

The Ministry of Governance for the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries¹

Preamble

Service as Trustee is a response to the baptismal call to mission:

*In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples ... The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized.*²

In recent years, as a flowering of the vision of Vatican Council II and in response to the “signs of the times”, the ministry of Church governance has been opened up to the laity.

Recognising the new ways of sustaining ministry, in 2009 the Religious Sisters of Charity of Australia transferred their education, health and some welfare ministries to Mary Aikenhead Ministries, a new public juridic person established by the Holy See at the Sisters' instigation.

See, I am doing a new thing! (Isaiah 43:19)

The canonical stewards of Mary Aikenhead Ministries are designated Trustees. Their role is the stewardship of the Ministries' resources for Jesus' mission.

Appointment of Trustees

Following a discernment and formation process for prospective appointees, conducted by the Congregational Leader and Council of the Religious Sisters of Charity of Australia, the Congregation currently appoints between five to nine Trustees, normally for a 3-year term.

A recent publication describes the characteristics of canonical stewards as follows:

*... such individuals are committed to their role; are confident, respectful, just and compassionate; have a sense of vocation and their baptismal call; are informed about Catholic intellectual tradition; are reflective about the nature of God and the Church; and understand their responsibility for the stewardship of the Catholic identity of their ministry.*³

The Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries are missioned also to bring to their stewardship the “joy of the gospel”, a “compassionate gaze” and “the power of tenderness”.⁴

Their stewardship of education, health, social service and research ministries is underpinned by Mary Aikenhead Ministries' values of love, hope, compassion and justice. Coupled with their canonical governance role, the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries are also the members of the civil body corporate.

¹ This document replaces the *Role Statement: Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries* (2010), which has guided the Trustees since the Sisters of Charity's successful petition to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life that led to the establishment of Mary Aikenhead Ministries in 2009. With the *Theological Statement for Mary Aikenhead Ministries*, *Ethical Framework for Mary Aikenhead Ministries* and *Mary Aikenhead Ministries Educational Philosophy*, the *Role Statement* formed the foundational documents for Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

² Pope Francis (2013) *Evangelii Gaudium*, St Pauls Publications, Strathfield, NSW, §120.

³ J.H. Thornber and M. Gaffney (2014) *Governing in Faith: Foundations for Formation*, Connor Court, Ballarat, xii.

⁴ Pope Francis (2013), §1, §169 and §270 respectively.

The Ministry of Governance

While their civil responsibilities are in common with those of other corporate entities, aspects of the Trustees' canonical responsibilities are specific to Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

In the tradition of Mary Aikenhead and the Religious Sisters of Charity of Australia, the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries seek:

*to bring to each person the love, tenderness and concern of Christ for the poor, seeing Christ in everyone.*⁵

Drawing on the Gospel and its expression in Catholic Social Teaching, they work within a shared leadership framework.

In fostering and developing the ministries, the Trustees seek to promote the common good.

Recognising the "suffering Christ" in the poor, they commit the ministries to addressing "new forms of poverty and vulnerability".⁶

*Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members.*⁷

In preparation for and in carrying out their ministry of governance, the Trustees accept a period of induction and then commit themselves to ongoing formation.

Formation⁸

For the Trustees, as for those in leadership roles across the Ministries, the key formation document is the *Mary Aikenhead Ministries' Leadership Formation Framework*:

*Formation is about opportunity, both planned and unplanned, that will enable us to come to know ourselves, our place in the world, our service to the Church and ultimately our relationship with the Divine at a deeper level. In our role in leading, on behalf of the Church, we should be empowered to explore that which lies at the very heart of our existence. This calling to the unique experience of leadership in Catholic ministry by nature may be delivered through education but, in order to be deepened, must be accompanied by reflection, discernment, prayer and conversation.*⁹

In their commitment to induction and their own formation, the Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries participate in monthly sessions with a spiritual companion, a beginning-of-year formation day, an annual retreat, and liturgies, pilgrimages and immersion experiences with the Ministries. They conduct an annual conference and biennial pilgrimage for the Ministries, open their gatherings with a reflection, and undertake periodic visits to the Congregational Leader and Council, local ordinaries and the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. They are also committed to personal journeying through professional reading, self-reflection, journaling and engaging in conversations with others. Their formation has a focus on Ignatian spirituality and discernment, and seeks to foster human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development.¹⁰

⁵ *Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of Australia*, Norm 25.

⁶ Pope Francis (2013), §210.

⁷ Pope Francis (2013), §186.

⁸ The Trustees' formation and ministry take inspiration from the Gospel text of *Luke 4:6-22*.

⁹ *Mary Aikenhead Ministries' Leadership Formation Framework* (2012), p. 16.

¹⁰ J.H. Thornber and M. Gaffney, p. 48.

*Set your stakes on great ideals, the ideals that enlarge the heart, the ideals of service that make your talents fruitful.*¹¹

Role of Trustees¹²

The Trustees:

- (a) are the canon law stewards of the ministries of Mary Aikenhead Ministries including the Services conducted by the Civil Entities;
- (b) govern and manage Mary Aikenhead Ministries and the Body Corporate in accordance with the Statutes, the Act and this Constitution;
- (c) exercise all powers of the Body Corporate that are not by the Statutes, the Act or this Constitution, required to be exercised by the Members;
- (d) also act as the 'members of the body corporate' as that expression is defined in the Act. The Chairperson is the 'provincial' of Mary Aikenhead Ministries and the other Trustees are the 'community consultors' of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, as those expressions are defined in the Act.

Powers of the Trustees¹³

The powers of the Trustees include, without limitation, the following:

- a) to ensure that the business and affairs of Mary Aikenhead Ministries and the Body Corporate are conducted in a manner consistent with the teachings and laws of the Roman Catholic Church;
- b) to approve all acquisitions, by gift, purchase, transfer or otherwise for Mary Aikenhead Ministries in accordance with canon law and the constitution;
- c) with the prior approval of the Members and the Holy See, to carry into effect any alienation of temporal goods belonging to the stable patrimony of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, by gift, sale, transfer or otherwise for Mary Aikenhead Ministries in accordance with canon law;
- d) to determine in accordance with canon law the acts of administration which go beyond the limits and manner of ordinary administration, and the process by which acts of extraordinary administration will be carried out.

¹¹ Pope Francis, general audience, Saint Peter's Square, 24 April 2013; accessed on 12 March 2014 at <http://www.vatican.va/>.

¹² *Constitution of Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries*, Section 15.1.

¹³ *Constitution of Trustees of Mary Aikenhead Ministries*, Section 15.2.