023, Christian Savings hosted their annual Church and Charities Conference. We have gathered some insights and resources from this for your governance kete-toolbox.

This year the governance theme was 'Fruitful Stewardship', looking at some of the key stewardship issues our churches and charities are facing and shared some resources for faith communities and faith-based organisations.



Please note – if you are on a Vestry or Committee and have signed the Anglican Church declaration of adherence, you are essentially an Officer of the Church – anything below that relates to Boards and Trustees includes you as well.

Charities Health Checks

This year in our Diocese we have been encouraging Boards and Vestries to have a look at the [Good Governance Code](#) produced by Community Governance Aotearoa. The Charities conference shared some more resources produced by Parry Field Lawyers in Christchurch, who are very active in providing resources and supports for charities, particularly those operating in faith sectors (access these documents via <https://www.calledsouth.org.nz/diocesan-resources/> and go to [Governance Resources 2023 – Part 1](#) or follow this link: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/hh7snh4b01i3pjj70j5i0/h?rlkey=eo40aeq60q6tg29m72pe8vxmr&dl=0>

Stephen Moe from Parry Field is one of the main players in developing these resources... and encouraging any and all of us to have a health check on what we are doing. Some of

what follows is taken from Stephen's and other's presentations at a Governance Masterclass.

Board Skills and Succession Planning

It's always useful for Boards and Vestries to have a skills matrix i.e. knowing what range of skills you have represented by your board, but what you are missing. How is your Board planning for succession, and do you have a rotation of board members... or the same people who have been there for years?

If you are considering joining a Board (or Vestry-Committee), the following questions are worth asking:

- **Who is on the Board?**
- **What is the Chair like?**
- **How do the Board make decisions?**
- **Can I sit in on a Board meeting to see what happens before I say "yes" to joining?**
- **Why me?** (what skills-attributes are you looking for?)
- **Are there any significant issues that you are dealing with right now** that I need to know about? (rather than finding you arrive in the middle of something very complex and messy)
- **Do you set time limits** for your meetings?

Good Governance Practices

Rear view mirror

If we think of our organisations like cars, how many of us would spend all of our time looking in the rear view mirror when we need to be looking through the windscreen? We need to be looking ahead at what is coming at us, not just looking back.

In saying this, there are some matters which help Boards to look back as well as into the future. How do you measure up with the following?



- **Do you ever check if anything has gone wrong...** is there anything that you need to ask about?
- **What about safeguarding** - is this on your agenda, do you have policies in place around this, bullying etc, to ensure that the organisation is a safe place?
- **Are you able to change your mind or a decision** you have made (or do you insist that once something has been decided, that's it)?

- **Do you ever pause for prayer?** It's a great way to slow things down, refocus and get a much needed bigger perspective.
- **How much do questions get asked...** and if there is a disagreement, do you minute it?
- **What would happen if you put "our honour" at the end of your sentence?** (i.e., what would happen if a particular matter ended up in a court of law?)
- Trust Law has been updated over the past few years - **when did you last update your rules?**
- **New Trustees have superpowers** - they can ask "Why do you do this"?
- **Do you review conflicts of interest** at every meeting?

The best practice for attendance is for trustees to be there at every meeting, to have Board papers circulated one week before and to have accurate minutes that would be understood 5 years from now. The ultimate card any Trustee can play is their resignation - if the Board and you are not a good fit, there is no point in staying on.

[Seeds Podcasts - Telling Good Stories](#)

Steven Moe has developed a resource hub with podcasts, videos, articles and books that will help inform and inspire your governance space: "stories of people living lives of purpose and making an impact on our world".



Have a look at our recent series of [podcasts with senior directors](#) who give their insights into Governance by way of "If I was to write a book, what would the title be?"

The following information focuses the bigger (future) picture with three of the Keynote speakers

Stewardship is the Current Season of the Church

Frank Ritchie

An opening observation from Frank Ritchie was that although churches can feel "it's bad out there" and our very survival is threatened, "the gates of Hades will not prevail..." (Matthew 16: 17-19). There is genuine hope for the church even when we



become smaller and feel under fire. What we do see in history is that when the church is at its most powerful, we can actually be at our worst: when we have nothing, that has been the best time for us to really identify and relate to (the poor) who are open to the Gospel. He observed that in New Zealand there is what is called a "Commentary class" i.e. people who are very vocal on all kinds of issues, but for all the noise there are also ones who are more silent. For the (often unseen) silent ones, it is issues like food, job security and housing that are really important. If our "silent" community sees the Church speaking and acting in these spaces, this potentially has a huge impact.

In a governance space, the key issue is the quality of our decisions now. The church tends to be asset rich: how can these be used to generate not only income but transformation (why would any of us continue to go to church if we didn't believe in transformation?!). This is not just about making converts or getting more people into pews, it is about getting involved in the important issues around us in our communities, and aligning our resources to help bring about transformation.

Frank asked an important question of our asset rich churches: what would happen if all of our assets were taken off us? What would we be left with... and what would we do? This scenario is a way of focusing us on the why of what we do. Even if we do feel that some of us are small (and fading away), how can we help each other make a difference in our communities?

As churches, most of us can't do everything like we used to be able to do. We have to say "no" sometimes to keep things simple and realistic. We run the risk of trying to keep the machinery for church as it used to be going, where we really need to be seeing ourselves as not needing to be the sole provider of every kind of activity in our communities. **What should be being worked on is a patchwork-puzzle of churches:** we can talk to other faith communities around us and network our strengths, For example, if the church around the corner has a good youth group, why don't we send our younger people there... and invite them to the good things that we offer?

In summary, we need to be asking ourselves these kinds of questions:

- Where are we at with our relationship with God?
- Do we really believe in transformation?
- Can we be realistic about our assets ("build it and they will come" has not been a good strategy for most churches) and use them for transformation?
- How can we prepare for our own end? (all of us will die.. and that includes some churches as well).
- Would our community miss us if we were gone?
- How can our assets enable something that would be wanted and needed in our community?

Frank is an ordained Wesleyan Methodist minister and leads a small church in Hamilton. He has a history in radio broadcasting and can be heard every Sunday night on Newstalk ZB and Rhema Media's stations from time to time. He highly values the place of the media in society, and many in the industry have trusted him enough to sit down and have confidential conversations about life and work.

Governance as Service

Kirsten Patterson

Kirsten Patterson spoke from a place of wide governance experience and a philosophy of leaving places better than she found them.



For any of us involved in governance, it's important to focus on strategy, purpose and responsibility - like ships nowadays where drones are sent off to see exactly what lies ahead. Governance is all about looking ahead into the longer term, looking at risks and opportunities: it's not just focusing on today (*see the [7 principles of Governance](#)*).

Four principles of governance which help us to see if what we are doing is really making a difference are:

1. **Determining our purpose** - why do we exist? Is this the forefront of everything we do?
2. **An effective governance culture** - how does everyone contribute in our governance space and is everyone's voice heard?
3. **Holding ourselves and each other to account** - its not just about the CEO or other significant leader, but its all of us.
4. **Effective compliance** - knowing and following the rules.

People may be aware of some of the Mainzeal story and the directors who have been before the courts. There was one - Paul Collins - who didn't get into so much trouble because he asked questions, challenged the rest of the board... and ended up starting the insolvency process. Kirsten asked:

- What would get you on the front page of the newspaper?
- What discussions have you had about these kinds of things on your board - so you have them as regular agenda items?
- How do you reflect on and learn from your mistakes?
- How do you keep people safe?

A useful resource: the [Not for Profit Hub](#) on the [NZ Institute of Directors Website](#).

Kirsten's extensive governance and leadership experience include being a Chair of Global Network of Directors Institutes (GNDI), Board member of New Zealand External Reporting Advisory Panel (XRAP), Chair of Brian Picot Ethical Leadership Advisory Board, Trustee of a mental health charity Voices of Hope, an Ambassador of Wellington Women's Homeless Trust, a founding member of Global Women's 'Champions for Change', and a founder/Executive Sponsor, Chapter Zero New Zealand.

Above and Below the Line

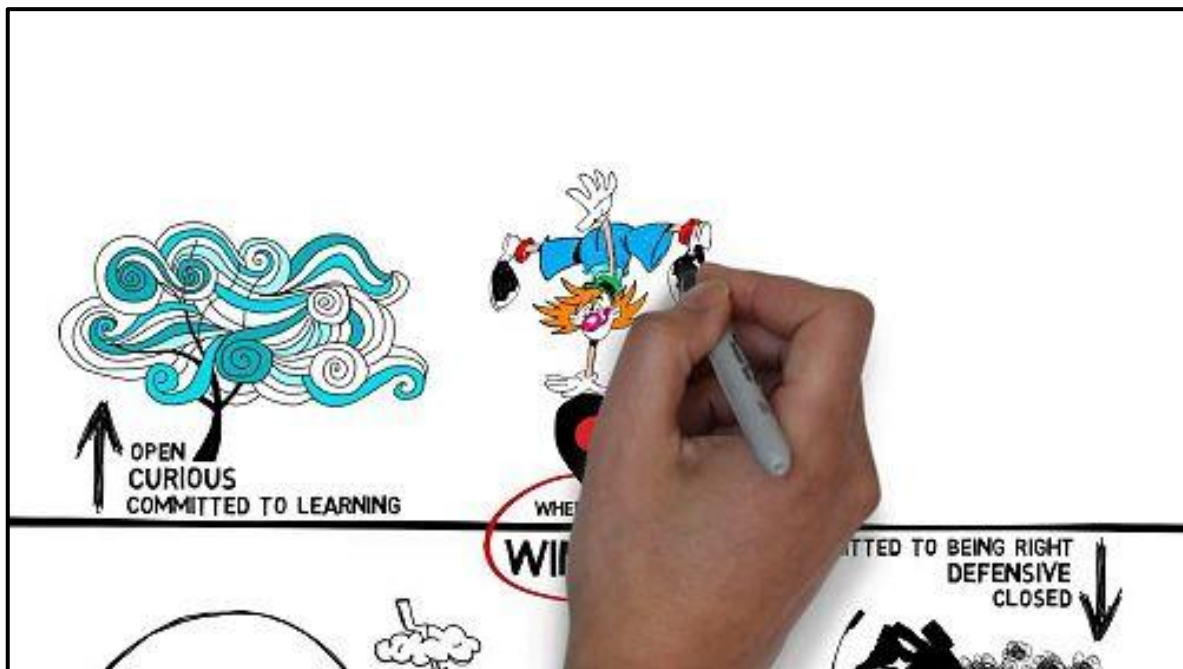
Jenny Collings

One of the presenters at the conference, Jenny (Jen) Collings (National Director, Christian Medical Fellowship NZ) spoke about the importance of looking after people in our organisations.



If we have volunteers working with us, do we have proper position descriptions for them, covenants etc and make sure that they are well oriented and informed about how things work? If people leave, do we have "exit interviews" where we find out what they are going... and look for any themes that may be emerging with others who have left? If we ever notice someone is not performing well, it's best to tackle this head on as the "worst" people in any organisation will always drive out the best.

We need to be able to articulate what our shared values and beliefs are - our norms, but also to keep looking at our own behaviours. One tool that Jen recommended (and we have used in the Diocesan office for a while) is the "**Line of Choice**". This is included below plus [available here](#)... but slightly amended to include biblical references to help us assess if we are below... or above the line.



Locating Yourself - A Key to Conscious Leadership

[This video](#) is a great introduction to this, and worth any leadership team watching together and asking, "**What's my current location?**"



Above and Below the line

Jen Collings works to encourage doctors and medical students in living wholeheartedly for Christ through medicine. She has also served for 15 years as a Salvation Army Corps Officer (ordained Minister) and local Director of social services. As a Law graduate and final year Executive MBA student, she is passionate about good governance and Christ-centred strategic decision-making to lift the impact of Christian organisations.

What could we do with this information?

Resources and links referred to in this article make great discussion starters for Boards, Vestries and other leadership groups. How much time do you spend at meetings: reflecting on what you are doing; asking some hard questions; learning about different aspects of your governance role, and; genuinely evaluating what you do and making positive changes?