

Minutes for Church Support Committee

Time: 2.00-3.30pm

Date: Saturday 18th April 2020

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

John Bentham
Nick Gleich
Anna Lachowski
Keith Bradley
Alan Kennedy
Peter Young
Ruth Green
Lee Rayner
Ian Jones
Barbara Bridges

Representing:

Chair
Chair CIPT MB/SW Midlands Area
East Midlands Area
North East Area
North West Area
South East Area
South West Area
CF in Scotland
Eastern Area
Chair APCC Group

Staff:

Yvonne Campbell
Walter Riggans
Maddy Varley
Mark Tucker
Gary Baker

General Secretary (1st half of meeting)
Learning and Development Manager
Learning and Development Administrator/Minutes
CFL Manager / Company Secretary
Financial Controller

Participant Observer:

Janet Wootton
Suzanne Nockels
Jim Lyon

President
President Elect
Chair of Council

Apologies:

Lisa Vickers
Neil Chappell
Joy Leathers
Colin Brown
Steve Richards

Safeguarding Officer
Website and Social Media Officer
North West Midlands Area
CF in Wales
CF in Wales

Abbreviations:

CC	Congregational Church
CF	Congregational Federation
CIPT MB	Congregational Institute of Practical Theology Management Board
CSC	Church Support Committee
CSW	Church Support Worker
FX	Fresh Expressions

Opening devotions

The Chair welcomed committee members and thanked them for attending the virtual meeting. The Chair led the Committee in prayer.

Apologies

As noted above.

Minutes of Last Meeting (21st September 2019)

The minutes were approved with no alterations.

Matters arising not elsewhere on the Agenda

The review of safeguarding training will be carried forward with a formal paper at the next meeting, due to apologies from the Safeguarding Officer for this meeting.

An update on the Christian Aid Appeal was given. The total currently stands at £8,501 and had been on track to reach the target of £12,000 by the end of the year. With Assembly cancelled and fundraising events in churches not taking place this may need to be reviewed. The General Secretary is to contact Christian Aid to discuss the way forward.

It was agreed by Council that Eric Fenwick will be the new Chair of the Communication Group.

The production of the Terms of Reference handbook is ongoing.

Chair Agreed

A new Church Support Worker has been appointed and it is hoped she will be in post in June.

Budget Papers

The Budget Holders walked the Committee through some elements of the budget overview that had seen significant changes:

- The budget for ICB has increased due to an increase in subscription costs and a prediction of higher expenses claims.
- The Youth and Children's budget shows an increase due to the ICF conference (now to be held in 2021), and the recent Leaders Link-Up Days. The income line shows an income forecast as events were planned that would have generated income. These events may now not go ahead.
- The ICB Ecumenical expenses show an increased forecast amount for 20/21. This will continue to be monitored.
- As agreed in September, a new budget line has been created for consultancy and buying in expertise where needed in 2021, using the salary from the CSW role. It was confirmed that the Church Support Team would be responsible for decisions on how this budget is used, reporting to CSC.
- In line with Government policy, a budget line has been added under Safeguarding, in order to start a historic case review.
- Both income and expenditure budget lines have been added for the Summer School, which is still planned to take place in August.

In summary the Financial Controller added that the Finance Committee had met prior to this meeting. The budgets will be submitted to Council as they stand, but due to the current Coronavirus situation there are many events that will not take place, and budgets may change accordingly; there is an expected fall in income, however expenditure is also expected to fall. Proposals are in place to preserve the reserves we currently have.

Grants

The funds available for grants currently stands at approximately £70,000. At the year end there had been approximately £100,000 available, but due to the current fall in investments this amount is changeable and unpredictable.

The Finance Committee has put a proposal forward to Council to suspend Impact Grants until further notice.

A grant application summary from Kingswood (South West Midlands Area) was considered, for a grant of £20,000 over three years to support outreach through the youth group.

There was some discussion around the amount of church contribution to the project during the first year, and it was felt that more information might be required. The South West Midlands representative confirmed that the project was already bearing fruit and that the Area is supportive of the project. It was agreed that the project could start whenever it is ready, and it is appropriate to do so; the 6th month rule will be removed in this case, and reimplemented once the current situation

has improved.

Recommendation: The committee recommended awarding the grant, adding the condition that an annual review of the project outlining how funds have been used is submitted, before the subsequent year's funding is released. It will be made clear that this remains a three-year grant.

Agreed: Unanimous.

Action – Letter to be sent to Kingswood to update them in the process of the grant

By who – General Secretary

By when – w/c 20/4/2020

After some discussion, it was agreed that future summaries provided to CSC by the Grants Working Group should include more detail about how funds awarded will be used.

Action – Summary sheet to be updated

By who – General Secretary working with new Church Support Worker

By when – next meeting

It was confirmed that the CF is not a specific grant-giving body but has three types of grants available. If churches are starting new projects in mission during this current 'lockdown' situation, it might be possible to apply for a starter grant. Area Reps should make sure churches in their Area are aware of this.

Church Support Team

The Church Support Team action plan is derived from the reports from Area Workers.

The Area reports from the September CSC meeting included the following concerns from Areas:

- New Initiatives
- Retiring Ministers
- Funding, planning and care of buildings
- Social Media
- Requests for Prayer

Much work has already been put into place to support churches and Areas with these issues.

Two different booklets have been produced to support retiring ministers and their churches, and a third has been drafted. A query was raised about the use of the word 'interregnum' in the context of these booklets.

Action: It was agreed to edit the document replacing 'interregnum' with 'vacancy'.

Post Meeting Note: This action has been completed, and an edited version is ready to send to the publisher.

A booklet on recruiting new ministers has been planned to work alongside the existing booklet 'How can I be Sure?'. The Learning and Development Manager is to work along side the Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordination Group.

Continuing Ministerial Development Days and Likewise Days had been arranged in several Areas covering topics including care for buildings and website and social media use. Unfortunately, these have now had to be postponed. There was some discussion as to whether technology could be used in order to deliver some of these events electronically.

Chair Agreed

It was confirmed that the MSP4 grant funding of £79,000 from CWM has been agreed. The processing of other CWM grants applied for have been delayed.

Area Reports:

The themes identified from the most recent Area reports are:

- Finance, grants and applying for grants, loss of income;
- Property maintenance;
- Pulpit Supply and Preachers;

These will be discussed and added to the Church Support Team action plan at their next team meeting ready to feedback to CSC in September.

The General Secretary confirmed that she had been working directly with any churches that do not have access to email or online resources. There are now only 12 churches with no online access. The General Secretary would welcome feedback on how churches and ministers have been using technology to facilitate services and ministry, so that ideas can be shared with others. Many churches without their own minister have connected with others, and some congregations have increased dramatically online, including those who do not usually attend church. There has also been an increase in those volunteering to contribute and participate in services.

Weekly Zoom conference calls have been set up to assist those who need help with technology, and these have been well attended. There are lots of new initiatives taking place which could be taken forward in different ways to support churches in the future.

Recommendation: It was recommended that the CSC agree the Church Support Team action plan.

Agreed: Unanimous

Accreditation Recommendations

Usual protocols require applicants for accreditation to be present for acceptance at the National Assembly. With Assembly being cancelled, CSC made the recommendation that Council approve an alternative method of progressing applicants to accreditation as an exceptional circumstance.

It was confirmed that the process takes over a year, prior to attendance at Assembly, including Area and national interviews, and there have already been many checks and opportunities for Areas to raise any concerns regarding the applicants.

There are five applicants for accreditation, and the Chair of APCCG remarked that the group had been impressed with all the applicants.

(Anna Lachowski left the meeting at this point).

Recommendations were made as follows:

Anna Lachowski, Minister. Accepted unanimously.

Geoff Cable, Minister. Accepted unanimously.

Gerry Simonis, Minister. Accepted unanimously.

Michael Rolton, Minister. Accepted unanimously.

Caroline Stott, Minister and Chaplain. Accepted unanimously.

Action: The Chair of APCCG to write to all applicants confirming they have been passed this stage of the process and will be recommended to Council for accreditation.

Chair Agreed

The current term for the post of Chair has come to an end, and the recommendation was made the Barbara Bridges continues in the role for a second term.

Recommendation: Barbara Bridges to remain in the post of Chair of APCCG for a further term.

Proposed: Yvonne Campbell

Seconded: Ian Jones

Agreed: Unanimous

Fresh Expressions Working Group Report

The FX working group proposed a recommendation that their report is submitted to Council.

The group is clear that the CF and its churches need to put energy into growing churches, and that it is important for survival that investments are made in new ways of being church. The report laid out is the vision for the present time, rather than a long-term vision. A commitment to FX is required for it to move forward. The offer of a good, supportive package is available to anyone interested in pioneering and FX. It was requested that the amount of funding for the FX project required from the CF to be clarified in the report, and it was confirmed that this would be updated.

Recommendation: FX working group report to be submitted to Council.

Proposed: FX Working Group

Seconded: Barbara Bridges

Agreed: Unanimous

Thanks were offered to the FX working group for the work carried out so far.

Representation of External Groups

Margaret Morris is retiring from her role as a Trustee for both the Milton Mount Foundation and the Memorial Hall Trust, and therefore a replacement is being sought. The roles involve two London based meetings per year with expenses paid. New members will be elected at the next meeting in June.

Area Reps are asked to see if there is any interest from anyone within there Area. The Milton Mount Foundation predominantly supports female ministers and the children of ministers, and therefore a female representative could be preferable.

Date of next meeting: 26th September 2020

Closing Prayer

The President led the members in prayer.

Signed.....

Dated.....