

# Chair Agreed Council 14 – 16 November 2024

## **Minutes of the Council Meeting 15 – 16 November 2024 Holiday Inn, Edinburgh.**

### **Present**

Jim Lyon  
Elisabeth Sweeney-Smith  
Caroline Stott  
Sue Austin  
Ruth Green  
Ruairidh MacRae  
Margaret McGuinness  
Gerry Simonis  
Chris Gillham  
Brendan Mason  
Eric Fenwick  
Mark Taylor  
Foday Kamara  
Tim Bateman  
Chris Damp  
Sandra Turner

### **Representing**

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

### **Participant Observers**

Yvonne Campbell  
Mark Tucker  
  
Gary Baker  
Sam Coleman

General Secretary  
Operations Manager/  
CFL Company  
Finance Section only  
Minutes

### **Apologies**

Judi Holloway  
Oliver Kinchin.  
Ruth Leeming

South West Midlands  
Previous President  
North East

## **Opening Worship**

Elisabeth Sweeney-Smith opened the meeting with readings from Psalm 138, prayer and worship.

## **Session 1**

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

Tim Bateman (North West Midlands) and Sandra Turner (South West) were welcomed as the new area representatives to Council. Caroline Stott was welcomed in her new role as President Elect and Ruth Green as the Chair of Church Support Committee.

Council was welcomed to Scotland.

### **2. Apologies**

Noted as above.

### **3. Minutes of last Meeting 19-20 April 2024 (Paper B)**

**Decision: The minutes of the meeting held in April 2024 were accepted as a true and accurate record.**

### **4. Matters Arising from last meeting April 2024**

Tutor increases from Nov 2023  
The increase has taken place as discussed.

### **5. Declaration of Other Business**

Retired Ministers Fund.

**6. Finance and Support Services Committee**  
**(Papers D – D6)**

Sue Austin

**6.1 Minutes of last meeting of the Finance and Support Services Committee**  
**(Paper D)**

The minutes of the Finance and Support Services Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2024 were received by Council.

**6.2 CF Decision Sheet**  
**(Paper D1)**

**6.2.1** Council **received** the CF Half Year Accounts and Balance Sheet 2024 which have been noted and received by the FSSC on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2024. **(Papers D4 & D5)**

**6.2.2** Write-off the unpaid affiliation fees as per D6  
**(Paper D6)**

The church from CF in Scotland has paid their fees since the papers production.

**Action** – Welsh & South East Council Area Representatives to consult with their Area and the Churches involved to see if they want the affiliation payments outstanding to be made from the accumulated County Funds.

**Council decided to write-off the unpaid affiliation fees for the church in “Others Scotland” category.**

**6.2.3** Council **agreed** to increase affiliation fees for 2026 as follows:  
Church fee from **£170pa to £175pa**  
and per member from **£9.25 to £9.50**.

Council agreed unanimously.

**6.2.4** Council **agreed** to increase Personal/Associate Membership Fees to increase from **£45 to £46** for 2026.

**6.2.5** Southam Church and Community Project Ltd. This will be covered at item 9 on the agenda.

**6.2.6** Council **agreed** that the Congregational Federation provide an Interest Free loan of £30,000 to the Congregational Federation Limited to cover the shortfalls in its cash position because of recent church closure expenses. This will be paid repayable upon sale/distribution of Longney Congregational Church.

**6.2.7** Bank signatories for CF to be 2 from 4 of General Secretary, Financial Controller, Trust and Property Manager, Assistant Financial Controller.

Council **agreed** for the two new members of staff (Trust and Property Manager & Assistant Financial Controller) be added as signatories when they have completed their probationary period.

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During the interim period General Secretary to ask the Learning and Development Manager to consider being a signatory. This would give 2 from 3 signatories.

### 6.3 Finance Report

#### (Paper D2)

The Financial Controller reported that finances remain in a fairly stable position, seeing a slight reduction in deficits this year. CF currently have healthy cash reserves. The empty Investment property in Cardigan is to be sold, the proceeds will be transferred from the General Purposes Property Fund to the Protected Program Fund to provide future financing to protect and preserve CF operations in supporting churches. A further property in Shrewsbury will be sold in 2025 for the same purpose.

Comments on report:

The Welsh rep asked if Pilton Green remains viable in view of the new Welsh Government rules on holiday lets.

**Action:** Trust and Property Manager to investigate any changes when appointed.

**Action:** Finance to provide costings and viability of Pilton Green to the next meeting of ITTB, along with reviewing the cost of users taking a dog to Pilton Green.

For future reports it would be useful to Council to include property type along with any other information (e.g. HRM, Investment)

Chair of Church Support Committee asked if more than 10% of closed church income should go into the grants fund.

**Action:** to be discussed at a future meeting of Council.

**Note:** Grant funds are low at present, but no Impact Grant has been refused due to lack of funds. It was suggested that if churches apply for grants and the money isn't available in the fund, Council will be able to allocate more funds.

Council said it would be useful to see the amounts available to areas in the Union funds.

Financial Controller explained that the Area Treasurers receive a report quarterly.

**Action:** Council requested that the information is also shared with Area Chairs & Area Secretaries along with the Area Treasurers. (For the Eastern Area please send to Adrian Burr, Margaret Morris and Eric Fenwick).

### 6.4 Finance Strategy

#### (Paper D3)

Key Performance Indicators are at healthy levels.

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

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

Finance Strategy for 2027 onwards needs to be begun to be discussed as soon as possible.

### 6.5 Congregational Federation Financial Summary Report

#### (Paper D4)

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Council **received** the Financial Summary Report, Paper D4. Specific questions to go to the Financial Controller.

Chris Damp pointed out that the minutes of the last FSSC meeting recommended the New College London Foundation be wound up. He commented that there are potentially still funds that the Foundation could receive as beneficiary in dissolution clauses.

This will be discussed further at the Congregational Federation Limited Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2024, final decision to be brought back to Council.

### **6.6 Congregational Federation Balance Sheet at 30.6.24 (Paper D5)**

Council received the Balance Sheet at **6.2.1**

### **7. Church Support Committee**

**(Paper E1)**

Ruth Green

Ruth Green took Council through the minutes of the last meeting of the Church Support Committee held on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

### **Proposals as approved by CSC at the Above Meeting.**

**7.1 Grassington** – The grant for £18,000 (over 3 years) had been approved to fund a new post of Wellbeing and Reflection Worker. Sadly Peter Thomas, who was to fill the role has passed to glory. However, some of the resources have been promised to local schools. The General Secretary will be visiting the church in December and proposed as follows:

### **Proposed Yvonne Campbell, Seconded Roo MacRae.**

**The first two quarterly payments (£3,000) be paid to the church in January 2025.**

### **Unanimously agreed by Council**

The future of the project then to be discussed with the church in March 2025, with a proposal to the next meeting of CSC.

**7.2 Driffield** - To agree an Impact Grant of £18,000 (over 3 years) to Driffield Congregational Church towards the cost an outreach project and safe space via a community café.

### **Council unanimously agreed the grant.**

**7.3 Southam** – To agree an Impact Grant of £18,000 (over 3 years) to fund a part-time Children and Families worker for 10hrs a week.

### **Council unanimously agreed the grant.**

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**7.4 Zion Miner's Chapel, Llanhilleth** – To agree an Impact Grant of £1,000 (one off payment) for benches to be purchased for quiet reflection within the Garden Project.

**Council unanimously agreed the grant.**

**7.5 Stalbridge** – To agree an Impact Grant of £15,000 (over 3 years) to employ a Youth Worker for 24 hours a month.

Sandra Turner (SW area) declared an interest as member of the church.

**Council unanimously agreed the grant.**

**7.6 Newbiggin Course** – (Eric Fenwick declared an interest, the student is from Hutton)

There is one CF Student attending this external pioneering course. Newbiggin is joint project between the URC and CF. Ruth Green is a Coach on the Course. The final CF grant of £300 has been awarded for the course fees.

**7.7 Christian Aid** – Prayer meeting for and with Christian Aid will be on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024 to highlight and pray for the project we are supporting in Malawi.

#### **7.8 CWM**

- Four people attended the quadrennial CWM assembly, all costs were met by CWM.
- CWM Member Church Initiative grant, funded a large proportion of the mission trip to Brazil and the recent mission trip to Grenada.
- We had a member from Newark CC working as an Intern with CWM.
- A young person from Union Chapel has successfully completed the TIM programme
- A young person from Penge has participated in a volunteer environmental research trip to South Africa.
- Nigel Lindsay has finished his work in Grenada, we are in discussions for another PIM placement in Nauru.

**7.9 MSP4** – update, “All for Jesus, Jesus for All” discipleship project will be piloted in four churches in early 2025.

**7.10 Safeguarding Checkers** – a training meeting is planned for February 2025.

**Action:** General Secretary to clarify with the Safeguarding Officer if churches can use Area Workers as Protection Verifier. In some cases churches do not have any members with email.

The desire of Council is to help this happen for churches. Report back to Foday Kamara.

**7.11 CIPT** – there are 10 new students this academic year and enquiries for the next academic year already.

**7.12 Youth Ambassador** – Harry Booton continues to make connections.

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There have been concerns mentioned regarding Harry sharing/promoting Honest Church; Council has agreed for Harry to Signpost Honest Church and not to promote it.

**Action:** Yvonne to talk to Harry regarding the promotion (or signpost) to Honest Church.

Council do not want to deter Harry, but to protect and keep him safe.

Harry is sent on behalf of CF and Council need to be clearer in their support and what is expected of him (CF Values and ideas)

**7.12 CIPTMB** – the Chair of CIPTMB has resigned. L & D Manager is working with the Chair of CIPTMB and Course Board to agree a proposal for the future of CIPTMB for the next meeting of Church Support Committee.

**Action:** Chair of Council requested that CIPT be a regular specific agenda item with CIPT reporting to Council for information once a year (when in Nottingham). This was agreed to be a regular annual agenda item.

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

## 8. News from the Areas

### 8.1 North East Sue Austin/Ruth Leeming

The latter half of the year has been a difficult time for the Area, the devastating loss for Suzanne and Keith Nockels of their son Isaac and the sudden loss only a few weeks after a cancer diagnosis of Peter Thomas the Minister at Grassington.

Helen Keighley stepped down as Minister at Harden.

The Summer meeting (including AGM) and day away was held in York, Summer 2025 will be held in Whitby.

### 8.2 North West Foday Kamara

The Area have a new Area Secretary, Kathy Shaw. The Autumn Assembly was held on 9<sup>th</sup> November, many attended who hadn't been to Area Assembly for some time. The Area are into their second year with him as Area Worker, Appraisal and valuation of the role are to take place. There is a shortage of Ministers in Churches, many need regular pulpit supply. Foday is doing some Sunday Services which is making connections. Looking forward the Area will be advertising for a Area Youth & Children's worker, Area finances are OK.

### 8.3 CF in Scotland Margaret McGuinness

They will be looking for a new Chair when Roo moves to Market Harborough.

Autumn conference was held at Motherwell, with two speakers on creation.

Disclosure Scotland has changes happening in 2025, PVG will now be required every 5 years. There are 3 churches who could potentially close, and Eyemouth will soon be in vacancy. Lynn Robertson was ordained at Kirkaldy. Larkhall may be reapplying for CF Membership.

### 8.4 South West Chris Damp

The Area meet by Zoom quarterly, Assembly was in South Chingford, Dave Simms was appointed as Area Support Worker, targeting small churches needing help with specifics e.g. Gift Aid. They have a full compliment of Area Officials.

Concerns – buildings, one needing a lot of work and a lot of money spending on it.

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Keeping churches involved with CF.

### **8.5 North West Midlands** Tim Bateman

The Autumn Assembly was good, though poorly attended. All Area officer positions have been filled. The guest speaker on evangelism was well appreciated. There has been additions to the ministers at Hay Mills (Online Minister), the Area only has 2 churches who don't need visiting preachers. The area are concerned over the shortage of Young People in churches on Sundays.

### **8.6 CF in Wales** Brendan Mason

Wales welcomed Penclawdd church into the Federation at Assembly in May. They have held a Spring Assembly, Summer Rally and Autumn Assembly, where they majored on pulpit supply, encouraging train, learn and ordain. The area Executive meet by Zoom, they have a new area Treasurer.

Chris Gillham added, All Nations, Swansea are breaking new ground with the Shop/Café in Swansea, representing many nations, Koreans who were missioned by Welsh missionaries have come to Wales as missionaries to Wales.

The Government do not make it easy for Ministers to get the Visa needed to work in Wales.

### **8.7 East Midlands** Mark Taylor

Roo MacRae will be welcomed to Market Harborough. Area Assembly was reasonably well attended. There has not been an Area Executive meeting in the last 12 months, having some issues with getting together. There is an executive meeting planned for week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> November – watch this space!

### **8.8 Eastern** Eric Fenwick

Held a prayerful and successful area meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> October 24, the first since 2019. Area has asked for people to step up and take on/over the area roles. Yemi from Hutton is on the New Biggin Course. Woodham Ferrers have permission to build on to the School Room, this will be accommodation and a hub for sabbaticals or respite.

### **8.9 South West** Sandra Turner

The Area is stretched out and meetings are a challenge. The Area AGM had good speakers; Area struggle to get people together having a small group of regulars who can be relied upon. There are many small churches in the Area, several churches have Children & Youth. It was a huge challenge when the Area Treasurer died. Vince Carrington has taken on the role of Area Chair. Kevin Dudman will be Minister at Cawsand. Area has four attendees on CIPT.

### **8.10 South West Midlands** Judi Holloway (by email)

Judi wasn't able to be at the meeting but sent detailed reports on some churches. The area have met three times this year, the Summer gathering at South Cerney was very uplifting and prayerful with impromptu worship. It was a great day and a great opportunity for sharing. Conversations were had about helping/ encouraging churches to move forward and to look for being a positive environment regardless of numbers and challenges; suggestions for positive solutions were shared.

The Autumn Assembly at Stapleton Road focused on Mental Health and presentations led by the Gs and L&D Manager. Positive feedback was given by all who attended.

The area worker Joy Howell continues to be an amazing asset.

## **9. The Graham Adams Centre (Paper G)**

The heating at the centre has failed; legal advice has been sought which made clear that the tenants (Southam Church and Community Project Ltd) have responsibility for all repairs.

As CF do not have the responsibility for repairing the property, the risk to CF of granting a new lease is reduced, provided there is clarity on this topic and a commercial rent is agreed. It was reported that at the current time SCACP are in crisis with the heating system not working.

Do CF want to help with the heating costs?

Should there be a new lease with commercial rent?

A longer lease will mean that they can secure more grants.

### **Decision:**

To contact SCACP Ltd to inform them that CF are prepared to renew the lease at a commercial rate, after the current one expires, subject to negotiation.

**Action:** Chair of Council to contact the centre regarding lease and clarify that CF are not responsible for the repairs.

It was considered that granting an unsecured loan would not be in line with our trust responsibilities. Chair to also communicate this.

**Timescale:** as soon as possible.

Council unanimously agreed this decision.

## **10. CF Constitution Introduction (Papers H1 – H5)**

A summary of the results from churches were presented and tomorrow more detailed evaluations would take place.

### **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

Elisabeth Sweeney-Smith opened the days meeting reading Mark 6: 31 prayer and reflection.

### **Presidents Report**

Presidential Theme: Hear the Word of the Lord

- Elisabeth has dedicated to prayer and listening to the Spirit's leading.
- She has written articles for Refresh magazine / Life & Light and Lent reflections along with an article about Congregationalism for the Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy magazine.
- CWM funded her trip week in Durban, South Africa and private visit to Ladysmith with the opportunity to preach & support a Presbyterian Minister.
- She attended Mrs Grist's funeral in Blackpool and sent letters of support to two grieving congregations in Sheffield.
- She had a day in Liverpool with Yvonne, Linda and the visiting CWM female ministers (pioneering/leadership).
- There have been many Zoom meetings and
- An invitation to Lambeth Palace's CTE Annual Presidents dinner.
- She has visited 45 churches since May 2024.



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Personal challenges included: Sharing family support for mum (99) living in her own home, serious illness of cousin and bereavement support since October. the submission of dissertation on R W Dale "The Atonement"; Extensive house exterior maintenance project, Greek lessons and keeping up with expenses claims!

Themes as I hear the Word of the Lord for our churches

What's in a Letter,	Jesus, our Great High Priest
Sanctify them by thy Truth –	Training for service
Thy Word is Truth,	Holy Overshadowing,
Sow and keep sowing,	King of Kings,
Speak Lord Your servant is listening,	He who puts his hand to plough and
You are my witnesses,	he looks back is not fit for the
I am the bread of life,	Kingdom of God
The Tent of Meeting,	The Wisdom of God
The Ascension power of the Holy	Who is like unto Thee O God?
Spirit,	

Reflections so far:

The Joy of seeing faithful people not giving up;  
The importance of sharing meals;  
Support of role of President in gifts of poems/songs/scarves/prayers and welcome;  
The fellowship of the Holy Spirit in preparation/delivery;  
One size does not fit all;  
Methodists/Anglican pulpit support;  
Embracing of Technology – wider musical choices;  
Lots of emails from CF!;  
The pain of seeing buildings in bad repair;  
Saying Goodbye;  
Formality;  
Lack of spontaneous prayer times;  
1 hour for God?;  
Lack of Bible study or prayer groups / in churches without Ministers;  
Lack of preachers to fill pulpits;  
Disconnect between worship and weekly children's community activities ?

### **Session 2**

#### **11. HR Topics**

**(Paper I)**

#### **Closed Session**

#### **12. CF Ltd – separate minutes**

#### **13. CF Constitution**

**(Papes H1-5)**

Council split into groups to discuss and agree the articles of the constitution based on the church comments received. The new constitution that will be sent out to churches for discussion at the Assembly is attached as Appendix 1.

**13.1 Article 2 & 3 Participants:** Foday Kamara, Caroline Scott, Sue Austin, Margaret McGuinness, Elisabeth Sweeney-Smith

**13.2 Article 4 & 5 Participants:** Yvonne Campbell and Jim Lyon

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**13.3 Article 6 & 7 Participants:** Tim Bateman, Chris Gillham, Brendan Mason, Chris Damp and Gerry Simonis.

**13.4 Articles 8 & 9 Participants:** Ruth Green, Roo MacRae, Mark Taylor, Eric Fenwick, Sandra Turner

## **14. Marketing**

### **(Paper L)**

There was nothing to report since the publication of this paper.

The following comments were made; item 6 makes no mention of the work of Areas and clusters of churches; 30 by 30 is a big ask (think big), do we need a strapline?

Concerns: to be aware of large churches possibly taking over areas; some churches might get better help from the Unaffiliated Churches Charity. Could churches join Areas and not CF as a whole, (CF in Scotland already have some churches affiliated to CFS and not CF). Some churches can be affiliated to more than one body, e.g. EFCC, this needs to be considered.

Council was unanimous in wanting to move this forward.

**Decision: General Secretary to organise a Zoom call to move this forward. As soon as possible.**

## **15. Correspondence**

### **(Paper M)**

#### **15.1 Safeguarding in the CF.**

The correspondence received from Buxworth regarding the removal of churches without safeguarding certificates from CF was discussed.

**Note:** Safeguarding is a National, legal requirement (not CF), open buildings can have children or vulnerable adults attend at any time, churches must be safe before anyone attends. Safeguarding is essential for every Church and person attending. Trustees must protect beneficiaries of the charity.

**Decision: General Secretary and Chair of Council to respond to the church.**

**Action: Safeguarding church status list to come to every Council meeting.  
Timescale: April 2025**

**Action: Policy for removal of churches who do not work towards having safeguarding certificate to be produced and brought to the next meeting of Council.**

**Timescale: April 2025.**

Action: Safeguarding is a mandatory agenda item for each Council meeting  
Timescale: next meeting

Tallistown are wanting to get safeguarding certificate and rejoin CF.

Visits need to be arranged for those churches who are not able to do safeguarding themselves.

**Action: General Secretary to write to those churches involved as soon as possible.**

## **15.2 Lapford – Solar Panels**

No further information or proposal has been received from the church.

**Action: General Secretary to contact the church asking if they have any further information or proposal.**

**Action: Caroline Stott to inform the church that Yvonne will be contacting them.**

## **16. UCCC Reps**

Current Reps are Chris Damp, Mark Tucker & Jim Lyon.

Chris Damp term will soon expire, he is willing to continue as a CF representative.

**Proposal: Chris Damp to continue as UCCC rep for a further term.**

**Proposed Foday Kamara; Seconded Roo MacRae; all in favour.**

Mark Tucker will retire December 2024; it would make sense for Mark's successor to take on the role. Yvonne Campbell is willing to stand in for the interim period (one year term).

**Proposal: Yvonne Campbell to be UCCC rep for 1 year term.**

**Proposed Foday Kamara; Seconded Chris Damp; all in favour.**

**Action: Revisit at Council November 2025**

**Action: Mark Tucker to forward the meeting details and past minutes to Yvonne Campbell before next meeting.**

## **17. New Chair of Council**

Jim Lyon's second 3-year term ends at the end of 2025. It would be good practice for his replacement to be ready for the April 2025 meeting for handover.

**Action: Chair or General Secretary to send the job description out to Areas for names to be put forward.**

**Timescale: when the job description has been reviewed.**

## **18. General Secretary Report**

The General Secretary shared Galatians 5v 25 as her focus and categorised her responsibilities using hot air balloons as a visual.

Categories included: Church project /visits; Preaching; Communication; Safeguarding; Ecumenical work; Staffing and Property; Vision days; Correspondence; Publications and Projects; Vacancies.

The General Secretary asked for permissions for two areas

- a) To represent the CF at the ICF Conference in Greece in May
- b) To implement new staff IT passwords

**Both were unanimously agreed**

## **19. HR Issues**

**Closed Session**