

Chair Agreed Minutes Council 1-2 April 2022

Minutes of the Council Meeting 1-2 April 2022 Holiday Inn, Nottingham

Present

Jim Lyon
Suzanne Nockels
Mark Taylor
Betty Bentham
Chris Damp
(only)
Hilary Biggin
Sue Austin
Oliver Kinchin.

Chris Gillham

Representing

Chair
President
President Elect
North East
South East (Saturday
only)

North West Midlands
Chair of FSSC
Assembly Rep (Not
Saturday morning)
CF Wales(

Tom Wilson

Participant Observers

Yvonne Campbell
Mark Tucker

Sandra Turner
Martin Spain
Clare Edwards

CF Scotland

General Secretary
Operations Manager/
CFL Company
South West Observer
CF Wales Observer
Minutes

On Zoom

Gerry Simonis
Eric Fenwick
Foday Kamara
Margaret McGuinness

CF Scotland
Eastern
North West
CF Scotland

Apologies

Craig James
Judi Holloway
Michael Rolton
Catherine Booton
Bill Bentham

CF Wales
South West Midlands
Assembly Rep
East Midlands
Assembly Rep

Friday 1 April

Opening Worship

Mark Taylor, President Elect opened with a reading from John Chapter 3 Jesus teaches Nicodemus followed by a short prayer.

Session 1

1. Welcome & Introductions

Chair of Council, Jim Lyon welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Noted as above.

3. Minutes of the Council Meeting November 2021

(Paper B)

Decision: The minutes from the meeting held 19-21 November 2021 were accepted as accurate and correct with the following amendment: Martin Spain was not present on zoom on Saturday 21 November.

Eric Fenwick joined the current meeting via Zoom.

4. Church Support Committee Report

(Paper C)

The General Secretary reported that John Bentham's term Chair of Church Support Committee had expired, and the position was now vacant.

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Recommendation to Council: Suzanne Nockels and Simone Ramacci to be accredited as Chaplain and Minister respectively.

Decision: Council Agreed Unanimously

Recommendation to Council: Approve grant funding of £15,000 over three years to Upper Killay as per application.

Decision: Council Agreed Unanimously

The General Secretary reported there is a lack of Pastoral Care Coordinator's in some Areas, and some have none. Council was asked to encourage people in their area. A job description for the role is currently being produced.

The General Secretary updated Council on the themes and support needs identified across the Area reports:

- Encouragement generally
- Prayer, both specific and general
- Vacancies – some churches require support while they are in vacancy and others are finding difficulties with pulpit supply.
- Buildings – some churches are discovering problems when reopening the church after such a long period of closure.

Council was updated with the work of the Church Support Team:

- Luzia Watt has double figures registered for the Youth & Children's May Assembly and is planning some form of camp in 2023.
- Neil Chappell has been working on the Resource Hub, Zoom calendar and improving the website. He is also working on the production of the 50th Anniversary Bible Reflections. The Secluded Place reflections have also received some really good feedback.
- Walter Riggans has been busy with Spring School, this has also had very good feedback. Revalidation from York St John University went really well, and this weekend (Training Weekend) is the first time everyone has been together for 2 years
- Lisa Vickers has been working on the safeguarding training for Youth and Children and Adults at risk, this was open to all.

The General Secretary concluded it was a very positive Church Support Committee Meeting with 3 new Area Reps, she asked Council to pray into finding a new Committee Chair.

Chair of Council thanked the General Secretary and Church Support Team for their efforts helping and supporting the churches in the Congregational Federation (CF) in so many different.

5. Matters Arising

None

Review of the Actions from November Council Meeting

(Paper D)

Actions	Update
<p>Have a library of suggested recorded sermons for use in churches without minister/preacher. Plus details of churches broadcasting online services. Ask churches what equipment/training they need to be able to use the recordings in their place of worship. Include grant information to enable them.</p>	<p>In discussions with Mark Taylor, Suzanne Nockels, Walter Riggans and permission from John Clements about recording sermons. Tom Bonnar CF Scotland has recorded Sunday morning services for churches. Tom Wilson reported it has a small group of followers and judging by viewing figures it has been well received. Next step is to write to churches, Tom Bonnar can assist advising the equipment required to do / use the recordings</p>
<p>How do we make people more aware of the Resource Hub. Need several ways to communicate as some don't use emails. Calendar of events happening online. Include in Intouch monthly.</p>	<p>Calendar of events is still a work in progress. The Resource Hub is being promoted, tried to raise awareness with Easter ideas and prayers for Ukraine. It will be monitored as to how many hits it receives.</p>
<p>Prayer needs to be built into the strategy. Develop the prayer life of CF. encourage churches to connect with other churches as prayer partners.</p>	<p>CF currently run - Monday afternoon Bible Study, Golden Time once a month, Ministers Zoom Tues afternoon, Prayers for Ukraine Thursday. Can the Areas coordinate something monthly?</p>
<p>Practical instruction on conducting life events. Eg: Holding babies, dealing with funeral directors. Different locations: crematoriums, graveside, Supporting bereaved families, Managing unchurched families in church, Using relevant language, Practical preparation of leading services and preaching.</p>	<p>Walter Riggans has a combination of resources with several presentations. Looking at short certificates: primarily one or two one day workshops offered multiple times and short video sessions. He is also working on the practical preparation of leading services and preaching.</p>
<p>Visit Services and provide coaching</p>	<p>Walter has highlighted he is unsure if this is realistic.</p>
<p>Skills database</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Mentoring / Coaching</p>	<p>Active agenda item for Pioneering group</p>
<p>Additional Actions for this meeting</p>	
<p>Areas – 2 areas say they are at crisis point.</p>	<p>Separate Agenda item 18 (Saturday)</p>
<p>Continuing Ministry Development</p>	<p>Separate Agenda item 9</p>

6. Declaration of other Business

None

7. Pioneering

(Papers E)

Mark Taylor reported the Pioneering and Fresh Expressions Working Group (PFEWG) have been working in excess of 2 years following a CWM conference on the subject in Utrecht in 2019. Several 'Likewise' Day events on the subject, were attended by a total of 32 people from CF churches. These days included contributions from the Church Mission Society (CMS), an Anglican-led Organisation with much experience in training Pioneers.

A new opportunity.

CMS are undertaking work with the URC to develop a 'Pioneer Hub' with a Free Church flavour.

'Pioneer hubs are designed to be a partnership between the Church Mission Society (CMS) and either a diocese, network of churches, cluster of missional communities or alliance of various groups or enterprises.

Hubs create a space to encourage the pioneer gift in different missional contexts, nurture innovative mission on the ground and grow a network of people re-imagining and transforming the UK with the Gospel story.'

The PFEWG are convinced that working in partnership to establish a Hub would have significant benefits for the CF, including:

- The ability to access a bespoke course to train potential Pioneers;
- No cost to the CF in setting up and establishing the Hub. The URC are to meet the whole of that cost;
- The potential to fast-track potential Pioneers, who could achieve a recognised qualification in just 12 months;
- A proposed start date of September 2022 means that the first qualified CF Pioneers via this route could be available from summer 2023;
- The delivery of a strong, practical ecumenical project in the 50th anniversary year of both the URC and the CF;
- The influence available to the CF by being in the project at the start – it is envisaged that the Hub might be opened up to other Free Church groupings in future;
- The opportunity for CF representatives to teach and/or mentor delegates to the Hub, and thereby helping to shape the course in line with CF principles.

It is not intended that the training of Pioneers via the Hub would in any way conflict with the accredited route to a Pioneer Ministry in the CF, but rather to complement it by offering an alternative, quicker route to qualification which may appeal to those for whom a four-year programme of training might be daunting.)

The URC are in the process of finalising their approach and seeking final approval for the project to proceed. It is both timely and important therefore for the CF to give consideration to its appetite for collaboration and to some issues that would arise from a decision to proceed. It is important to note that no commitments have been entered into regarding the CF's involvement in the project by any of the delegates to the meetings with the URC.

Recommendation: That the CF agrees to entering into a relationship with the URC for the provision of a Free Church Hub for Pioneering Ministry (as outlined in the appendix).

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

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As identified above there is already a route to recognition for Pioneers by way of accreditation. It would not be appropriate to offer accreditation to those obtaining a qualification via the Hub as this would not be an equivalent qualification to the Foundation Degree from the Training Course.

However, the PFEWG do consider that recognition of ministries supported by the new route is important.

Recommendation: That the CF agrees to a new category of recognition for Pioneers qualifying via the Hub to be designated Certificated Pioneers.

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

Enrolment on the Hub training programme would cost £600 per delegate. The PFEWG consider that it would be helpful to demonstrate the importance to the CF of delegates attending this training by providing financial support.

Recommendation: CF pay half of the delegate fee (currently £300) for a maximum of 5 delegates entering into the training programme in the first year.

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

(Note: Initial conversations are underway with an independent charitable foundation with a view to the charity contributing the remainder of the fee for each delegate)

The CF has progressed more rapidly than the URC with work on establishing criteria for the acceptance of Fresh Expressions of church. The URC are interested to see the work we have undertaken as a basis for the similar considerations they will need to make. The PFEWG have not yet shared this documentation subject to consideration by Council.

Recommendation: That the documentation on establishing criteria for the acceptance of Fresh Expressions of church produced by the PFEWG and approved by Council be shared with the URC. On the basis it is recognised and marked up as a CF document.

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

The PFEWG consider it would be appropriate to report briefly to Assembly to seek support for the project.

Recommendation: That a report be made to the 2022 Assembly seeking support of the Assembly for the principle of the proposed relationship with the URC.

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

Council thanked Mark for a fantastic presentation and the work involved.

Margaret McGuinness left the meeting.

8. Student Costs

(Paper F)

The General Secretary highlighted the CF training course fees and what the course costs CF per student.

Chris Gillham joined the meeting.

This was in response to feedback from Session 4 20 November Council Meeting *What is the value to the Federation to providing inhouse training verse what if we outsourced to another group to provide some of the training. Evaluate the cost.* It was concluded that it would not be more cost effective to outsource training and this should not be pursued further at this time.

It was noted Council would like to see comparison figures on an annual basis.

9. Continuing Ministry Development Report

(Paper G, G1)

The General Secretary made reference to grants for those Accredited in Ministry with the Congregational Federation.

This CMD grant provision relates only to those who

- are accredited by the CF
- are active in their accredited ministry
- hold a current DBS or PVG certificate
- where serving with a church or other organisation, the church or organisation has a Safeguarding certificate

Applicants will provide a brief context for what they intend to do with the grant. This CMD commitment is focused on learning and nurture that is not simply part and parcel of the ministry in which the applicant is engaged. The grant is for personal growth and development, which in turn will have a positive effect on ministerial responsibilities and opportunities.

Those in active accredited ministry are able to apply for a grant of up to £300 to use for CMD.

Individuals can apply every two years for this grant in order to support them continuously throughout their ministry.

Points from discussion:

- Should the church or organisation be the first point of call for financial support?
- CF should offer some form of support to its Accredited Ministers
- The CMD grant would not apply to students because they are already getting ministerial development

This paper is going to Finance for discussion and will come back to Council with a recommendation

10. Travel grants

(Paper H)

Council have agreed, in principle, to this new initiative. The purpose appears to be in encouraging CF Ministers and CIPT students to attend certain CF events and thus to being more involved in the National life of CF.

Travel Grants convey a sum of money as an award towards something, are treated as exempt from VAT and do not appear on VAT returns, are reported as grants paid within the statutory accounts. Yet, as you will see, the proposal is to “reimburse” specific types of expenditure – travel – with accompanying receipts where relevant.

It is therefore suggested that these now be called: CF Events Travel Expenses.

Action: The General Secretary reported papers G, G1 and H will go to the next FSSC meeting in April before coming back to Council for consideration and final approval.

11. Presidents

(No paper)

The General Secretary updated the meeting regarding the current Presidential nominations.

Points made during discussion: -

- Is there a different way to encourage churches to nominate given the low number of nominations?
- The enthusiasm from the churches to elect a President and the number of churches voting has declined. Should the process be done a different way?
- Is it an active working or an honorary role?
- If the role continues it should work alongside/supporting the General Secretary.

Martin Spain declared an interest as a Past President

- According to the Constitution Presidents are the only officers of the CF, therefore, to change the process it must be put to Assembly.

Action: To keep on the Agenda and refer to Going for Gold responses

12. New church – Pickering / Ruscombe

(No paper)

Following the new church process (agreed at the November 2021 Council meeting) the following new church applications have been received:

Ruscombe in South West Midlands – to be agreed as a new church at Assembly
Pickering in North East - They would like their membership to be seen as continuous rather than announced at Assembly as a new church.

A recommendation will come to Council later this month.

13. Practical Pastor

(No paper)

The Chair of Council reported a discussion with Hugh Osgood (Free Churches Group) about Churches in the Community who are accrediting people based on what they are already doing on the ground. He highlighted there are situations where people in CF churches have been doing things for years who do not want to do the course to be a Minister. Could we provide practical certification to acknowledge/recognise them within CF?

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A discussion took place and points made included:

- It was highlighted that some Scottish denominations had the role of Community Minister
- It is not so much making a role it is recognising what people are already doing, as a method of encouragement
- Concerns were raised it could be used to escape situations; no way of tracking them
- Recognising where people are is not recognising them as part of CF family, it has to be beyond just the local church
- Every new Minister receives a welcome pack which includes information about the training course and not many participate. This could be a follow on, advising this practical recognition is available
- It could apply to people who have done the same thing for years
- It could apply to someone who has come from elsewhere with many years of previous experience
- There would have to be some validation from the local church. It must create the conversation; to be recognised could mean someone coming and talking to you
- A way of putting arms round people rather than not being connected to others

Action: To obtain the Accreditation criteria (if they are willing to share it with us) from Churches in the Community. Mark Taylor & Suzanne Nockels to talk to churches about different styles of leadership.

14. Questions to ponder for discussion tomorrow

1. What can we do to play a part in reinvigorating Congregationalism?
2. Closed church money – to what extent should we be using this for the deficit or use to support new initiatives and to what extent to provide strategic growth to re-invigorate churches?
3. Framework – how do we decide to pioneer / plant something new? Is the leadership there?
4. Assembly – what conversations can we bring?
 - Assembly could consider framework for the Areas
 - Should Assembly be spread over 2 – 3 days to make more time for business and celebrations.Gerry Simonis left the meeting
Should Assembly be split into two occasions? Celebration in May, business/financial reports in October – need to revisit Going for Gold before taking to Assembly.

Jim Lyon closed in prayer.

Saturday 2nd April

Session 2

Suzanne Nockels led a short time of prayer and a reading from John Chapter 12 Verse 1.

Jim Lyon opened in prayer.

15. CF Properties

Mark Tucker updated the meeting on the CF property portfolio.

Ridgewell

Note: This item was put before the CF Council following reference from a previous CFL meeting

Eric Fenwick shared his thoughts with Council as follows:-

- Sell the Church
- Retain the Manse
- Finance someone (possible from CF Training course) to work locally for 3 years for Stambourne, Steeple Bumpstead, Ridgewell and Haverhill
- Opportunity to see this model of pioneering
- Adrian Burr could be lead Pastor / Minister

A discussion took place and points made included:

- The role may be beyond the skill set of one person
- Hilary Biggin has the same vision as Eric
- If Ridgewell is sold the rest of the plan must be carried through
- It seems madness to sell the church and keep the Manse
- The church was not build to a high standard, the Manse is sound
- CF has no capacity to do this, no structure for projects.
- The local churches would have to buy into this
- Could there be an ecumenical partnership with URC?

Proposal

To call a meeting with the local churches (Stambourne, Steeple Bumpstead, Ridgewell and Haverhill) to understand their capabilities and next steps.

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

**Action: Suzanne Nockels to work with Eric Fenwick to organize the meeting
General Secretary to update Adrian Burr**

Timescale: Feedback to Council at a Special meeting after May Assembly 2022

**note: this item to also appear within CFL Summer meeting*

16. Closed Church Money

Chair of Council spoke of the huge responsibility regarding money from closed churches. Should there be a structured way of using it? How do we use this wisely for its charitable purposes?

A discussion took place and points made included: -

- Currently the interest is used rather than the capital
- Could 50% be available for resources / growth
- Clusters of churches could get together
- Council members to visit churches asking for grants

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- Council members to take responsibility for evaluating grant applications in their area
- Identify churches / situations with potential and invest realistically
- Local Ecumenical Projects – Community Ministers
- Traceability to show what happens to closed church money
- Visual graphic to present to Assembly, financial openness
- Be able to analyse the results of grants
- Grants should also be for new projects
- Finance should reflect the CF vision

Suzanne Nockels left the meeting.

17. Pioneer or plant framework

This item was postponed till the next meeting.

18. Areas

The General Secretary updated the meeting regarding the South West Midlands Area. They currently have an Area Worker however the roles of Secretary and Treasurer are vacant.

The previous Area Treasurer has agreed to assist for a year whilst Council consider the problem that all Areas are struggling for volunteers.

How can Areas be supported and encouraged? How can we give them purpose?

The point was made that Scotland and Wales are national bodies and therefore this discussion relates to English Areas only.

The General Secretary provided Council with a colour coded map of the British Isles showing Areas and the churches that fall within them.

It was noted that in addition to electing Council Members, bringing churches together and building relations / networks each Area is a registered charity for grants and have monies that are geographically assigned.

Churches could be re-organised by groups (e.g. Church size, location, likewise, special interest) and asked where they feel they fit within these groups.

It was felt that some churches would fall into more than one grouping. Some Areas would resist change and that churches benefit from relationships with churches different from themselves.

The point was made that churches could remain classified as they are if they are happy with this.

Where there are Area vacancies, could personnel from another Area help, virtually? This is where the skills database could be utilised.

19. Assembly Update

The General Secretary advised plans for Assembly were going well and encouraged Council to attend.

There are to date 11 booked for the Youth and Children's Assembly.

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Assembly 2023 in Taunton – currently looking around for venues.

Thundersley

The General Secretary reported a letter had been received from Thundersley advising they wish to withdraw from the CF and that the decision was unanimous. Congregational Federation Ltd will continue to act as Trustees. They will be joining the Elim network.

The point was made that Thundersley have recently had their final Impact Grant payment totalling £16,500. As a result of this Church Support Committee have agreed to change the grant rules. A church must remain affiliated to CF for 5 years after being awarded an Impact Grant.

20. Assembly Review

- **Chair Assembly Report**

Council agreed unanimously Chair of Council's Assembly presentation (Appendix 1)

Oliver Kinchin closed in prayer.