

# Chair Agreed Minutes Council 24 – 25 November 2023

## Minutes of the Council Meeting

**24 – 25 November 2023**

**Free Churches Group offices, Tavistock Square, London**

### **Present**

Jim Lyon  
Elisabeth Sweeney-Smith  
Ruairidh MacRae  
Sue Austin  
Ruth Green  
Chris Gillham  
Brendan Mason  
Eric Fenwick  
Foday Kamara  
Hilary Biggin  
Chris Damp  
Caroline Stott

### **Representing**

Chair  
President Elect  
CF Scotland  
Chair of FSSC  
Chair of CSC  
CF Wales  
CF Wales  
Eastern  
North West  
North West Midlands  
South East  
South West

### **Participant Observers**

Dawn Mason  
Yvonne Campbell  
Mark Tucker

Gary Baker  
Sam Coleman

### **Apologies**

Gerry Simonis  
Margaret McGuinness  
Mark Taylor

Ruth Leeming  
Judi Holloway  
Oliver Kinchin.

CF Wales  
General Secretary  
Operations Manager/  
CFL Company  
Finance Section only  
Minutes

CF Scotland  
CF Scotland  
Immediate Past  
President & East Mids.  
North East  
South West Midlands  
President

## **Session 1**

### **1. Welcome & Introductions**

Elisabeth Sweeney – Smith was welcomed to her first Council Meeting and as President Elect.

Elisabeth opened the meeting with a reading from 2 Kings 3:15, reflection and prayer.

The Chair extended welcomes to Roo MacRae, CF in Scotland & Ruth Green, Chair of Church Support committee attending their first Council meeting.

Ruth Green declared an interest in any business that may come up in relation to safeguarding and safeguarding checkers and should any business present itself which may pose a conflict of interests, agreed not to participate in any discussions or decisions in relation to these potential situations at this and all future such meetings. The trustees noted this and were happy that any potential conflict of interest had been identified and further noted that any payment made to her in the course of her safeguarding role was in relation to that only and for transparency and the avoidance of doubt it was confirmed that no payments are made in relation to any role as a trustee.

### **2. Apologies**

Noted as above.

The General Secretary, Yvonne, led an exercise for each member of Council to name 3 benefits of being members of the Congregational Federation. The results will be used later in the meeting.

### **3. Minutes of last Meeting April 2023**

**(Paper B)**

**Decision: The minutes from the meeting held 24-25 April 2023 were accepted as accurate and correct.**

#### 4. Matters Arising

4.1 Church Fees being written off – does this include the churches that were discussed for removal from affiliation? – this will be discussed later in the meeting.

4.2 Correspondence has recently been received from Southam regarding the removal of the lease of the Graham Adams Centre. The Chair proposed that he look at ways that mitigate the circumstances for church – discussions of ways to support the church will take place by General Secretary and Chair Council. Reporting back to Investment Board in March 2024.

#### 5. Declaration of Other Business

None.

#### 6. Finance and Support Services Committee

(Papers D – D6)

Sue Austin

6.1 Minutes of last meeting of the Finance and Support Services Committee 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 (Paper D)

Clarification on the loss of income and the expenditure while number 4 Castle Gate remains empty was given.

The minutes of the Finance and Support Services Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 were received by Council.

6.2 CF Decision Sheet

(Paper D1)

6.2.1 Council **received** the CF Half Year Accounts and Balance Sheet 2023 which have been noted and received by the FSSC on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023. (Papers D4 & D5)

6.2.2 Council **decided** to write-off the unpaid affiliation fees as per D6 (Paper D6)

**Action** - Financial Controller was requested to check if Freystrop have paid as they have told the Area Representative that church has paid their fees.

Council were in unanimous agreement.

6.2.3 Council **agreed** to increase affiliation fees for 2025 as follows:  
Church fee from £165pa to £170pa  
and per member from £9 to £9.25.

Council agreed unanimously.

6.2.4 F&SSC ask Council for confirmation of the proposal to lose churches without safeguarding certificate as this will impact on budgets/forecasts and procedures.

This will be discussed later in the meeting in section 16.

6.2.5 F&SSC request Respect & Courtesy is received in all communications. That a respect and courtesy policy be written for all those involved in the CF (Trustees/Ministers/Volunteers/Officers) and possible remedies to issues.

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Council discussed if a generic volunteer policy was needed.

The General Secretary said that a Safeguarding policy for volunteers is already in place and will be updated later at the meeting.

Financial Controller asked for the policy to emphasize the need for respect and courtesy. A good code of conduct needed.

**Decision: Council Agreed that the Code of conduct is to go in yearbook (on a separate page) and look at ways of communicating this to everyone – areas, churches etc.**

**Action** - Area representatives were requested to flag the issue at area meetings. That there is a clear escalation route for issues with staff and that an Intermediary needs to be in place for situations.

### **6.3 Finance Report (Paper D2)**

The Financial Controller reported that the overall outlook for the year is good. Adding Long Term assets will go up and down.

A question regarding the Protected Program Fund being used to fund suitable accommodation for Homes for Retired Ministers was asked, the response being that this had been agreed at a previous meeting (HRM being capital asset).

### **6.4 Finance Strategy (Paper D3)**

Key Performance Indicators are at healthy levels.

Congregational Federation is not reliant money from closed church funds to function.

PPF is invested – the return from this fund is used for normal CF function.

### **6.5 Congregational Federation Accounts & Forecasts (Paper D4)**

Council received the Accounts and Balance Sheet at **6.2.1**

### **6.6 Congregational Federation Balance Sheet at 30.6.23 (Paper D5)**

Council received the Balance Sheet at **6.2.1**

### **6.7 2023 Affiliation Fee write offs (Paper D6)**

Council agreed to write off the unpaid fees at **6.2.2**

## **7. Church Support Committee (Paper E1)**

Ruth Green

**7.1** Chair of Church Support Committee highlighted the following parts of the minutes.

**7.1.1** One of the main issues for churches is the shortage of preachers; the library of recorded sermons has been set up and is being used.

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**7.1.2** Churches have asked for a role description for deacons; a planning meeting has taken place and the leaflet will be ready for a first proof before Christmas.

**7.1.3** There is a shortage of volunteers to fill the area officers roles (especially treasurers), some areas are considering employing treasurers.

**7.1.4** The safeguarding deadline looming (end of 2023). This covered at section 16.

**7.1.5** CWM donations have fallen as Ministry & Misson donations no longer get automatically split between CWM and home donations.

### **7.2 Proposals from CSC**

**7.2.1** To agree an Impact Grant of £18,000 (paid in one year) to Crediton Congregational Church towards the cost of fully replacing and upgrading their audiovisual equipment.

Proposed by Hilary Biggin & Seconded by Foday Kamara

**Council all agreed to approve the grant.**

**7.2.2** To agree an Impact Grant of £18,000 (over 3 years) to Haymills cc for the appointment of a Community Pastor 9 hrs a week.

Hilary Biggin abstained (as in area)

**Council all agreed to approve the grant.**

**7.3** There have been 2 further applications for the fund to assist churches with increased stipend costs, from Fritchley & Hutton. The closing date has passed.

**Proposed** by Hilary Biggin & Seconded by Foday Kamara

**Council agreed**, for them both to receive the £500 they requested.

Eric Fenwick declared an interest and abstained from the vote.

**Action**, General Secretary to forward paperwork to Finance Team who will make the payments to the churches.

**Timescale** on return from Council.

**7.4** Area representatives were encouraged to get churches to apply for the smaller grants, money is available for them.

**7.5** A Youth & Childrens leaders retreat has been booked by the Church Support Worker for June 2024. Following the success of the Children's Assembly in 2023 preparations have begun for the Children's Assembly in 2024

**7.6** Safeguarding will be covered in section 16.

More safeguarding checkers are needed especially in Scotland & East Midlands Area.

Safeguarding training online is being well attended. With the addition of Spiritual Abuse safeguarding.

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**7.8** CIPT – there are 12 new students on the CF training course this year. The Pioneering Working Group had been tasked with redefining the role of a Pioneer Minister.

Their chosen definition is:

*Someone called by the Holy Spirit to help birth a new form of Church in a non – traditional context and who is actively engaged in the work.*

The Old wording for a Pioneer Minister is:

*A Pioneer will go into a church or Area as a missionary entrepreneur who may work alongside an existing Minister for a short period as required to plant and encourage new forms of church that are appropriate for a given cultural context.*

Council agreed that the definition needs to include congregational & culturally relevant (original has Minister at side) – the words non-traditional, birth & new form caused issue.

**Decision: General Secretary write to the Pioneering Group.**

**7.9** MSP4 is now moving forward, Clemev Gilmore has been appointed to drive this project forward.

**7.10** Mission 2024 – the Committee looked at 2 Christian Aid projects. The Church Support Committee members have taken the details of both projects back to areas and churches for them feedback their preferences.

### **CIPTMB – proposal 1 & 2**

**Proposal 1:** To raise tutor marking fees to at least the national minimum wage hourly rate. This would be applied per assignment marked rather than as an hourly wage. This would be reduced to 50% per assignment for second marking and the marking of formative assignments.

**Proposal 2:** For this rate to be reviewed annually in line with the minister's stipend and staff wage rises, and to be adjusted according to the same percentage increase.

#### **Decision:**

Both proposals were deferred, Council asked for the proposals to be reworked by CIPTMB – Catherine Booton, Gary Baker & Mark Tucker to look at the fee payment (figure) and check the minutes of CIPTMB . Any changes in payments to be back dated.

**7.11** ICB – need to look at terms to be served and change of reps needs to be given.

**7.12** ICF – the next Assembly meeting will be in 2025 and will be in Greece.

**7.13** APPCG have many areas in vacancy, this is a concern.

**The minutes of last Church Support Committee meeting were received by council.**

## 8. Strategy/Assembly Feedback

(Papers F)

### Discussion

**8.1** Chair reflected on some thoughts and ideas for moving forward.

Assembly were enthusiastic welcoming new churches.

How should we promote membership of the Congregational Federation to welcome more new churches.

Should we bring ideas to Assembly discussions for consultation and not resolutions.

Suggested that the Presidents group to Council could be changed so that they are only a Council Member for the year after they have been President – therefore being in a place of having visited many Churches and Areas.

Council wants to make decisions with the approval of Assembly, discuss and embrace Assembly for their views. – test if there is approval & agreement at Assembly.

### Ideas

**8.2** Could Presidents be for a 2 years to spread out responsibility. Chris Gillham agreed from experience that it could help the President grow into the role. Being able to welcome people and make them feel welcome is key for both church & Assembly.

Seek the mind of Christ at Assembly – share what is happening.

Assembly & Council need to be in Unison.

As Assembly is recorded, make the discussions at Assembly available for Churches & Areas to see and discuss at a later date.

President Elect & Previous Past President could work together on Council, leaving the President free in their year of presidency for visits etc. The Previous Past President to be a role model i.e. a teacher to the President Elect.

**Decision: As there is only a role description for President there is a need for role descriptions for both President Elect and Previous Past President.**

**Actions: role description of President Elect and Previous Past President to be written By Whom: General Secretary.**

**Timescale: bring draft to next meeting of Council April 2024.**

### Consider

**8.3** More worship time at the start of Assembly – maybe start at 10am. Half an hour earlier for informal worship.

Welcome each area to assembly, celebrate our welcome. – ask someone from each area to bring greetings from the Area i.e. say “Hello from.....”

Put the most appropriate person on the door to welcome visitors.

Consider a 2-day assembly – 1<sup>st</sup> day “rally”, 2<sup>nd</sup> day business.

Communicate what’s on at Assembly better. Ministers meeting, fringe, main day, Sunday worship – promote what we do more.

Live stream and record to allow feedback & comments.

#### **8.4 2024 Assembly**

This will be held in the Eastern Area; we are currently at the point of contract with Essex University which is near Colchester. There are several churches close to the main venue. More information will be shared after Christmas.

#### **8.5 Future Assembly Venues**

**2025** Assembly will be held at Nottingham Trent University

Council were asked to think about if we continue to move Assembly round the areas? Or would having 4 venues set in Scotland, Wales, plus 2 in England. Plan further in the future?

#### **8.6 Assembly 2023 Collection**

The collection was split between Christian Rebuild and the Church in Grenada where Nigel Lindsay is based. The finance team are struggling to get the payment to the church in Grenada.

**Proposal: That if Finance are unable to send the payment in 2023 then the money be ringfenced until Finance are able to send the donation.**

**Proposed Roo MacRae; Seconded Foday Kamara**

**Council were all in agreement.**

**Note: Finance team could consider sending Nigel Lindsay back to Grenada with cheque.**

**Larkhall**

**(Paper F1)**

A letter has been received to withdraw from the Congregational Federation. They remain members of in Congregational Federation in Scotland.

The letter was acknowledged and noted by Council.

#### **9. NSPCI Proposal**

**(Paper G)**

A Zoom meeting took place on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

NSPCI are asking for support in the areas of safeguarding, training, and communication,

They are willing to pay for these services.

Fees are to be calculated by Finance team.

Proposal from the meeting is that individual churches that are members if NSPCI are welcome to apply for Congregational Federation membership. If any churches do apply, they will be dealt with on an individual basis. This would include discussion as to which area they should join and if the area are willing to include them. Scotland have close ties with them so could be the natural choice.

This discussion continued overnight and was returned to on Saturday morning.

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Elisabeth Sweeney-Smith opened the days meeting with readings from 1 Peter 5 1-11 & Micah 5 a quiet time and confession.

**9. continued** from 24<sup>th</sup> November

This will be an opportunity to teach and grow individuals and help with safeguarding. Individual churches will need to be assessed on an individual basis. The NSPCI Unitarian churches are not interested in membership.

**Decision: Council agreed to the links with NSPCI, noting the training course is already open to those from outside the Congregational Federation churches.**

**In favour 8**

**Abstentions 4**

**None against**

**Action: General Secretary to communicate and draw up a memorandum of agreement and communicate the decision to NSPCI.**

**Timescale: as soon as possible**

**10. New Church Application**

**(Paper H, H1 & H2)**

**Kirkcaldy (CF in Scotland)** application for membership has been received, safeguarding is fully in place.

**Decision: Council formally agreed to accept Kirkcaldy accept back into the Congregational Federation family. This was a unanimous decision.**

**Action: General Secretary to communicate the decision to Kirkcaldy church with details of the 2024 Assembly where they will be formally welcomed.**

**Timescale: As soon as possible.**

**11. Action Plan Review**

**(Paper I)**

Ongoing from last meeting

<b>Action</b>	<b>Update November 2023</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
Practical Instruction on Conducting Life events in different locations	Plans in place for 2024	ongoing
Skills database	No further action taken	Unsure how to progress; further discussions with CST January 2024
Mentoring	More discussions taken place with L&D manager and plans in place for spring training sessions	ongoing



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Re visit Likewise topics	L&D Manager has plans for further Likewise days	January 2024 - ongoing
Enthuse those in ministry in the bible	Thoughts to run an advent bible study on a Tuesday afternoon not come to fruition. Advent Bible Study been produced. President elect theme will focus on God's word CWM msp4 focus on discipleship	Could be more opportunities in 2024 to promote and will as appropriate
Short courses for preachers and worship leaders	Retreat Day took place in September but very poor attendance. Zoom Tuesdays continue	More thoughts will take place on this in January 2024
Short films of church success stories	No further action has taken place	We continue to have lots of feedback from churches about events and displays – plans to film in the new year but staff workloads taken over

Now looking at the weaknesses list from the last meeting.

### Weaknesses

1. Communication – content and disseminator
2. Sustainability / Future planning
3. Building bound
4. Participation / value
5. Governance / understanding and lack of engagement
6. Congregationalism / What is Congregationalism?
7. Low numbers
8. Addressing social concerns
9. Perception lack of public stance
10. Step into unknown / fear
11. Don't pause and reflect
12. Administrative – risk of taking advantage / need for trained people

**Action: General Secretary to put these in some sort of plan to be distributed to Council**

**Timescale: within the next week.**

### Session 2

#### 12. HR Topics

(Paper J)

#### Closed Session

#### 13. CF Ltd – separate minutes

#### **14. Accreditation Proposals**

**(Paper K)**

From General Secretary, Learning & Development Manager, agreed by Chair of APCCG

(Papers K1 & K2 for information)

##### **Proposal 1.**

**Change the name of Accredited Ministers to Nationally Recognised.**

**Decision: Council asked for this to remain as Accredited Ministers.**

##### **Proposal 2.**

New pathway for Accreditation – experienced based Accreditation

Criteria to include.

- Over 12 years leadership experience in a church (at least 5 years in a Congregational Federation church)
- Demonstrating spiritual and numerical growth
- Attendance at Congregational Principles Weekend or Course (TBC)
- Reference from each church
- Interview from Accreditation Board
- Portfolio of work / Visit by Accreditation Board

**Jim Lyon, Eric Fenwick & Roo MacRae abstained.**

##### **Proposal 3.**

Reform the Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordinator's Group to be Area Pastoral Care Group whose focus is to lead and support the Pastoral care in the areas. One gathering and training a year in September at the Arboretum. Create an Accreditation Board which has 5/6 members who do all the Form B interviews. Members must be trained in mentoring/coaching which will be provided through an outside body and have relevant experience. Form A interviews will still be the responsibility of the area/nation. There will be a requirement for areas/nations to submit a report to the Form B interview board to ensure local knowledge is provided.

This board will report to Church Support Committee.

Council suggested that a specification of the role for members of the Accreditation Board would be beneficial for those wanting to join the Board.

##### **Proposal 4.**

To create a national online training course based on Christ in all things and Being Congregational for new members of congregational churches.

Council suggests that the Learning and Development Team /Church Support Team work on this.

##### **Proposal 5.**

To devise a new guideline for those already on the Accredited Roll who want to add another category of ministries to their entry.

This would include;

- 2 days of teaching at the Director of Studies discretion (this could be in the applicants place of ministry)

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- A placement in the ministry
- An assessment/written assignment

At present completion of Module L is normally required and this is now only offered every other year. This proposal would ensure there is no teaching repetition and allow the application to fit the current the process.

### **Decision: Proposal 2 – 5**

**Council recommends that these proposals be brought to the next Accreditation & Pastoral Care Coordinating Group meeting.**

**Timescale: February 2024.**

## **15. CF Constitution**

**(Paper L)**

Any changes to the Constitution are required to be to meet Article 6

**Proposed by Roo MacRae and all council were in agreement:**

**To set up a 4-person working group to work in between the Council meetings and report to update each council meeting.**

**Action: Operations Manager, General Secretary and Chair of Council to set up the group to include persons with specific experience.**

Council suggested asking Roo MacRae & Martin Spain to proof any alterations.

**Group to look specifically at article 5, 6 & 8 and a Dissolution cause.**

## **16. Safeguarding**

National Congregational Federation Safeguarding Policy

**(Paper M1)**

This paper was for information and review by Council.

Council agreed that there were no amendments needed.

Safeguarding policy Paper M1 was unanimously accepted by Council.

**Churches with no safeguarding certificate**

**(Paper M2)**

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The table shows the CF churches with no Safeguarding certificate as of this week November 2023

	<b>CHURCH</b>	<b>AREA</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
1	REAWICK	CFS	This church has closed now Nov 2023
2	SWANSEA : Paraclete	CFW	Call and emails to the Minister waiting on response
3	TALLISTOWN	CFW	
4	SIRHOWY : Ebenezer	CFW	
5	BATTLESBRIDGE	E	
6	BRAINTREE : Bocking End	E	No engagement with CF usually and no affiliation paid
7	GRIMSBY : Park	EM	
8	THEDDINGWORTH	EM	
9	EAST MORTON	NE	Checker in contact to find out if the church want to go ahead with the process
10	AFFETSID	NW	Area worker in conversations
11	ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD	NW	Area worker in conversations
12	STOCKPORT	NW	Area worker in conversation
13	HARTING	SE	Process with another denomination – waiting on confirmation
14	HEATHFIELD	SE	Also affiliated to Baptist waiting on policy
15	HERSTMONCEUX	SE	Now in process!
16	ISLEWORTH	SE	
17	BEER	SW	CSC rep has been in contact but not wanting help
18	FROME: ROOK LANE	SW	No building but also no policy GS emailed Jim
19	CASTLE COMBE	SWM	Church in negotiations of merging with Sherston
20	DIDMARTON	SWM	Checker trying to persuade
21	GLOUCESTER	SWM	Unpaid affiliation fees
22	LONG COMPTON	SWM	Checker/ GS has emailed numerous times in process of writing policy but asking questions
23	TIMSBURY	SWM	Church will close at the end of the year awaiting confirmation
24	WICKWAR	SWM	Checker in communication with someone new at the church

General Secretary expressed thanks for Lisa for her unending work on this and to all the Safeguarding Checkers.

### **Process proposal for removal**

September 2023 The Church Support Committee were given the list of the all the churches with no certificate and no engagement in the process to contact and encourage.

November 2023- Council to be given the final list of churches with no certificate or engagements and updated status to again contact and encourage.

January 2024 – A letter from the General Secretary to be sent to the churches to tell them their affiliation is no longer active and they will not be sent an invoice for renewal. It will make clear that their trust deeds remain with CF Ltd. Churches who wish to affiliate again will have to go through the application process.

Finance will be copied into the letter.

Safeguarding Training for Trustees needs to be redone by all Trustees.

**Action:** Safeguarding Officer will Doodle Trustees to get the best dates for organising Zoom training in the new year.

### **Historic Case Review**

General Secretary is taking the Historic Case Review forward, 31:8 will be reviewing the documentation and making recommendations.

**Action: General Secretary to bring the review results to the next Council Meeting.**

**Timescale: April 2024.**

## **17. News from the English Areas, CF Wales and CF Scotland**

### **North East Area** via email from Ruth Leeming

The N E Area is experimenting with a few organisational changes which, it is hoped will make best use of our time and resources and keep the network going well among our churches. This year was the 2nd experimental Annual Assembly which took place in Scarborough for a Fun Day, worship event & short business meeting and was featured in the last Refresh. It was very successful and so we are continuing with this plan. We welcomed the new Pastor of Driffield CC, Helen Sissons, as John & Linda Gaughan retired due to John's ill health. We are very fortunate in the N E Area to have a Vice Chair, Treasurer & Secretary plus the Executive Committee and other representatives on committees who work hard to keep things running smoothly.

Sue Austin added that succession planning is required to fill Area Officer Roles.

### **South West Area** Caroline Stott

They had a good Area Assembly, including fire safety training & mindfulness. The President provided good worship. They enjoyed hosting national assembly. There has been the sadness of Nicola & Greta White passing, which has caused issues with getting access to the area accounts.

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### **CF in Wales** Brendan & Dawn Mason with Chris Gillham.

All nations Swansea have moved from rented accommodation to their own place, they are planning to have a coffee shop in the premises and use this for outreach. The General Secretary joined Haverfordwest for the Ordination of their new Minister Anthony Batterton. Freystrop is growing – God uses all situations.

### **CF in Scotland** Roo MacRae

They have a new Chair – Roo! They are having issues replacing some officers. Area is meeting monthly and are wanting to re-engage with the churches. President Elect, Elisabeth Sweeney-Smith and Nigel Lindsay attended the Scottish Assembly and many were able to join online. Musselburgh have filled their vacancy, Edmonde Openshaw. It's wonderful to have Kirkcaldy back in the fold. Area have met with Reawick Church to offer support and advice before their closure. The Area are meeting next week to consider why we do what we do and what we do.

### **North West Area** Foday Kamara

They also have new Chair, David Gould. The Secretary has given final notice to step down. Representation on boards and committees is difficult. They are trying hard to encourage volunteers. The Area have a new Church Support Worker, Foday, he has visited 24 of the 27 area churches. He is trying to encourage and reassure churches in that what they are doing is good and to keep momentum the up. Safeguarding is being managed well. The ordination of Rob Cross has taken place at Brierley Green, this is first time this church have called a Minister.

### **Eastern Area** Eric Fenwick

The Area meet two times a year for Area Assembly. The last couple of years things have changed. They do much of the work and meetings by zoom and emails. Earlier this year they had problems with grant system; Area grants are being run by the Congregational Federation finance team. A way forward needs to be found.

### **North West Midlands Area** Hilary Biggin

As an area they have similar problems as other areas, they are now down to 9 churches, and have less people to fill the roles. Area meetings are held in different churches. Congregations are aging. Ladypool Road have a transient congregation, with a steady flow coming and moving on. Newcastle have noticed that having Pulpit supply doesn't move the church forward and that there is a need to revisit congregationalism in the church; there is a forward looking day with General Secretary (wed 29<sup>th</sup> November), they too are having difficulty with banking after the treasurer died. Does the area need to be looked at differently?

### **South East Area** Chris Damp

The Area have also had bank issues, this has made the area get organised. They have appointed officers and filled all their vacancies. Churches now engaging with the Area who haven't been involved before. Isle of Wight have opened their new building. The Area have seen some big church anniversaries this year. Sadly Delia O'Halloran has recently passed away. The Area are struggling with churches wanting ministers but unable to afford them.

**Request:** Could the issue of difficulties changing banking signatories when someone dies be raised with the Ecumenical bodies, CTE, CTYN, CTS. Should churches be warned that this could be an issue – i.e. make sure they have several signatories.

**Action:** General Secretary to take up the issue with the Ecumenical bodies.

## **18. Further Discussions and Action Planning CF Film and Affiliation Benefits.**

**18.1** Refresh still being well received – the changes for 2024 will be that individual copies can be ordered now, and Refresh can be ordered without the Year Book (and visa versa). The Editor of Refresh Andrew Halloway has said Summer 2024 will be his last edition.

The Advent weekly resource has been produced and is available via the office. It will be reprinted for next year.

**18.2** Comments from post it notes. Benefits of being members of the Congregational Federation.

- Being part of the wider picture of CF and keep in touch with both each other and what is happening in other church fellowships
- **Fellowship**
- Like minded friends
- Fellowship at areas and National Assemblies
- Friendship
- Shared partnership
  
- Being linked to the **wider network of churches together CWM and Free Church** events and feeling connected to these – thanks to the good offices of CF
- Physical and spiritual demonstration of the body of Christ united
- Helps us remind us of the wider church – not “you in your small corner and I in mine”
  
- **Shared heritage**
  
- Having a backup for all the many and varied things which happen in the day to day running of the church
- **Support** / Advice from Nottingham
- Help in dealing with trying officialdom
- Support
  
- Little control
- **Remaining independent** but having access to support for every eventuality
  
- **Ways of reproducing inspirational ideas via magazine articles**
  
- **Safeguarding** support
  
- **General Secretary**

- **Custodian trustees**
- **Exemption from Charity Commission exception** – (Not Scotland) support for changes in the process & help available from CF when churches need to register.
- **Constitution does not claim to speak on churches part.**
- **Spiritual support**
- **Training Course**
- **Need more fun days** without together without business meeting attached.

**Action:** General Secretary to produce a poster as an advert for benefits of being part of CF.

**Timescale:** To be fed back to Council Members at the next meeting.

**Action:** General Secretary to work on a new action plan

**Timescale:** before next council meeting.

**18.3** Church Support Committee commissioned the film used at Assembly.

Action: CST to make sure the film can be shared with the churches and is available on the CF website.

### **Future venues discussions**

Next meeting in Nottingham offices so members can join by zoom if need be  
Agree rotating years, one meeting in Nottingham and one in Scotland, then one in Wales and one in London.

A lot of the business could be dealt with on zoom, use it more, be greener and financially savvy.

Broader discussion needs to be face to face. Need to get interaction.

**Decision:** Nottingham & Scotland for 2024

April in Nottingham 19/20 April 2024

Scotland 15/16 November 2024

Foday Kamara closed Council in prayer.