

Minutes of the Council Meeting
16-18 November 2018
St. Katharine's, London.

Present

Sandra Turner

 Janet Wootton
 Martin Spain
 Peter Butler
 John Bentham
 May-Kane Logan
 Gerry Simonis
 Chris Gillham
 Jill Stephens
 Eric Fenwick
 Stella Wallace-Tween
 Betty Bentham
 Hilary Biggin
 Sue Wade

Representing

Interim Chair of
 Council & South West
 President Elect
 Prev. Past President
 Chair of F&SS Comm.
 Chair of M & S Comm.
 CF Scotland
 CF Scotland
 CF Wales
 CF Wales
 Eastern
 East Midlands
 North East
 North West Midlands
 South East

Participant Observers

Paul Davis
 Marion Kerr
 Caroline Stott
 Yvonne Campbell
 Mark Tucker

Gary Baker
 Philip Stainer

Walter Riggans
 Judith Mbaabu

Sam Coleman
 Clare Edwards

Presidents Group
 CF Scotland
 South West
 General Secretary
 Operations Manager/
 CFL Company
 Secretary
 Financial Controller
 Finance Officer/
 Property Manager
 L & D Manager
 Church Support
 Worker
 Minutes
 Minutes

Apologies

Margaret McGuinness
 George Crossley
 Judi Holloway

CF Scotland
 North West
 South West Midlands

No Contact Received

Reiltin Hart

CF-XTRA

Friday 16th November 2018

Opening Worship and reflections were led by Martin Spain. This included readings from Proverbs chapter 3 and Isaiah chapter 43:16-21.

There was an Act of Remembrance for Paul Matthews.

The Presidents Group (Martin Spain, Janet Wootton & Paul Davis) were invited to share some recent highlights which included; Anniversaries, Graduations, Inductions, Symposiums in America, Church visits & re-visits, National Meetings, NSPCI Assembly, Free Churches Group.

Martin encouraged everyone saying that we can adapt, change and cope with the unexpected; learn from the past and move forward. Isaiah 43: 18-19 tell us that "God is doing a new thing".

Session 1

1. Welcome and Introductions

(Paper A)

A warm welcome was given to all attendees by Sandra Turner the Interim Chair of Council. Sandra specifically welcomed Gerry Simonis representing CF (Congregational Federation) in Scotland and to Caroline Stott observing for the South West Area.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Minutes of Council

3.1 Minutes of Council Meeting 27-28 April 2018

(Paper B)

Council accepted the Minutes of the Council meeting 27-28 April 2018 as a true and accurate record and they were signed by the Interim Chair.

3.2 Minutes of Council Meeting 13-14 July 2018 (Paper B1)

Council accepted the Minutes of the Council meeting 13-14 July 2018 as a true and accurate record and they were signed by the Interim Chair.

4. Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere in the Agenda or Action points)

4.1 Actions 2016 & 2017 (Paper C1)

4.1.1 18.11.16 – 14.4 Role of Assembly – Ongoing; will be part of the Governance Review.

4.1.2 18.11.16 – 14.5 Personal Membership – referred to Governance Review.

Proposal: Personal Members Working Group to be reinstated separately to the Governance Review for details and clarifications.

**Proposed: Hilary Biggin; Seconded: Stella Wallace – Tween;
1 abstention**

Members to be: Chris Gillham, May-Kane Logan and convened by Janet Wootton.

Timescale: to report back to Next meeting of Council (January 2019)

4.1.3 Nov.17 – 7 Big Church Day Out – this was advertised on the Website and by Social Media.

4.1.4 Nov. 17 – 11.3.7 safeguarding checks central costs – ongoing and to be reviewed autumn 2019.

4.1.5 Nov. 17 – 11.5 Alumni Association Terms of Reference – this has been completed.

4.1.6 Nov. 17 – 11.6 Rescinded implementation of decision to charge Students – all elements relating to this have been completed.

4.1.7 Nov. 17 – 12.1.3 Finances request for clarification of essential operations etc. – some aspects will be covered in the Finance section of this meeting, others by the Governance Review.

4.1.8 Nov. 17 – 12.1.4 Expenses policy changes - this has been completed.

4.1.9 Nov. 17 – Schedule of charges for 2019 - this has been completed.

4.2 Actions Remaining from Council April 2018 /July 2018 (Paper C2)

4.2.1 27.04.18 – 6.1 Year Book contexts – Communications Group are seeking a new Chair, action still ongoing.

4.2.2 28.04.18 – 12 Costings for Archiving Group to go to Finance - this has been completed.

5. Declarations of Other Business

The Congregational Church in Paradise, California has been extremely damaged by the wild fires; prayers for the congregation and area were requested.

General Secretary will send a letter of condolence to the church as soon as possible.

6. Finance and Support Services Committee(FSSC)

Papers D1, D2, D3, D4, D5 & D6

Chair of FSSC, Peter Butler shared some headlines, the Investment Trust and Trading Board (ITTB) had met the previous week, investments are keeping the status quo, however this probably won't last in light of government resignations due to Brexit causing investments to slump. The CF's Investment Manager recommends that the Board hold strong and ride out this storm.

Question: If the investments go down won't the income go down?

Answer: Possibly so, the forecast is that investments will go down for a short while, it is too early to tell; CF's income tends to remain stable as the investments follow a medium risk track.

6.1 Funds

"Income from investments, trading and affiliation fees do not cover our current expenditure. For some time, operations, including programmes (excluding training which has designated income) have been funded from the Closed Churches Fund (CCF). A significant number of churches closed and brought income into the Federation which was placed into a designated Closed Churches Fund. The five- year programme 'For such a time as this' made good use of these fund but also depleted them considerably. As the five-year programme period was drawing to an end, two things became clear – firstly CF should be working to enable churches to remain viable rather than close, and secondly the consequence of this would be less income from closed churches. It was necessary to plan for this. Finance advised Council to begin to set aside new income from any closed churches, or legacies etc into a 'Protected Programme Fund' (PPF) which would gain interest for a time when the Closed Churches Fund was depleted as no further monies would go into this fund. All income to this fund to be invested. Over time, the PPF has increased and the CCF has decreased. The situation has now been reached when the deficit in our budget, while considerably reduced by the measures taken with our programme structure, would still need to be met out of our assets. F&SSC recommended, and Council agreed that in order to maintain our operations at their current level, some deficit will remain, and this can be covered from the CCF until that fund is fully depleted and then from the PPF which will have built up sufficiently to support this. However, the policy decision to invest all income designated to the PPF is impractical as currently some is needed to cover the deficit. F&SSC therefore have recommended that only income over and above that required to cover the annual deficit is automatically invested."

Recommendation:

That the Protected Program Fund will be used to cover the deficit produced by the Core Operations (apart from CIPT (Congregational

Institute of Practical Theology)) once the Closed Church Fund has been expended and that this is to be reviewed annually.

Decision:

Proposed: John Bentham; Seconded: Hilary Biggin

Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

Timescale: to be reviewed annually.

6.2 Unpaid Affiliation Fees

A number of churches have not paid their affiliation fees which raise questions concerning whether they should still be considered 'affiliated' to CF or should they be removed from membership.

Council requested that if a church is removed from membership that their needs to always be an open invitation for churches to apply for reinstatement to membership should circumstances change. Also that the matter of unpaid fees needs to be dealt with delicately and with compassion, Council would not want to cause any church to feel forced to close. Council showed great compassion for churches experiencing problems paying the fees.

Question: how many churches will this affect?

Answer: there are only 1 or 2 churches involved; every possible means of communication is used and visits are made to the churches where possible.

Recommendations:

1. Finance Team with the General Secretary to communicate with the persistent non-paying churches (i.e. for over 2 years) by the end of 2018, to crystallise their intentions towards remaining in membership with CF. GS to write to those churches from which no positive response has been forthcoming with the notice that 'membership and the benefits it brings will be withdrawn unless there is contact from them and a conversation about their membership status is resolved'

2. Recent non-paying churches, to be considered as above 2 years from the date of the final reminder letter.

Both recommendations (1 & 2) taken together

Proposed: Martin Spain; Seconded: Betty Bentham

Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

It was noted that any churches that are removed from membership should be reported at May Assembly.

6.3 Schedule of Charges – 2020

It was noted that fees had been frozen for two years and that this will be in most cases an increase of 20-25%

	£
Church Affiliation Fees	150.00
Member Affiliation Fees	8.00
ACAT	10.00
Personal/Associate Member	40.00
Year Book	35.00
Congregationalist	18.00

Recommendation: that the amended schedule of charges for 2020 be agreed by Council and that invoices have the following added to them “in the case of difficulty paying these fees please contact the General Secretary to discuss”

Proposed: Hilary Biggin; **Seconded** May-Kane Logan
Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

Action: recommendation to be put to Assembly.

Timescale: May 2019

6.4 Finance Strategy and Funding Requirements

Questions about monies for new projects was discussed.

Recommendations:

1. That the CF operations for 2020 remain at similar levels to now (Nov. 2018) allowing for responses to ongoing requirements whilst waiting for the new strategy to be formatted.

Proposed: John Bentham; **Seconded:** Hilary Biggin; 1 abstention
Council agreed to the recommendation.

2. To allow capital receipts and investment properties to be utilised in funding deficits as and when required as opposed to automatically being invested into the money markets.

Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

Caroline Stott prayed for the Finance Team.

Sandra Turner closed the evening session with worship.

Saturday morning session commenced with worship, led by Paul Davis. The reading was from Romans: 8 – Paul asked, what do we have to hope for if we are sitting comfortably?

6.5 Retired Ministers’ Housing Policy (Paper D5)

Council discussed that this policy is part of the ongoing Council policy to care for both current and retired ministers; noting that there is room to appeal all decisions and that this policy is subject to continued review. The policy is available on request.

Recommendation: That the Policy for Retired Ministers Housing (Paper D5) become policy from 2019; subject to continual review.

Proposed: John Bentham; **Seconded:** Hilary Biggin;
1 against; 1 abstention.

Council agreed to the recommendation.

6.6 Transitional Arrangements of the Homes for Retired Ministers scheme (Paper D6)

Recommendations:

1. Designate as and when required, from Protected Program Fund up to £500k to acquire up to 3 additional properties. This will be repaid though from the sale of no longer needed properties elsewhere.

**Proposed: May-Kane Logan; Seconded: Sue Wade
Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.**

2. Subject to the minister reaching SPA (Standard Pension Age) by 31.12.2024 and meeting the qualifying criteria of the scheme.

3. These funds are repaid as properties become available.

2 & 3 taken together

**Proposed: Martin Spain; Seconded: Betty Bentham
Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation**

6.7 Year Book Disclosures 2019

Philip Stainer

Philip talked Council through the changes that have been made for the 2019 Year Book.

Recommendation:

That the changes highlighted and the recommended minimum stipend are accepted by Council

**Proposed: John Bentham; Seconded: May – Kane Logan; 1 abstention.
Council agreed to the recommendation.**

6.8 Education Grants

This grant is per household, not per child. Applications to be invited in the New Year (not for Christmas) the amount of the grant to be reviewed after the first year has been paid out. The first mailshot to be after Easter 2019 and payments made in readiness for the new academic year.

Recommendation:

An Education Grant of £75 per household is made available to all ministers of the CF member churches for 2019 subject to the following criteria:

- **There is at least one young person in full time education up to college age of 18.**

**Proposed: John Bentham; Seconded: Martin Spain
Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.**

6.9 External Bodies – The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust

The current representatives (Chris Damp, Barbara Bridges & Margaret Morris) term of office all expire November 2018; all 3 are willing to be put forward for consideration for a further 3 years. FSSC unanimously agreed to reappoint these 3 as CF representatives to Memorial Hall.

Recommendation:

That Council ratify the decision of FSSC to reappoint Chris Damp, Barbara Bridges & Margaret Morris as CF representatives to The Congregational Memorial Hall Trust.

**Proposed: Stella Wallace-Tween; Seconded: May-Kane Logan
Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.**

6.10 Future Chair of FSSC and ITTB replacement

ITTB: Keith Bradley & Marion Kerr are both standing down. Names and contact details of potential board members to Peter Butler and/or Gary Baker.

FSSC: Chair's first term of office expires May 2019. Peter Butler is willing to continue in the role until a criteria for Chair of FSSC is produced or for a further term if needed. Names and contact details of potential Chair for next meeting of FSSC April 2019.

Recommendation: that a suggested criteria for Chair of FSSC be produced along with a recruiting mechanism.

Action: Operations Manager, Financial Controller and Chair of FSSC to develop a criterion for the role of Chair of FSSC.

Proposed: May-Kane Logan; Seconded: Martin Spain

Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

It was suggested that a period of shadowing and handover would be advantageous to all involved.

It was proposed by Hilary Biggin and seconded by John Bentham that the Finance papers D1, D2, D3, D4, D5 & D6 all be received by Council. Council unanimously agreed to receive the papers; noting that full minutes are now to be made public. Papers available on request.

Session 2

7. Church Support Committee (CSC) John Bentham (Papers E1, E3, E4)

Chair of CSC shared some highlights from his report.

- Ecumenical work in churches is encouraged
- Area workers are valued greatly
- Judith and Johnny have a focus that will see them working with 2 areas and the Committee representative to strengthen relationships.
- Hay Mills is a success story to shout about thanks given to Stephane and Jane
- Judith and Johnny are a resource and churches are encouraged to invite them but Judith explained that it is recognised that churches want and appreciate advice but few are asking for hands on support

7.1 Other Federation Churches in Scotland (Paper E4)

There was a request from CSC to ask if there was any chance of reconciliation in Scotland.

It was noted that the other churches in Scotland have refused mediation in the past.

Recommendation:

That the Chair of CSC remains the point of contact for the other churches in Scotland, and continues to contact each church individually.

Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

Council wished to reinforce that this group of churches is not recognised as an Area by them; however these churches are welcome to reapply for membership into CF in Scotland.

7.2 Youth & Children's Strategy

A paper was presented and Council want to move this forward in new ways. There was a feeling that there has been a disservice to young people. There was suggestion that electronic connection could be a way forward, and that there is a need for local churches to link together.

Recommendation:

To form a Youth & Children's strategy working group.

Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

Action: Church Support Workers to recruit appropriate volunteers for the group.

Note; Joy Howell has already volunteered to be part of the group.

There was a discussion about the wording to the last paragraph of John Bentham's report to Council (Paper E3). John agreed that this report is a record of his work as Chair of CSC, that it is his opinion and agreed to change the wording to the paragraph to start "in my opinion".

7.3 Learning and Development Walter Riggans

The Alumni Association is up and running and launch event well attended, graduations was fabulous and appreciated and enjoyed by all. The numbers of students participating in the validated course are down; however CIPT roadshows are planned around the areas from early 2019; council were encouraged to personally recommend the training course to others who will value the course within their area/and or churches.

7.4 Conference Events

CSC unanimously agreed to set up a working group to explore the best way forward for encouraging and organising annual conference events, with volunteers being recruited by the CSC. Ruth Green & Joy Leathers have already volunteered.

Council affirmed.

7.5 Christian Aid

CSC has chosen a new project to support over the next 2 years; "No Generation Lost in Syria". This project will improve access to education for young people, supporting them in their psychosocial wellbeing and increasing community resilience. This project is matched funded 9:1 by the EU.

Chris Gillham, John Bentham & Janet Wootton expressed an interest as they are all trustees of Christian Rebuild; they expressed concern that this project may affect the amount of money that they are able to raise. It was discussed that if both charities details are circulated together this could benefit both charities.

Recommendation:

That CF will launch a campaign to raise £12,000 over 2 years for the project: No Generation Lost in Syria.

Action: Yvonne Campbell and Chris Gillham to work together to send out information of both charities (CA project & Christian Rebuild)

Council agreed to the recommendation, 8 in favour, 3 abstentions & 3 not voting due to the conflict of interest.

7.6 Communication Group Sandra Turner

The work of this group hangs on the results of the review of CF governance & strategy. Eric Fenwick stated that the Congregationalist as it stands costs too much to produce and that there is considerable wastage.

Proposal:

That Eric Fenwick reworks the costings for the production of the Congregationalist as it stands.

Proposed: Hilary Biggin; Seconded: Sue Wade

Council unanimously agreed to the proposal and encourage Eric to include David Kinchin in discussions as needed. The main aim is to see if the Congregationalist can be produced significantly cheaper than present costs.

The meeting broke and returned after lunch

Returning to point 7.2

Hilary Biggin wanted to clarify a point she made earlier regarding Youth provisions, she said that she wasn't referring to CF- XTRA but to CFY & "Go For It" these were the best provisions and we allowed them to be disbanded and CF-XTRA be put in its place.

7.7 Grants

The Chair of CSC stated that the impact grants carried through at CSC meeting leaves a balance of £57,709. Once this money is gone it is gone he stressed it doesn't come out of deficit.

Council accepted the impact Grants approved at CSC unanimously.

The Chair of CSC stressed the impact grants are not just rubber stamped, at the end of each year a report has been requested and a review will take place. If there are problems each award is reviewed. It will be reported back to the CSC meeting that they are still meeting the criteria for receiving the grant.

May-Kane alerted Council that the CSC minutes do not say what the grants are for!

Yvonne Campbell & Judith Mbaabu advised

- Hay Mills – for Minister (Stephane Vickers)
- Hope Bristol – for Christians Against Poverty Manager
- Thundersley – for Noise Arts Festival (new initiatives)
- Castle Combe – for Church & Community Link Worker
- Loddiswell – for Youth Worker

Please see Appendix which includes what the impact Grants are for.

Discussion followed and points made included;

Q: Shouldn't there be receipts to show what the money is going on?

A: It was highlighted a lot of the amounts are for salaries, the grant can be given to the church to employ someone.

Q: Proof is needed that the church has spent the grant in the correct way.

A: This would be in the church accounts. Any problems would be uncovered by the CST during the review.

7.8 Accreditation Group

Update - There are 4 students in the process of application for accreditation.

7.9 Inter Church Board (ICB)

General Secretary

Alan Kennedy is the Chair, Yvonne Campbell has been sending out more of the newsletters received to show how being part of the ecumenical bodies supports churches.

Free Churches information; Churches Together in England say that the future of the church in England is ecumenical.

Martin Spain raised the subject of Scottish and Welsh representatives being unable to claim expenses for attending ecumenical events. He asked if Alan Kennedy is being paid from central funds to attend events in England why it is different for representatives from Scotland and Wales.

May Kane talked about budget lines back in 2013 for ecumenical meetings that are now no longer there.

The General Secretary said she was unaware that any expense claims had been rejected. The budget is tight for ICB but if there are going to be additional claims we need to rethink the budget.

Marion Kerr explained the confusion comes from the fact the expenses are paid by the Treasurer of Scotland.

Recommendation:

We cannot pay England representatives and not those from Scotland and Wales; anyone representing a Congregational Federation body ecumenically can send in an expense form with receipt.

The General Secretary will look at the claims and see how they fit with the budget lines. Council will look at the budget and realign the policy if required.

Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

7.10 Budget Report from Financial Controller

Statement from the Financial Controller read out by Philip Stainer

Re: Budget Section of Paper E1 Minutes from CSC 22 Sept 2018

I am sorry to hear of the committee's confused state.

Some finance training appears in order.

To that end, I am happy to offer, on the Friday before the next CSC meeting, an "invigorating and exciting" training day for all committee members.

Council graciously accept the Financial Controllers offer with thanks.

Council receive paper E3 with caveat the final paragraph in bold is a personal opinion.

Hilary Biggin requested it be minuted that she is saddened by the need to amend John's statement. We as Council were all wrong in some way; we need to accept that and move on.

Council All agreed to accept the CSC minutes Paper E1

Proposed: May Kane; Seconded: Peter Butler

8. Archiving Group Janet Wootton (Paper F2)

This is ongoing work, there has been much exploration. The Archive will be housed at the Congregational Library.

Request: the Group are requesting £5,155 in addition to what is currently unspent (£2345) to enable gathering and analysis of material.

Proposed: John Bentham; Seconded: May-Kane Logan

Council unanimously agreed to the request.

9. Children and Youth Proposed Strategy (Paper F3)

The General Secretary asked Council what they would like the youth and children's group to focus on initially?

A discussion took place and points made included:

- Focussing on an event straight away would be wrong. We need to let the youth bring their own ideas and ventures; youth energy needs to lead the way. It would be wrong for Council to decide what they want.
- Firstly we need to locate the ages of the Young People in the churches.
- Do we need to find a group of people who can take the idea forward? The group has to have people that have a specific talent or skills. Ask the group to do some research, good conversations with churches then reported back to Council.
- For over 13's we need to think outside the box, we need someone of that age group within the group. We failed Youth and Children once, we can't fail them twice!
- In Scotland Child Friendly training days were very successful. It needs to be something along those lines where the leaders of the churches are engaged. If you have leadership on side they will bring in the young people.
- Engage with young people do a fun day, championing it will start from small things.
- Some churches live stream services. There is a live streaming company that use Newcastle-Under-Lyme office space.
- Young people have to be young people, we cannot put too much pressure on them. Enable, Equip, Engage.
- Suggestion of latching onto existing organisations such as Pilots, or sponsor local Scouts / Guides.

- Focus must be on children not just youth; faith comes when they are children more than youth. We need to feed into what is available, keep it local and young enough to work with.

General Secretary advised Messy Church has regional co-ordinators, who could be another source of support.

After the discussion the Children and Youth Strategy is:-

- 1) Research to find out where children are within our Churches.
- 2) Engage with leaders regionally and report back to Council in April.

10. CSC/Department Evaluation (Paper F4)

The Chair said this would be reviewed during the governance review process and is yet to be discussed.

Recommendation:

That Mark Tucker and Yvonne Campbell to carry out a consultation and review for the new committee and department.

Council unanimously agreed to the recommendation.

Session 3

11. Congregational Federation Limited Trustee/Directors Meeting

Minutes are recorded separately.

12. Personnel Group report (Paper H)

Council met in Closed Session and the Minutes are confidential.

12.1 General Secretary report (H5 Power Point Presentation)

The General Secretary delivered a power point presentation and reported:

- She has visited a number of churches this year and also supported individuals.
- Churches in vacancy - this is a big part of her job and prayer concern.
- She has attended various events including Ordinations, CIPT Graduation Ceremony, The Alumni Launch and was invited to speak at the URC Assembly.
- CWM (Council for World Mission) is also a big part of her work; Sara Iles worked with her on the NIFEA programme. They produced the Abundant Life publication which was funded by CWM. This can be used for Bible Study, Youth Club, Prayer ideas etc.
- Resource hub, she is working on one place for churches to get and share resources.

The General Secretary thanked everyone at the meeting for their continued support.

Council thanked the General Secretary for her work.

12.2 Council representatives (No paper)

The General Secretary reported that in view of the June 2018 Assembly the Areas were asked to confirm their representatives on committees and Council.

The only areas yet to reply are Eastern and South East. The North West Area is in the process of re-appointing because their representative has made the decision to step down.

12.3. Chair of Council

(Paper H4)

The General Secretary reported 2 formal notifications of people wishing their name to be put forward.

The Interim Chair was asked if she is interested in the position, she responded it was never in her remit to be the Chair. She is not sure it is the right way forward and other people should be encouraged to be part of things.

Options to consider:

Pre April meeting what is required?

CV/Reason for applying/Skills they can bring/Task on their ideas for the future of the CF

Should candidates be invited to all of the April meeting?

Interview/Task/Presentation

Should an external person be asked/be involved?

It was noted the application process is still open. There was a discussion regarding skill sets to match against and a presentation. The point was raised that the letters received after Assembly have asked for an external person to be involved. This would validate the process and bring a different perspective.

Recommendation: General Secretary to continue to invite applications with a deadline of 31st December (For applications and CV's) A more detailed application is required with CV, skill set and presentation at interview. However an appointment may still not be made even after the interviews during the April Council Meeting

Action: General Secretary to write to those who have expressed an interest requesting a CV and covering letter and advising the deadline. To also provide Council members with job specification. Council to agree skill set at January Meeting.

Council agreed unanimously.

12.4 Assembly Review

(Paper H5)

The General Secretary advised Paper H5 showing Assembly venues from 2008 – 2019 and the planning process is for information only.

12.5 Dates of next meetings

(Paper H6)

The Interim Chair highlighted that in order to discuss items thoroughly a meeting was needed before April.

Proposal: An extra Council Meeting to be held in January 2019

Council unanimously agreed to an extra meeting on 18th/19th January.

Further 2019 meetings:

26th/27th April

12th/13th July

15th/16th/17th November

Sunday 18th November 2018

Session 4

(J Power Point Presentation)

Presentation by Janet Wootton and Sandra Turner and discussion groups

Janet Wootton opened the session with a reading from Daniel 7:9-14.

She spoke of the following from:

Isaiah 51:1

Look to the Rock from which you were hewn

Isaiah 43:18

Do not cling to the past . . .

Through the previous reviews (listed below) the churches have spoken to us, so why has there been no action based on these reviews?

- Truscott November 2003
- Shaping the Future 2004-5
- Peter Allen Being Church Today 2006
- Tim Lea Congregational Distinctive 2014
- Yvonne Campbell Survey 2015
- Strategy Process 2015-17, including formal and informal processes.

She highlighted the aim of the session:

- To hear what the Spirit is saying through these processes – which have drawn on the contribution and wisdom of our churches
- To discern strands of understanding for the way forward
- To lay the ground for tomorrow morning's discussion
- To guide our prayers overnight

Issues to be addressed

- 'Founding generation' and 'Succession'
- Failure to respond to, and manage change
- 'Job hopping' means that new people do not get to the table
- Failure to communicate
- Loss of confidence and trust
- Loss of consensus

Positive outcomes

- Surveys show that churches value what the Federation offers
- Up to Yvonne's survey, all have shown that there is a sense of optimism about the future (the most used phrase for 'where is CF going in the next 5 years' was: From Strength to Strength)
- People care passionately about Congregational Christian witness

Areas of Discussion

- Vision

- Practice of Congregational Christianity
- Roles and Communication
- Constitution and Structures

A discussion exercise took place in small groups. Each group was asked to write down what they associate with the above areas.

The following ideas were shared:-

Vision

- Is for visionaries, there are practical people who carry out the vision
- There is vision and not enough action
- Increase membership, build on the numbers within our churches
- Add more independent churches
- Vision of Council is hampered by being Trustees of CF Ltd.

Practice of Congregational Christianity

- Christianity firstly, Congregational second.
- Congregationalism shouldn't be lost.
- Congregational is good it makes everyone feel they have a role in the church.
- New members may be unaware what it is- use the CF 'Way of church' leaflet.
- Principles of Congregationalism still need to be shared

Roles and Communication

- Area system is not working
- Communication is about respect
- Some areas are sharing time together, days out not just meetings.
- There is a need to communicate with people in a different way
- Communicate in as many ways as possible in a user friendly way – the very elderly may find some things difficult to deal with

Constitution and Structures

- Review geographical areas
- Separating CF and CF Ltd
- Review communications
- Look at minimising conflict of interests
- Understanding trusteeship

Martin Spain continued the session by asking Council to take the above comments to the next stage by referring to the Resolution.

“That there be an independent review of the process that has been followed to ensure lessons are learned and healing can happen.”

Martin Spain read the following:

Proverb 19:21

“Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails”.

A discussion took place and points made included:-

- The learning has not been articulated.
- Headspace initiated healing through prayer session during Assembly. The calming effect is the healing process, bringing us back to God.

- Headspace session was not authentic to everyone. Assembly said words of reconciliation that were not meant by some.
- Each individual person has to examine themselves and accept a portion of wrong and ask for forgiveness from their God.
- Lesson learned in relation to what? The decision to open the office in Manchester was done without any consultation and resulted in the mess CF found itself in.
- Best intentions can be misunderstood. The intention has not been to hurt anyone.
- The need for more openness and transparency has been learnt.
- A change is needed in the way Assembly is managed
- The Constitution requires updating.
- The healing process is ongoing and people have a responsibility to heal themselves.
- It has not been recognised that Council found the process followed difficult to deal with.

“And that the review of the function and powers of the Council and Secretariat of the Federation be carried out with full transparency, in collaboration with the churches and Areas, drawing on legal advice from someone with expertise in charity law as it affects other Christian denominations”.

How the above is achieved:

- With churches and Areas
- Legal person

Where does that lead us?

- Vision
- Governance
- Structures
- Support
- Revised / amended constitution

Ensure that structures support the vision, enable the practice of congregational Christianity, are served by the roles and patterns of communication and are expressed in a new constitution.

Council was asked: What do you want to see reviewed of functions and powers of Council?

- Serve down, or bring up to top of the pyramid –
- Ratifying/accept reports, minutes, reporting mechanism
- Review CFL – trustees, separate CFL from Council
- Representing Area views not allowed

Council was asked: What do you want to see reviewed of functions and powers of Secretariat?

- two roles – company secretary – manager – registered company – conflict of interest
- General Secretary ambassador of CF

Council reps need to be equipped – written resume to present to Areas and a written response from the Areas, that they have received the information.

Clear minutes

More correspondence, in the right way

Support – the areas to support churches, more pastoral support

Janet Wootton's notes on the discussions see Appendix 2

The meeting closed with worship led by Martin Spain in the chapel