

Chair Agreed Minutes Council 15-17 November 2019

Minutes of the Council Meeting 15-17 Nov 2019 St Katharine's London

Present

Janet Wootton
Suzanne Nockels
Martin Spain
Peter Butler
John Bentham
May-Kane Logan
Margaret McGuinness
Gerry Simonis
Chris Gillham
Jill Stephens
Eric Fenwick
Stella Wallace-Tween
Betty Bentham
Foday Kamara
Hilary Biggin
Caroline Stott
Judi Holloway

Representing

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

Participant Observers

Paul Rochester
Bill Bentham
Ruth Leeming
Roo MacRae
Jim Lyon
Yvonne Campbell
Mark Tucker

Free Churches Group
Assembly Rep
Assembly Rep
Assembly Rep
Chair Candidate
General Secretary
Operations Manager/
CFL Company
Secretary
Financial Controller
(sat.am)
Minutes

Gary Baker

Sam Coleman

Apologies

Chris Damp

South East

Friday 15th November 2019

Opening Worship and reflections were led by Janet Wootton. This included readings from Ephesians and the President Report which was a Power Point of her many visits among churches; Inductions; visit to the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland; Graduations and a visit to churches in Myanmar.

Session 1

1. Welcome and Introductions

(Papers A, A1)

The order of items as minuted here follows the order of the Agenda rather than that of the meeting due to some sections overrunning.

This meeting was chaired by Hilary Biggin from the North West Midlands Area.

A warm welcome was given to all attendees by the Chair

Specifically welcomed were Bill Bentham, Ruth Leeming and Roo MacRae all attending as Assembly representatives to assist Council with the way forward, they will be Participating Observers at this meeting.

Also, to Jim Lyon candidate for the role of Chair of Council and to Paul Rochester General Secretary of the Free Churches Group.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Congregational Federation Limited Trustee/Directors Meeting (B)

Minutes are recorded separately.

4. Minutes of Council

4.1 Minutes of Council Meeting April 2019 (Paper C1)

Council accepted the Minutes of the Council meeting April 2019 (changing Martin Spain to Previous Past President) as a true and accurate record and they were signed by the Interim Chair.

4.2 Minutes of Council Meeting July 2019 (Paper C2)

Council accepted the Minutes of the Council meeting July 2019 (changing Martin Spain to Previous Past President) as a true and accurate record and they were signed by the Interim Chair.

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

From the April 2019 Minutes

5.1 The Communication Group have not met and are still seeking a new person to chair the group.

Decision/Action:

General Secretary to speak with Sandra Turner (previous group chair) to seek a way forward;

Timescale: as soon as possible.

Meeting Note: Eric Fenwick was voted by Council as the Chair the Communication Group which will meet as soon as possible to look at the overall PR image of the Congregational Federation. Social Media and Website Officer to be included in the group.

5.2 Proposal from page 4 April 2019 minutes.

General Secretary reported that the consultation is not yet complete. There is a grid available for comparison of minister's stipend, expenses & associated costs

6. Declarations of Other Business

There were no declarations of any other business at this stage of the meeting.

7. General Secretary Report (Power Point) Yvonne Campbell

The General Secretary gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Amcrazy Weekend", after a recent busy weekend.

The General Secretary confirmed she still felt called into the role and enjoyed her role. She thanked Council for the privilege of serving the Congregational Federation.

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The report showcased some of the work she is doing with churches and those she has visited in the past 6 months. It also explained the journey that created the new Congregational Principles leaflet in her role to promote the distinctiveness.

The report also talked about the ecumenical work with Churches Together in England, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and The Free Churches Group she has been involved with.

The General Secretary shared her plans for 2020 with a focus on safeguarding training.

The presentation finished with a quote from Mother Teresa.

The evening session closed with prayer led by the President.

Saturday 16th November 2019

Morning Worship was led by the President which included a reading from Acts chapter 2; Janet asked; what has Congregationalism to offer the whole church as a gift in serving?

Session 2

8. Finance and Support Services Committee(FSSC)

(Papers F1, F2, F3 & F4)

The Chair FSSC (Peter Butler) spoke of all decisions having consequences; that sentimentality alone is no reason for regenerating a church. That too many protocols have been invoked without reference to manageability; the small team of staff are continually having to take on extra work.

He continued saying that no one wants to live on closed churches funds, but the rules for funding are not always fit for purpose.

Peter stressed that expertise is needed locally (secretary, treasurer etc) and that the succession of officers needs to be worked out.

Regeneration not just about money but having the right personnel too.

The viability of each church regeneration has to be taken into account on a case by case basis. That we have found some rules not fit for purpose when things go wrong – but life and the Federation must go on.

Staff are lacking holistic guidance from Council

Minutes of Meeting on 5 October 2019

(Paper F1)

Recommendations from FSSC

8.1. To approve the revised 2019 repairs and maintenance forecast of £37,500.

Council approved the revised forecast unanimously.

8.2. Due to financial pressures there is a need for a holistic approach for strategy, church support, regeneration and finance.

Council approved this recommendation unanimously.

8.3. To remove from the membership of CF, Swansea All Nations and Gloucester St Mary's

Following discussion, it was discovered that there is a cultural issue within Korean communities (All Nations Church Swansea) whereas they will not discuss the inability to pay outstanding bills.

8.3.1 Decision: Swansea All Nations: not to be removed from accreditation until there has been a visit.

Action: Area Secretary (Chris Gillham) and General Secretary (Yvonne Campbell) to visit the church in the new year and report back to the next meeting of Council.

Timescale: Visit in the new year; report back to Council April 2020.

8.3.2 Decision: Gloucester – St Mary's: Council approved the removal from affiliation of this church.

Action: General Secretary to write to the church advising of Councils decision. Assembly to be informed of the church's removal from Affiliation.

Timescale: Write as soon as possible; Assembly notified May 2020.

8.4. That the amount of £712.50 in unpaid affiliation fees be written off

Council approved the above amount to be written off; 1 abstention.

8.5. That Council approve the table of fees for 2021.

Council approved the table of fees unanimously.

FSSC have raised concerns that the cost of printing the Congregationalist is very high, asking for the General Secretary to speak with the current designer seeking better value for money.

Decision: General Secretary to liaise with the Eastern Area Rep. and have a conversation with the current designer of the Congregationalist. Council are happy for a change to take place if better value prior to the next meeting of Council.

8.6. Recommendation: That the CF operations for 2021 remain as similar levels to 2020 and that Core Operations be funded from the Protected Program Fund. CIPT operations to be funded from their own reserves.

Council agreed unanimously to this recommendation.

8.7. Recommendation: That a discussion takes place regarding grants and that it be communicated to all churches that grants will only be awarded if CF have enough funds in the "grant pot"; that they will not be funded by core operations.

Following discussion Council unanimously agreed to the above recommendation.

The minutes of the FSSC meeting 5th October 2019 (Paper F1) were received by Council

The Summary report (Paper F2); Financial Summary (Paper F3) and Balance Sheet (Paper F4) were all received by Council.

9. Church Support Committee (Papers G1, G2 & G3)

Minutes of meeting on September 2019 (Paper G1)

The minutes were received by Council.

Report to Council (Paper G2)

Chair of Church Support Committee reported that he (John Bentham) will become a trustee of the Lady Hewley Trust in June 2020.

The Christian Aid Syria Appeal total is now over £7,000.

The Church Support Team have prepared an action plan from the church support needs reported by the Area representatives. The plan includes;

- New initiatives – Children; Youth; Older people; Outreach.
- Ministers – Retiring & Recruiting.
- Funding – Ministers; Buildings; Projects.
- Planning – Vision – Action Plan (2-5 years)
- Prayer – Support – Encouragement
- Caring for Buildings
- Social Media Support

South West Area have appointed an Area Worker, Rev Edmonde Openshaw-Gill.

Proposed: Martin Spain Proposed that the salary saved by not replacing Johnny O'Hanlon be opened to use at General Secretaries discretion.

This proposal was deferred until later in the meeting when Church Support Team staffing will be discussed.

There has been an excellent intake of students on the course this year, with enquiries already for starting in September 2020. Council recorded their thanks and congratulations to the Learning and Development team on their admirable job.

Going forward there is concern that there are not enough funds to support potential grant applications.

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Proposal: to revise the split of funds to Mission and Ministry, to the point of separation of separating CWM & CF (home ministries) splitting into individual funds.

Decision:

1. Defer the decision of separation funds (CWM & CF (home ministries)) to the April 2020 Council meeting.

2. That the discussion of separation of the above funds be on the agenda of the next meeting of FSSC to review the ideas and report back to Council on the implications of making this change.

Timescale: Report back to Council April 2020.

Council ratified the decision of Church Support Committee awarding an Impact Grant to Hope Community Church Bristol to assist with appointing a part-time Youth Worker. For £24K in equal instalments over 3 years.

Proposal: from SW Mids. CSC Area Rep (Paper G3) for Council to consider development of a strategy for pioneering & regeneration, to include funding for resources and ministry.

Decision: Council decided that as “the pot” is low on funds, the consideration of grants for areas be considered by FSSC along with the split of M & M funds as above.

Timescale: report back to Council April 2020.

The Fresh Expressions Working Party will also be reporting to the Church Support Committee.

10. Presentation by Candidate for Chair followed.

Session 3

11. Questions to Chair Candidate

Members of Council asked pre planned questions of the Chair Candidate.

Following discussion Council members voted on the candidates' suitability for the role.

Decision: Council decided unanimously to appoint Jim Lyon as Chair of Council for the term of 3 years.

12. Council Minutes

Council discussed should the full minutes of Council meetings be published and shared followed by who should the minutes go to and where will they be

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available. Council noted that the Charity Commission Website states that it is up to the Charity as to whether the minutes are published in full.

Decision:

Council decided that the full minutes will be published on the CF website in an area that is accessible to all.

Action:

General Secretary to write and advise all Churches and Ministers etc. that full Council minutes will now be available on the CF website for downloading; understanding that some will not have access to the internet (Admin will be happy to send hardcopies). Area Reps to Council will continue to give updates at area meetings.

Timescale: to start with the minutes of this meeting.

13. Assembly Protocol

Council discussed attendance of Council Members at Assembly. The consensus was that Members of Council are Trustees of both CF & CFL; they should be visible at Assembly and need to unify at Assembly (possibly sit together). The issue of cost of attending Assembly was also discussed.

Decision: Council unanimously decided, going forward, anyone eligible as Member of Council can (if they wish) claim expenses incurred attending Assembly.

14. Annual reporting – Roles and responsibilities

A reminder was given that the Finance Department will be contacting the relevant people for their end of financial year reports, ready to go to the Auditors. The main issue being the lack of Chair of Council for amalgamating the reports.

Plan A: New Chair, Jim Lyon suggested he pick this reporting task with the previous Interim Chair, Sandra Turner and compile the report together as it will fall to Jim to sign this report off.

Plan B: If Sandra is unable to assist with the report, Jim to liaise with the East Midlands Representative, Stella Wallace-Tween.

Council were unanimously satisfied with either of the above plans.

15. Archiving

President, Janet Wootton reported; the archiving project is ongoing, tracking records is taking much longer than expected and achievements are slow. Janet is now in the position to talk to individuals and areas to obtain records; Janet asked to be advised of any archives that are still available.

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South West Midlands Rep left the meeting at this stage.

16. Church Support Staffing

Church support Workers.

Johnny O'Hanlon left in August to train as Minister in the URC.
Judith Mbbabu has notified that she will be retiring on 11th March 2020.
This leaves a void that needs to be filled.
Following discussion on what will work best until the review process is completed the following was proposed.

Proposal: Eric Fenwick Seconded: Peter Butler

To advertise for a Church Support Worker to work Part-Time on a Fixed-Term contract and that the amount of wages saved be available to be used at the General Secretaries discretion for specific consultancy work to meet church support needs.

Agreed unanimously by Council.

Action: General Secretary & Operations Manager to advertise the vacancy.

Timescale: January 2020

17. Update on the Review Process

Following the recommendation from Assembly 2019, Bill Bentham, Ruth Leeming and Roo MacRae have been appointed to assist Council with the process. The timeline therefore requires updating in the January meeting. The July 2019 meeting left Council members to consider the big questions that need to be answered (Paper H2).

Council split into action groups to discuss the following, using details from the past reports and to report back with 3-5 Action Points.

- Vision
- Communication
- Culture & Mission
- Structure & Governance

Feedback is in Session 4

East Midlands Area Questions

(Paper H3)

Proposed Action:

General Secretary to work with Chairs of Committees and Chair of Council to pull together all the information and write to the East Midlands Area and churches explaining the progress to date on matters arising from the Independent Review at Assembly 2018.

Proposed: Martin Spain; Seconded: Eric Fenwick; 3 Abstentions

Timescale: As soon as possible.

Closed Session followed

The evening session closed with prayer led by the President.

Sunday 17th

Morning Worship was led by the Presidents, Janet Wootton and Suzanne Nockels.

Session 4

Feedback from Session 3

Group 1 Vision (& Strategy)

Prudence:

Streamline - to be relevant to the needs of the churches.

- CF encourage/allow Congregational Churches to reflect the unity of the Body of Christ
- CF understands and addresses the needs of member churches
- CF Enabling body of the local church to assist carry out their mission

Achieved by;

- Maintaining Roll of Ministries; Accreditation
- Training
- Safeguarding
- Pensions
- Human Resources, Personnel
- Grant making body
- Custodial Trusteeship providing expertise
- Pastoral Care of Ministers

There needs to be realism in what we can achieve; we can't do everything!
We need to do what we do well and know our limitations.

Embrace our smallness; make this a strength,

“Better Small Churches; More Small Churches”

Group 2 Communication

Proposals:

- Assembly Review to be discussed at churches then brought to a Pre-Assembly Area meeting to prepare people for Assembly
- Timescale for communication is tight because of audit and Easter

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- Live Streaming of the Assembly
- Website to be modernized - Someone to review and advise on our online presence - Vetting of our postings and policy relating to this
- Who's who in the CF and a CF open day
- Congregationalist possibly changed to an A4 paper 24 pages (6xA3 pages) example in CTBI (Areas to gather stories from the churches, use as a vehicle to show what is happening and to encourage each other)
- Professional PR advice on how we promote our image/promote what we are

General Secretary & Eastern Area rep. were earlier in the meeting tasked with reviewing the costs of the Congregationalist and a possible change in size/quality; this decision was revised as below.

CONFIDENTIAL DECISION (time sensitive)

**That the Congregationalist will cease with the next issue (Spring 2020) with a new publication being launched.
Council were in favour; 1 abstention.**

Action: General Secretary to contact the Editor of the Congregationalist informing that the Spring Edition will be the last issue. Also, to let Hilary know once this has happened.

Timescale: As soon as possible.

Action: Hilary Biggin as Interim Chair of Council to write to the Editor of the Congregationalist with the Council's thanks for all his work on the publication.

Timescale: after General Secretary has notified Editor.

Proposal:

Going forward an outside professional body should be employed to review all CF communications working alongside the Communications Group; appointing a Convener for the new publication. Eric Fenwick to chair the Communication Group going forward.

**Proposed: Hilary Biggin; Seconded: John Bentham;
Unanimous agreement**

Action: General Secretary to contact Sandra Turner and ask if she would like to still be involved with the Communications Group; other members of the group remain as Eric Fenwick chair, Yvonne Campbell and Neil Chappell.

Timescale: as soon as possible

Group 3 Culture and Mission

- Recognise the lament from our churches and the uncertainty
- Work with the Regeneration and Pioneer working parties

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- Produce a defined piece of work to create a skills/gifts bank. People could be paid on a sessional basis (need a specific person to pull this information together)
- Closure of a church building... could the money be used for a pioneer within the same Area
- Training implications... create a link with Youth Work
- Community Gatherings. Meals of Thanksgiving (President Elect will be focusing in on thanksgiving meals as part of her Presidential year)
- Make room for technology

Decision: Regeneration and Pioneer working groups to work together and produce a report for the next meeting of Council

Action: General Secretary to task the groups to provide a written report for next Council meeting.

Timescale: Report for Council Meeting April 2020

Group 4 Structures and Governance

Reviews Report – Areas for consideration:

- CF Constitution..... this will be the end of the process
 - Trustees of CF Ltd..... 3 options
 - 1) Remain as we are
 - 2) CFL have a small trustee board, chosen for skills and experience (of church & finance) separate from but reporting to Council
 - 3) Small trustee boards for CF & CFL, Council reps are representatives only (explore this option for legality)
- Option 2 recommended**
- Council and its Chair – consider who are voting members, only Area reps- not Chairs, Presidents etc.
 - General Secretary
 - Presidents
 - Assembly.....

Not representative – each church could have a set number of votes, exercised by using voting sticks or paddles, voting on items relating to AGM business (this might increase attendance at Assembly)
- 4 Options:
- 1) As now
 - 2) Friday as now, Saturday business 10-1; 2-4 rally, Sunday Assembly worship
 - 3) Friday full day business, voting Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon rally, Sunday worship
 - 4) Friday full day business, Saturday rally, Sunday worship
(Rally includes awards etc. Sunday worship includes obituaries, prayers for churches closed, receiving ministers and churches)
- Also, to be considered: Venue – Static or venues in North, Midlands & South and the papers to go out in advance sent from the communications group.
- Structure of committees and subsidiary bodies including CIPT
 - Role and functioning of Areas and their relations to the above
 - Role of the local churches and their relations to the above.

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All changes need to be agreed by Assembly.

In the whole of the review process – how do we best ensure representation of churches?

This is a review of the underlying structure of CF – deeper level than other proposals

2022 will be the Golden Jubilee – 50th Anniversary of CF we should be planning now.

Decisions:

1) Details of the group discussions be collated by the General secretary and sent to all Council, who are to be asked to prayerfully consider responses for the next meeting (January 2020)

The weekend closed with worship in the chapel led by Presidents.