

Minutes of the Council Meeting
10 July 2020
Zoom Meeting

Present

James Lyon
Janet Wootton

Suzanne Nockels
Peter Butler
John Bentham
Margaret McGuinness
Gerry Simonis
Chris Gillham
Jill Stephens
Eric Fenwick
Mark Taylor
Betty Bentham
Foday Kamara
Hilary Biggin

Representing

Chair
Immediate Past
President
President Elect
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
North West Midlands

Chris Damp
Caroline Stott
Judi Holloway

South East
South West
South West Midlands

Participant Observers

Bill Bentham
Ruth Leeming
Yvonne Campbell
Mark Tucker

Assembly Rep
Assembly Rep
General Secretary
Operations Manager/
CFL Company

Apologies

May-Kane Logan
Roo MacRae

CF Scotland
Assembly Rep

Friday 10th July 2020

1. Welcome & Introductions

Chair of Council, Jim Lyon welcomed all to the meeting. There were no new members to introduce to the meeting.

2. Opening Worship

Janet Wootton

Janet used Psalm 1 and spoke about connections – what binds us together?

3. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

4. Update on the Congregational Federation

Yvonne Campbell

4.1 Office

Government advice is still to work from home if you can, the office remains closed, enquiries continue to be dealt with by email or phone.

4.2 Staff

Training: Walter & Maddy - The Training Course has been running via Teams; there are 7 new Students due to start training in September 2020 along with 2 new Tutors. Summer School has been postponed to Spring 2021.

Safeguarding: Lisa - is working with Yvonne on updating the sample Safeguarding Policy ; safeguarding certificates have been due to expire have been extended till September 2020.

Website & Social Media: Neil - has been busy with Cong Fest, revamping the website and with the daily posting of Secluded Place.

Church Support Worker: Luzia - is finding her feet; having produced the latest copies of Inform & Intouch, she is also working with the Children & Youth Group. There have been many enquiries about grants and the Team continue to support many churches.

5. Update on COVID 19 Situation

5.1 Government Guidelines

Yvonne has been sending regular updates to Churches & Ministers etc. hopefully without overloading them.

5.2 Churches

Some Churches in England have already reopened for worship.

Churches in Scotland will be able to reopen from 15th July – guidelines are still awaited.

Churches in Wales can open for private prayer; a statement is due from the First Minister later today (10.07.20)

Post meeting update – Welsh churches could reopen from 13th July 2020.

Foday was asked how the “Drive in Church” held at Chinley had worked. Foday said it was well attended with good weather and that this could be the way forward for them.

Cong Fest: the material from this event is available on the website, the theme was Rainbows and God’s promises, members from every area have been involved in the production. There are 4 Tents; Worship, Bible Study, Witness & Responses and Children & Youth (will have some amendment after concern was raised about some of the input).

Many positive comments have been received and something similar is planned for the May Flower Anniversary in September 2020.

The Chair expressed thanks to Yvonne for adapting in these changing times.

6. Update from the Presidents Janet Wootton, Suzanne Nockels

Suzanne has had virtual visits to both Wales & Scotland for Area Assemblies.

Janet intends to ring round churches in a positive way; things are changing quickly; Janet would like more invitations to churches.

The Presidents Face Book page “Chrysalis” has been launched.

Janet has been involved with the CWM Anti-Racist discussions.

Both Janet & Suzanne are looking forward to developing their working relationship.

7. Going for Gold

Almost immediately after the questionnaires were sent out to churches, meeting ceased due to the Covid19 pandemic.

7.1 Feedback of Responses

To date the Chair has received 5 responses, which show no patterns. There needs to be more clarity on the question of trusteeship.

7.2 Area Feedback

As Area Council Reps. gave feedback it became obvious that most Churches and Areas had not been able to meet to discuss the questionnaire. Many churches had said that this was not a priority for them; they have bigger things on their minds. Many were not sure where Council were coming from and that it may be next year before they get round to discussing the issues.

The consensus was that Council are not likely to get many responses before 2021, meaning that serious proposals will not be ready to present at Assembly May 2021, and churches will understand the need for a delay.

7.3 Timescale

There was much discussion as to how the Going for Gold process could be moved forward, with about half of council wanting to find a way to move forward and half in favour of waiting for a changed environment. Bill Bentham, as one of the assembly appointed observers, reminded council that members had been elected to make decisions on behalf of the federation, and suggested that some progress would be expected.

7.4 Smaller Working Group Proposal

Jim stated that he thought that full Council meetings on Zoom were too large to hold meaningful creative discussion which could allow us to find agreement.

Proposal:

Jim Lyon proposed that small working groups could keep the process moving forward and shape better thinking. Suggesting Governance could be the starting point.

A show of hands vote for either making an alternative way forward or to delay the process gave no clear consensus.

The Operations Manager commented that council need to find balance and a way forward. Some churches may be suffering from “consultation fatigue”, some may have found Covid a convenient reason to ignore the survey. Council need to replenish and refresh this for the Council meeting November 2020 and must agree as a Council collective.

Proposal:

That Council look at workable models of governance as a first task.

Again, this was an inconclusive vote.

There were some reservations, but most wanted to move this forward,

Decision:

Chair asked for volunteers to facilitate conversation for moving forward, Foday & Himself volunteered.

Action: Chair, General Secretary and Operations Manager to designate smaller groups,

Timescale: To meet/zoom before the Council Meeting in November 2020 and feedback to that meeting.

8. Fresh Expressions – Pioneer Group

This report was accepted in principle at the last meeting of Council, pending funding issues. This report has now been updated.

Council agreed the following decision.

Decision:

Walter to hold a meeting for interested parties to discuss the report in detail, highlighting the benefits to existing/struggling churches and birthing new churches.

Action:

Chair of council to contact Walter for Zoom meeting to be arranged.

Timescale:

As soon as possible.

9. CWM Gift of Grace

A paper from CWM was shared explaining about a monetary gift of about £15k has been given to help with the COVID pandemic. Council need to decide where it should be allocated.

Following many ideas, the decision was made by majority vote as follows.

Decision:

Send a dividend of the grant as a gift to each church (£60)

Action:

General Secretary to discuss with Financial Controller best way forward with payments to ensure audit trail.

Timescale:

As soon as possible.

There is a possibility that CWM will have further funds to distribute.

10 AOB

10.1 Proposal from South West Midlands Area

The proposal asked if grants could be made available for traveling costs of ministers & students attending Congregational Federation Events (inc. CIPT).

At the last meeting Council agreed to not embark on any new expenditure.

Decision:

Discussion to be put on hold until the Council Meeting November 2020.

10.2 General Secretaries Job Description.

Yvonne Campbell left the discussion.

Chair of Council, as line manager, has discussed with General Secretary her job description and would like to work through this with the Personnel Group.

Decision:

Council agreed to the Personnel Group meeting as requested.

Yvonne Campbell returned.

10.3 Welsh Representation

This was Jill Stephens last meeting a Welsh Council Rep, Council thanked Jill for her many years of service to the Congregational Federation.

10.4 Request from United Board

Letter was received on 9th July from United Board via Martin Spain requesting funds towards the costs to be incurred whilst moving the United Board Museum

Proposal:

To defer this discussion to the next meeting of Council November 2020.

This was agreed by all Council.

11 Closing thoughts Suzanne Nockels

The meeting closed with reading from 2 Samuel 6:14-16.

Suzanne posed the question “what do we bring back into the centre as we come back to worship together.