

Moderator: Revd David Harvey (DH)

Voting delegates: 58 from 33 churches

Approximately 100 present in total

At the start of the meeting it was explained that the electronic vote held in advance of the day and the holding of the AGM online was permitted due to an extension being granted of the temporary provision within the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 legislation. Such provision allowed charitable companies (such as EMBA) to hold on-line member meetings and conduct electronic voting when their governing documents do not make provision for anything other than face to face in-person meetings and voting.

It was confirmed that the electronic vote was quorate, as was attendance at the online meeting.

- 1 The minutes of the AGM** held on 23 March 2019 at Broadway Baptist Church, Derby were circulated in advance of the meeting and agreed by electronic vote with 4 abstentions and no matters arising. It was noted that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 AGM (due to be held on 21 March 2020) had to be cancelled.
- 2 The Annual Report 2020-21** had been circulated in advance of the meeting (also available on the EMBA website). DH paid tribute to the work carried out by EMBA Directors, the Regional Team, ministers and churches during a very challenging year. DH reflected that amidst the disappointments and pastoral heartaches much had been achieved, especially through the embracing of online technology; lots of fellowship, prayer and listening to God about what the 'new normal' might look like, successful online conferences and continued support to ministers and leaders. DH acknowledged that not only had the work of the Association continued but in some areas, better ways of working had been established for the future. DH summarised the contents of the Annual Report and encouraged those gathered to read through the various reports and uphold the activities in prayer on a regular basis.

Thanks and appreciation was expressed to the Staff Team for their flexibility, creativity and enthusiasm, especially given the added challenges of remote working over the last year.

3 2020 Accounts

A copy of the summary accounts had been circulated to all member churches in advance of the meeting.

Mr Tim Jackson (TJ), EMBA Treasurer presented and explained the 2020 accounts which showed that income for the year was **£282,140**. **£110,000** of this had come from Home Mission. The total expenditure on the work of supporting churches was **£242,314** leaving a balance of unrestricted funds to carry forward of **£1,512,270**.

2021 AGM MINUTES

TJ explained that majority of the Association's income comes through the Home Mission appeal; churches Home Mission giving goes to BUGB and a proportion is then returned to the Associations. TJ explained that Home Mission money helps fund both the operational (staffing costs) and missional work of the Association (grants awarded to churches and pioneer ministries) enabling good things to happen.

TJ expressed concern that over the past ten years, Home Mission giving had decreased around 1% per year with costs increasing around 2% year on year, the widening gap adversely affecting Association funding. TJ reported that EMBA's income from Home Mission went down by £16,000 in 2020 and in 2021 the decrease would be £37,000. In 2020, giving across the Baptist family was down by 4%, and whilst recognising that times were hard, TJ encouraged all churches to regularly review their giving to Home Mission, given the challenge outlined.

In relation to expenditure, TJ explained the decrease in Staff Team costs over the last year - a pension accounting issue as the pension gets closer to balance. Home Mission grants were also down £13,000 on the previous year, due to several of the grants having coming to an end. TJ reported that overall there was a surplus in the year of £39,826 despite the issues mentioned.

TJ also highlighted the pension reserve fund (currently standing at £473,042), whereby proceeds from the sale of closed churches over the last three years, had been put into a pension reserve to help cover church pension deficits. TJ explained that as the deficit reduces it is hoped that there will be less of a need for this fund going forward. TJ updated the meeting on the Baptist Pension Scheme, informing those gathered that the deficit had decreased from £18 million in December 2019 to £7 million in February 2021. TJ explained that the decrease was due to improving markets but was also the result of the deficit contributions made by churches (around £5 million per year). It was noted that there had been a temporary reduction (50%) in deficit contributions during the last six months of 2020 to support churches during the pandemic, reverting back to the full level in 2021. TJ went on to report that by June 2026 the deficit contributions should bring the scheme into balance, 2.5 years ahead of the previous valuation.

TJ highlighted the various grants and loans available and encouraged churches to contact the regional team if finance was an issue preventing mission and/or ministry.

No questions relating to the accounts had been received in advance of the meeting and with no questions raised at the meeting, TJ confirmed that the 2020 accounts had been unanimously accepted by electronic vote.

4 Appointment of Independent Examiners

Pells, 17 Newstead Grove, Nottingham NG1 4GZ had been recommended as independent examiners for the Association for the coming year. This was unanimously agreed by electronic vote in advance of the meeting.

Thanks were expressed to both TJ and Irene Milburn (EMBA Bookkeeper) for the time and commitment they give to managing the Association finances.

2021 AGM MINUTES

5 Appointment of EMBA Directors

DH explained that because the 2020 AGM had to be cancelled due to Covid-19, the five nominated Directors then, were duly appointed by the board of Directors under Bye-Law 1e which states that:

'The Directors shall have the power to fill any vacancy that may arise between Annual General Meetings. A person so appointed to fill the vacancy will serve only until the following Annual General Meeting.'

In line with the Bye-Laws, those appointed were only eligible to serve until the 2021 AGM. DH explained that all five Directors were willing to continue to serve and five nominations had therefore been received for the five vacancies on the board.

Following electronic vote, all five nominees were unanimously appointed as Directors of the Association for the next three years:

Revd Hannah Colk

Revd Sam Hackett

Revd Matt Jones

Mrs Ellie Cox

Revd Martin Hills

DH led the meeting in prayer for the newly elected EMBA Directors and for the board of Directors as a whole.

Thanks were expressed to all those who serve God and the Association on the various working groups and committees. Particular thanks was expressed to Melvyn Gilmour for his service to Association life over the last eight years in his various roles as Director and Company Secretary of both EMBA and the East Midland Baptist Trust Company and more recently as Data Protection Officer for the Association. It was reported that Becky Nicholls had now taken on the role of Company Secretary for both EMBA and the Trust Company and was also acting as EMBA Data Protection Officer for an interim period.

Thanks were recorded to Andrea Wilson who managed the administration of EMBA Home Mission donations over the last couple of years and it was noted that Jack Liquorish had now taken on this role. Thanks were also expressed to Elspeth Liberty who had recently stepped down after eleven years serving as one of EMBA's two representatives on BMS Council. DH explained that the position remained vacant and if anyone had a heart and a passion for the work of BMS and would be interested in serving in this role to contact Becky Nicholls.

6 EMBA Strategic Review

DH reminded the meeting that the Directors had begun the Strategic Review prior to Covid-19 in the context of looking at the numerical strength of EMBA churches. Whilst recognising that number was not the only measure of assessing church health it was noted that a significant proportion of EMBA churches had less than forty members with a number of smaller churches now struggling to afford ministry. Projection of current trends over the next 5-10 years indicated that without some form of intervention, a number of churches could face closure.



2021 AGM MINUTES

It was acknowledged that the vision of EMBA is to grow healthy churches, the Strategic Review designed to identify interventions and investments that could be made to enable all EMBA churches to grow and develop in health and fruitfulness. It was noted that the Association have significant reserves to invest and with church closures typically being at the rate of one per year, it was likely further funds would be released, funds which the Association need to discern how best to invest.

DH explained that it had been difficult to progress the Strategic Review over the last twelve months due to having five new directors and Covid restrictions preventing in-person meetings. In light of this, no new proposals were being brought to the AGM but it was noted that strategic discussions would recommence as soon as in-person meetings become viable.

DH gave formal notice that proposals to change the current governance documents (the Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Bye-Laws), would be brought to the 2022 AGM. DH noted that the Bye-Laws had been modified in 2014 but that the pandemic had exposed weaknesses in the current structures; no provision for electronic voting and current wording suggesting that most communication would be 'in writing'. DH highlighted that experience of the digital world over the last year had accelerated changes in the way matters were addressed, changes which needed to be reflected in the Association governing documents going forward. It was noted that the proposals would be the subject of consultation with the churches, initially electronically, but it was hoped that an in-person meeting of the Association might also be possible to further discuss and refine the proposed changes.

The meeting was informed that the Staff Team were currently undergoing a Communications Review looking into how communication with churches might be improved and opportunities for EMBA churches to engage in the world of digital mission were also being explored.

DH then formally closed the AGM.

Signed..... Date.....