

REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Prepared for Global Generation Church

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1. Introduction and background

This report follows on from my confidential investigation report to the Trustees of Global Generation Church (Glo) issued in February 2022, into concerns raised in September and November 2021, which included issues relating to the culture and leadership of Global Generation Church.

This secondary report is intended to provide further detail and context to the recommendations that flowed from my investigation report around those issues. It will also inform the Improvement Plan to be developed and implemented by the Trustees of Glo in consultation with church members. These findings are based on the 36 complainants who submitted their concerns into the investigation and while many of the complaints are historic, some were more recent and involved incidents that had occurred up to the time when the investigation began.

2. Original Recommendations

The four overarching recommendations I made in my original report were that:

2.1 A comprehensive review of Glo's policies and procedures is carried out, which clearly set out Glo's position on bullying, harassment and discrimination and ensure that clear processes are in place for raising concerns, protecting confidential information and safeguarding vulnerable adults and young people.

2.2 A review of Glo's employment contracts and any other working arrangements is carried out along with its HR procedures, including ensuring there is clarity around requesting annual leave and line management.

2.3 Within the new management structure, a training programme should be put in place to support managers in dealing with staff management issues and providing support with health issues, giving feedback, keeping appropriate records and managing formal processes in line with Glo policies.

2.4 Training on diversity and inclusion for all staff should be given at regular intervals to provide clarity on discrimination issues and Glo's legal obligations to all staff and refreshed for existing staff in relation to its staff and service users. This should form part of the induction process too.

In this second report I provide a summary of the context for these recommendations and have expanded on/added to some of them.

Each subsequent section of this report is divided into 3 parts. The first provides background and context, the second sets out my recommendations in detail and the third section is the response that has been provided to me by the Elders and Trustees of Glo.

3. Issues arising from the investigation

3.1 Church, Family and Work life

3.1.1 Background/context

Glo developed into a church through the founding work of a group of families who lived and worked very closely, for long hours and were very much involved in each other's lives. Those families had been impacted by the mistakes and abuses they had seen in other churches and wanted to build something better. The commitment of those involved in building the church during the 20 years that followed is evidenced in the growth of the church to over 200 adults, as well as the many youth initiatives and other community projects that Glo leads today.

However, what was also evident is that the lines between church, family and work became blurred from the outset, so that behaviours that might have been tolerated amongst the extended group of families and friends, were inappropriate in a work environment and within the wider context of the church congregation. The expectations that those early church leaders had of each other, working as long as it takes to 'get the job done' no matter what, also spilled over into what became expected of employees and others who voluntarily gave their time to support the church. It would seem that this was a significant source of resentment, misunderstanding and disillusion, especially amongst some of the early interns; 'year outers'.

3.1.2 Recommendations

While the church will of course, wish to maintain true to its Christian fellowship and inclusive family-focussed culture, there should now be a review of its cultural and behavioural practices and boundaries set through clear policies around working with each other to ensure that everyone knows what is expected and those expectations are reasonable and clearly communicated.

3.1.3 Response from Trustees and Elders of Glo

Laura has highlighted a key issue which we are determined to resolve. We recognised that the lines between working and volunteering can get blurred and that we specifically need to put in protections for paid staff in this regard.

We also recognise that the Glo's vision and commitment to make a difference in our local and wider communities has at times led people to undertake significant levels of volunteering to the extent that it has affected their wellbeing. Whether people felt under pressure to do this or were just inspired by what they saw as the example of others, we recognise that we need to protect the wellbeing of all volunteers.

We will continue in our commitment to transform communities and make a difference and believe that volunteering can bring great blessing to those serving as well as those who are served. However, we recognise that there needs to be protections in place to avoid volunteering commitments that negatively affecting an individuals' wellbeing. This can't be a one size fits all approach as every person is different. We will ask that the improvement plan working party considers these issues and helps identify the actions we need to take going forward.

3.2 **Transparency**

3.2.1 Background/context

A number of the concerns raised related to the financial dealings of the church. Having investigated these I concluded that they appeared to relate to miscommunication and misunderstanding of the financial workings of the church, rather than financial misappropriation. The fact that these concerns were raised indicates to me that communications about the finances of the church both to staff and to the wider congregations requires some improvement. I noted that there were clear examples given of irresponsible labelling and communication around how funding streams were managed and how church money was being spent, which had evidently fuelled the concerns.

This correlated with other concerns about church tithing and the feeling among some that church members were giving up a significant portion of their income, without assurance that it was being spent responsibly. One concern raised by a number of individuals related to hospitality spending using church credit cards by the Church Team Leader, which for those on low incomes, felt like 'rubbing their noses in it'. I also heard an example where an individual had been asked to take out a financial agreement on behalf of the church in their own name, which was inappropriate and had financial consequences for that individual.

3.2.2 Recommendations

This is an area where more effective and transparent communication would have been helpful in mitigating against any misunderstanding and resentment building up. The church may therefore consider reviewing its practices around financial transparency and reporting to the congregation so that its members and employees are kept informed about how money is being spent. The church should also review its financial policies and procedures around business card use and spend relating to hospitality to ensure that expectations of staff are clear. Finally, the church should ensure that safeguards exist to ensure that no staff or volunteers are asked to take out financial agreements in their own name on behalf of the church.

3.2.3 Response from Trustees and Elders of Glo

We fully accept these recommendations and are already working towards improving transparency regarding the church's income and expenditure. Whilst we are confident that we have good financial policies and procedures in place, we will review these as recommended and will consider whether our approach to hospitality expenses could be more clearly set out. We also recognise that existing staff training in these procedures could be strengthened to include training on financial sensitivity and supplemented with information to staff about how church funds are used.

There should be no reason for any individual to ever be asked to take out a financial agreement in their own name on behalf of the church and we will ensure that a statement to this effect is included within our financial policies and that our training to staff references this and explains what action an individual staff member should take if they suspect that this has happened.

These are all actions that we expect to be included within the Improvement Plan, and we welcome any further suggestions from the Working Party.

3.3 Accountability

3.3.1 Background/context

Whilst there were concerns raised regarding the ability of church leadership to challenge the team leader, this was not a focal point of the investigation. From the evidence I saw and heard during the investigation, there were occasions when some members of the leadership team had appeared not to have known how to challenge poor behaviours. However, to put this into context, I am aware that on many other occasions robust challenges have been made by members of the leadership team which have led to resolution.

Where individuals had approached church leaders and felt that their concerns had not been dealt with appropriately, I noted the absence of any clear process for raising concerns or any criteria against which concerns would be assessed and acted upon. The lack of clarity of approach had clearly impacted on the individuals concerned and was a driver for some of the complaints received as part of the investigation.

It is important to note here that many of the more serious concerns raised were not known to the leadership until the complaints received in September 2021. Furthermore, some concerns raised to me had not previously been raised to the church leadership at all.

3.3.2 Recommendations

It is therefore important that going forward, processes for raising concerns are clearly set out and regularly reviewed to ensure they are dealt with sensitively and appropriately. In relation to concerns about other staff or church members, it may be appropriate to explore informal resolution in the future. However, where that is not possible or has not been successful, staff should be clearly aware of their right to raise a formal grievance, and the process by which to do that, so that it can be dealt with properly, including being fully investigated where appropriate.

It is important that Glo has a clear process for dealing with concerns raised about other matters, such as mismanagement of finances, which could amount to public interest disclosures (“Whistleblowing”) and that such concerns are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Whilst a whistleblowing Policy exists, Glo needs to ensure that (alongside all other policies) it is accessible and that the process for enacting it is communicated to and understood by staff.

3.3.3 Response from Trustees and Elders of Glo

We appreciate that whilst members of the leadership team have provided robust challenge, this has not consistently been the case and we need to collectively consider why this is and what we could put in place to facilitate a culture within the leadership team where challenge is positively welcomed.

We also regret that a number of concerns had not been raised to those in leadership over the years either because people didn’t know how to do so or they weren’t confident that they would be dealt with appropriately. We fully accept that there is more for us to do to ensure that everyone involved in the church has a clear route to raise any concerns that they might have. We hope that the working party will help us identify some actions we can take in this regard. The processes around different

types of concerns may be different (e.g. the route for staff members raising concerns will be different to members of the congregation) but they all need to be robust and accessible.

Whilst we are committed to listening and helping and supporting people in the concerns that they raise; we also must recognise that we may not always be able to resolve an individual's concerns in the way that they might want us to. Our commitment here is that anyone raising a concern to us should be able to expect us to review it sincerely, fairly and consistently against our values and commitments as an organisation.

3.4 Confidentiality and Data Protection

3.4.1 Background/context

There appear to have been poor choices made previously around sharing church members' sensitive information inappropriately. I understand that there is an element of sharing information amongst elders for the purposes of seeking advice from peers and teaching trainees. However, care must always be taken around how personal information is shared and processed, and must be done in accordance with data protection legislation. This includes obtaining the consent of the individual(s) concerned unless there is a safeguarding or other legal reason for not doing so.

3.4.2 Recommendations

Failure to follow data protection legislation could leave the church at risk of complaints and legal claims. It is therefore important that a review is undertaken of the policies and processes to ensure compliance, including how information is stored and the annual training currently provided to staff on Glo's data protection obligations.

3.4.3 Response from Trustees and Elders of Glo

We take the concerns raised about confidentiality very seriously. We've noted that it has been a while since staff last received GDPR training and so have requested that all staff complete this training over the course of May this year and will consider how we build this into a programme of mandatory training. We also need to ensure that there is appropriate training for all members of the leadership team (both elders and trustees) and for volunteers.

We will look to the working party to suggest any further actions for inclusion within the improvement plan.

3.5 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

3.5.1 Background/context

There was evidence that individuals had experienced or observed discriminatory language and behaviour in relation to race, gender, sexual orientation and disability.

Whilst some of the examples given occurred some years ago, there were also much more recent examples given including in 2021.

Discrimination is a challenging and nuanced topic, and it is encouraging to hear that Glo has already reached out to 3rd party experts for training and development, to understand what needs to change culturally around race.

Sexual orientation is clearly an ongoing debate within the Christian church and no doubt will continue to be so for some time to come. However, there were examples of the treatment of gay members of the congregation which I understand would not have been in keeping with the values of the current leadership of the church, which were not inclusive, and which could be regarded as discriminatory.

There were also some worrying examples of inappropriate conversations and decision-making around job applicants that could amount to sex discrimination and/or harassment.

3.5.2 Recommendations

I have recommended that alongside a full review of Glo's policies on bullying and harassment and equality and diversity, regular mandatory training for all staff should be in place to provide clarity on discrimination issues, as a safe place to ask questions and to reinforce Glo's legal obligations in relation to its staff and service users.

3.5.3 Response from Trustees and Elders of Glo

We are deeply concerned that people have experienced or observed discriminatory language and behaviour within Glo. We have made some initial enquiries with 3rd party experts who could help us in our culture with regards to race, but nothing has yet been agreed. We also recognise that we need to strengthen our training for staff around all the protected characteristics, so that staff are aware of how to spot inappropriate language and behaviours and know what action to take.

We intend to undertake a full review of our existing policies on bullying and harassment and equality and diversity.

With regards to the question of sexual orientation, we recognise that this is an area of ongoing discussion across the contemporary Christian Church. We will continue to prayerfully seek wisdom on the practical application of the teachings of scripture. This is a process which will take time and in which we will seek external theological input including from the wider 24-7 church community.

3.5 HR processes

3.6.1 Background/context

Contracts – Several individuals raised historic concerns about not having a contract or other clarity about what their contractual obligations and rights were, including around requesting leave. Many also highlighted working excessive hours during their employment within the church and potentially in breach of the Working Time Regulations 1998. Lines also appeared to have been blurred between working hours

and volunteering which may have had implications for the application of the National Minimum Wage. There are a number of other legal requirements around employing people and providing information about their terms and conditions which Glo should ensure it is compliant with, so that staff are aware of their rights and obligations.

Appraisals, support and development – I heard that there had been inconsistent arrangements for one-to-one support for staff from their managers. It is important that managers ensure they have regular one-to-one contact with team members in a confidential space to discuss any issues as they arise, any support the individual needs, feedback (both positive and negative) and opportunities for development. Yearly appraisals are also important to review performance and set objectives, but this should not be the only opportunity for managers to get together individually with their staff.

HR records and systems – In any organisation accurate records should be kept of sickness absence, annual leave, and other HR-related processes so that staff are managed fairly and consistently in line with an organisation's policies. For example, managers should monitor annual leave to ensure that staff are taking their entitlement at appropriate intervals throughout the year. This will avoid burnout but also staffing issues at pinch points when people generally want time off (e.g., school summer holidays). Closer management of staffing levels may also present opportunities to develop a rota system during busy times in Glo's calendar, which may help avoid situations where individuals felt they had no choice but to work unsociable hours on a regular basis.

3.6.2 Recommendations

Maintain existing contractual records to ensure that all staff have up to date contracts and know how to access them.

Ensure that expectations around working hours and volunteering are clearly understood by staff and that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that staff are not working or volunteering excessive hours.

Establish a robust and consistent approach to staff support including regular one-to-ones, appraisals and personal development plans.

Review Glo's approach to staff requests and approvals of annual leave and review processes for keeping track of sickness absence, annual leave and other HR-related processes.

3.6.3 Response from the Trustees and Elders of Glo

We fully accept these recommendations and whilst we believe that improvements have been made in recent years we are also aware that here is still much to do. We have in the last month for example made improvements to the process for requesting annual leave and have also created additional opportunities for staff to have 1:1s, but we recognise that the annual leave approach needs a further review. We are in the process of establishing a new rhythm for regular staff 1:1s and appraisals as well as investing more consistently in staff personal development

See section 3.1.3 which talks about our commitment to clarifying expectations about volunteering.

3.7 Safeguarding

3.7.1 Background/context

I heard examples of situations involving young people that were poorly handled, so that they did not receive appropriate protection and support. I have received assurances from Glo regarding their safeguarding arrangements and note that the safeguarding concerns raised to me don't relate to the church's current children's or youth ministries.

3.7.2 Recommendations

I would recommend that all elders and leaders undertake regular safeguarding training in relation to both children and vulnerable adults to remind them of their responsibilities, what to look out for and how to appropriately manage a situation. It is also important that responsibility for safeguarding is not just held by one individual, as the nature of the work means there can be times of significant pressure. Having a team of safeguarding leads will also help make potential conflicts of interest avoidable. In the light of these recommendations, I would also suggest that a review of Glo's Safeguarding Policy is undertaken by an appropriately trained individual to ensure that the procedures in place are sufficiently detailed and robust.

3.7.3 Response from Trustees and Elders of Glo

We take our commitment to safeguarding very seriously and have made a number of improvements to our arrangements in recent years:

All staff and volunteers working with children and vulnerable adults are DBS checked and also required to undertake safeguarding training. DBS checks are renewed every 3 years as recommended to us by Thirtyone:eight where applicable in line with best practice. Regular in-house safeguarding training is also provided, which includes every 2 years the completion of level 2 online safeguarding training and PREVENT.

For a number of years, we have had both a Designated Lead and Deputy Safeguarding Officer in place as required. These are now supported by a designated Trustee for safeguarding. Our safeguarding policy can be requested and is kept as a live document. We also subscribe Thirtyone:eight an agency who specialises in safeguarding and receive regular updates from them regarding updates in legislation and also receive weekly updates from the NSPCC. This means we are able to adapt our policy quickly to emerging guidance. Every February we also undertake an internal review of our safeguarding policy.

Any safeguarding concerns raised to us should be dealt with in accordance with our policy and are passed onto the authorities where appropriate. All concerns raised are logged. We are able to access support from Thirtyone:eight if we need advice on any specific issues.

We are in the process of ensuring that all Elders and Trustees also complete level 2 safeguarding training with the Designated Safeguarding Trustee completing Level 3.

3.8 Wellbeing and Mental Health

3.8.1 Background/context

I found evidence that many members of staff felt unable to raise questions or concerns for fear of causing upset or offence. At times this had led to some staff becoming demotivated and even unwell.

3.8.2 Recommendations

It is important that managers are approachable and have an open-door policy so that staff feel they can raise concerns or ask for clarification on issues. It is often difficult in a management position to find the time to sit down with an individual. However, it is important to be able to manage concerns at an early stage when the individual is open to discussing solutions, rather than leave things to fester until they become unwell or raise a complaint.

Some individuals may nonetheless be reticent to raise health concerns and managers should therefore be trained to look out for staff who may be struggling with physical or mental health issues. I understand that some Glo staff have been trained as First Aiders for Mental Health. This should be reviewed and, if appropriate, more staff trained and/or refresher sessions offered.

3.8.3 Response from Trustees and Elders of Glo

We want to ensure that Glo is a vibrant, joyful, exciting and motivational place to work, and it saddens us to realise that too often this has not been the case for a significant proportion of our workforce.

We fully accept these recommendations and will look to review our line management arrangements and training for managers to help facilitate a culture of openness where feedback is actively sought out and encouraged. Staff wellbeing needs to be something that we review and revisit on a regular basis.

3.9 Health and Safety

3.9.1 Background/context

Concerns were raised about aspects of the maintenance of Glo's premises and regarding health and safety. I have been assured since the investigation that recent inspections have only raised recommendations for future improvements rather than critical issues. There were also questions raised about the level of training and supervision provided to young people and volunteers in setting up heavy and dangerous equipment for events. Again, I have been assured that appropriate training and supervision is identified within risk assessments for these events, however risk assessments have not been routinely reviewed by the Trustees of Glo.

3.9.2 Recommendations

As an employer and service provider, Glo has a legal responsibility to safeguard the health and safety of all its employees and service users. It is therefore imperative that

Glo ensures that all staff are trained and carefully supervised by qualified individuals when carrying out maintenance and other practical tasks. Glo should have clear policies and procedures in place around health and safety to ensure that staff are aware of their obligations and Glo can mitigate the risk of accidents and legal claims.

3.9.3 Response from Trustees and Elders of Glo

We absolutely accept the importance of safeguarding the health and safety of our employees and service users and are committed to a full review of our current health and safety policy and procedures, as well as all of our current health and safety risk assessments.

We really welcome robust challenge in relation to our health and safety practices and want to make sure that any staff or volunteers with concerns have a clear and easily accessible way to raise these.

We are committed to ensuring that all staff receive annual health and safety training, recognising that health and safety is everyone's responsibility.

We recognise that the trustee's involvement in health and safety assurance has been limited and we will consider ways that this aspect can be strengthened.

4 **Concluding comments**

The observations and comments I have made are based on the evidence I heard during the investigation and are offered purely from an employment perspective. I appreciate therefore that some of the suggested measures may not accord with church practices and/or may already be in place. I also recognise that it is important for Glo to be able to achieve an appropriate balance between its legal obligations as an employer and service provider and its guiding principles as a Christian organisation.

I fully understand that as a charity Glo's resources and capacity to implement these measures are limited, and so it may take time for some of these changes to be fully implemented, but hopefully this report will provide a broad framework from which improvements, where needed, can be made.

Lastly, in making the above observations and comments, I would like to acknowledge the openness of Glo's Trustees, elders, and leaders in recognising the need for improvements, their readiness to engage with the process and desire to drive positive cultural change.

Laura Foster
20 May 2022