

**Minutes of the Special Council Meeting**  
**18-19 January 2019**  
**Nottingham**

**Present**

Sandra Turner  
 Janet Wootton  
 Paul Davis  
 Peter Butler  
 John Bentham  
 May-Kane Logan  
 Gerry Simonis  
 Margaret McGuinness  
 Chris Gillham  
 Jill Stephens  
 Caroline Stott  
 Stella Wallace-Tween  
 Betty Bentham  
 Hilary Biggin  
 Sue Wade  
 Judi Holloway  
 George Crossley

**Representing**

Interim Chair of  
 Council & South West  
 President Elect  
 Presidents Group  
 Chair of F&SS Comm.  
 Chair of M & S Comm.  
 CF Scotland  
 CF Scotland  
 CF Scotland  
 CF Wales  
 CF Wales  
 South West  
 East Midlands  
 North East  
 North West Midlands  
 South East  
 South West  
 North West

**Participant Observers**

Yvonne Campbell  
 Mark Tucker

General Secretary  
 Operations Manager/  
 CFL Company  
 Secretary

**Apologies**

Eric Fenwick  
 Martin Spain

Eastern  
 Prev. Past President

**No Contact Received**

Reilain Hart

CF-XTRA

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

Opening worship led by Yvonne began by singing a song of praise and we were reminded that the theology of congregationalism was reborn in the 1600's but actually based on Acts 2.

Church members are "in Christ" there is a spiritual mindfulness we are a Theocracy – Jesus alone reigns and our charter is based on Matthew 18v 20 'where two or three are gathered in my name there I am there with you.' Yvonne asked why the healing of the lame man in Acts 3 should surprise us and included a statement from CTE concerning Brexit. Before the business began we sang "As we are gathered, Jesus is here"

Agenda: items 4 and 5 were moved to Saturday morning and an item concerning Blaenavon was added.

**Session 1**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

**(Paper B)**

Everyone was welcomed and a special welcome given to Judi Holloway representing the South West Meeting to her first Council.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were noted as above.

**3. Minutes of Council Meeting November 2018**

**(Paper C)**

Full minutes are available but not signed off – this will happen at April Council as this is a meeting with a limited Agenda.

**3.1 Session 4 minutes**

**(Paper C1)**

Session 4 of the November 2018 minutes was recognised as a true record for the purpose of this meeting.

**4. Appointing a new Chair of Council.****(No Paper)**

The application process is to ensure full transparency and fairness for the two candidates.

Process as agreed by Council:

Attendance at the whole Council will give both Council and the candidates an opportunity to get to know each other and how council works.

This is a Council appointment to be ratified by Assembly. (Churches are represented by their Area Representatives and at Assembly. It was noted that David Gent, was a non – council member appointed as chair which is a precedent for the current process.)

Council is seeking a chair with expertise to take the Congregational Federation forward into the future and will appoint or not on that basis. (As stated in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity material we must let our Yes be Yes and our No be No without fear or favour.)

An external person from the Free Churches is being asked to be an independent observer at the process. Martin Spain to ask Hugh Osgood as he has already approached him to be an independent observer in the review process.

The candidates to be consulted concerning confidentiality of their names.

The Candidates will be asked to make a presentation on *“how can we shape the Congregational Federation going forward into the future”* and to Chair a session of our normal council business. (In this way they can both share their vision and demonstrate their skills in chairing a Council Meeting.)

A series of questions (6) will be compiled to discover the skills, experience and expertise the candidates would bring to the role. (Council members to submit questions; one question each to be asked by six different members of council.)

5. Extraordinary Congregational Federation Limited meeting: Mark Tucker to record.

Closing worship was led by May-Kane Logan.

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

Opening worship led by the President Elect - Worship began by singing 'Thank you thank you Jesus' in English and Hindi. A reading from II Kings 22:3-10 reminded us that when we pay attention to practical commitments in God's service, God honours our work and builds up the people of God. In I Corinthians 12:28, one of the gifts of the Spirit is *kybernesis* - the work of the person who takes the helm of a great ship, and the root of our word 'governance'. The work we are doing here is exercising one of the spiritual gifts. We ended with a hymn from Aotearoa New Zealand, 'God who sets us on a journey.

**Session 1 continued.**

6. The timing of the meetings leading up to May Assembly are critical to get all the reports and preparations done in time. This year is especially tight. The decision by the churches at Assembly June 2018 to revert to May from 2019 means that it is necessary to look again at the timings of meetings especially finance and the audit to enable Council to meet in good time.

## 7. Succession of President Group Members

The succession of Presidents is out of tune as we do not have a current president. Paul Davis will step down at May Assembly, while Martin Spain was consulted by email and has agreed to stay on the Presidents group for a further year. This will bring the succession back on track in 2020 with a Past President, President and President Elect.

### Session 2

## 8. Taking the review process forward: (Papers D, D1, D2, C1)

Janet presented a table comprising the comments from Session 4 of the November 2018 Council Meeting – which was colour coded according to four areas of main interest. These are: (i) Vision (ii) Practice of the Congregational Way of Christianity (iii) Roles and Communication (iv) Constitution and Structures.

See appendix 1

In summary the following points were included:

The need to understand and capture our vision:

Trusteeship limited the ability to represent areas and churches.

Time factors make a joint meeting with CF and CFL very tight do these need to be separated. Is there a conflict of interest – ie property viz a vis ministry and outreach.

Area structures not working in all cases – Areas may need redefining. More consultation needed.

Communication was key and it was vital to get it right and avoid misunderstanding.

The discussion then asked a number of questions:

What should Congregational Federation become? What does loss of churches mean to congregationalism? Do we want to grow the number of congregations or the size of individual Congregations or both?

Much which comes into the office is CFL business and the CF model is based on income from closed churches.

The importance of exceptional receipts from disposals of closed churches and other sources was recognised as being important to the financial model of CF and the mechanism for distribution was changed in 2011. It was thought this may need to be looked at again as part of a future review '

Areas had income to support local church and projects but post 2011 many Areas quickly ran out of assets and depended on CF for support. This disheartened Areas and dislocated churches. Other repercussions of this change included some Training Board income streams as well.

It was suggested that an audit of the effectiveness of the use of the Closed Churches Fund over the past 8 years might be a useful exercise – but not followed through at this time.

It was recognised that this change had been responsible for kick starting the position CF finds itself in.

The headline vision of CFL going forward can follow two paths:

Growing and supporting existing churches.

Growing and planting new churches.

**9. Proposed Plan from the Presidents Group****(Paper E)****Vision: to shape the Congregational Federation for the future.**

A timeline was presented to Council of a possible way forward to consult and collaborate with the Areas and Church to fulfil the 2017 Assembly Resolution. This was in the form of a table of events, meetings and timings to include presentations and proposals to both 2019 and 2020 Assembly. (see Appendix 2.)

It was agreed that the timeline was ambitious – but nevertheless gave a useful mixture of consultation and collaboration with Churches and Areas as well as reporting the processes and findings to Assembly 2019. Proposals from April Council to May Assembly can then modify the process as necessary.

Council unanimously agreed the proposal as tabled.

Council tasked the Interim Chair of Council to write a letter to all Churches, Areas, Personal Members and Associate Members on the data bases explaining the consultation process 'Open Spaces' which is a method of enabling a wide audience of people to engage with the process of unpicking what our Vision stated above might look like.

Five national Open Spaces events were agreed as follows:

Knightswood Glasgow March 16<sup>th</sup>:

Port Talbot, March 9<sup>th</sup>:

Taunton Somerset March 2<sup>nd</sup> :

Bunyan Bedford February 23<sup>rd</sup> :

Newcastle Under Lyme March 9<sup>th</sup>

Such was the enthusiasm of council for this process to be a success, several other events were set up during the meeting to include: North West and South West Midlands Area Assembly 30<sup>th</sup> March, a North East event details to be confirmed and a S. East event in the London area details to be confirmed. Findings from the Open Space events will be collated for the April Council Meeting. It was agreed that in order to give sufficient time to the process without curtailing normal business and the appointment of Chair process, it was necessary to meet all day on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> April in order to evaluate the information and shape a report and proposal for May Assembly.

This was proposed by the chair and agreed unanimously.

Council agreed the proposal 'to shape the Congregational Federation for the future' timeline as follows:

Consultation through Open Spaces:

Report and Proposal to be got ready for Assembly May 2019:

Council Meeting July 2019 to take the next step in preparation for an Autumn 2019 consultation process.

Evaluate and confirm next steps at November 2019 Council.

Flyers will be produced to promote the Open Spaces events (including ones which can be overprinted for additional events) – inviting all to attend whichever of the events they could.

Interim Chair of Council to write a letter to the Churches, Areas, Personal and Associate Members with an update on the review process and to encourage them to take part in the consultation through Open Spaces. To emphasise how invaluable their contribution is to the process.

Young people are to be encouraged to take part in these events.

Council was encouraged to take the enthusiasm in the meeting out into the churches and advertise the Open Spaces events at every opportunity from services to Area Meetings. Enthuse, means to put 'God into something' and it was agreed there was very much the sense that God was in our meeting.

**Research Group:**

It was agreed that there was more to be gleaned from the earlier reports and a small group was set up to research this: Bill Bentham, Janet Wootton, Richard Pickering and Keith Bradley have agreed to join this group.

**Session 3**

**10. Open Space collaboration exercise led by Johnny O'Hanlon**

Open Spaces experience for Council. Johnny O'Hanlon and Judith Mbaabu led this session for Council to experience the process looking at the Vision as agreed and enable us to lead similar events as outlined. Johnny will provide each Council Member with a resource pack to carry out the process themselves.

Each Council member was able to take part in a minimum of two discussion groups out of the 10 options which were put forward from within the group. At the circle time (plenary) session when each person had the opportunity to give a sentence, phrase or word to describe what they felt about the experience included the following headline statements:

Amorphous; joyous; challenge and responsibility; encouraged – good – enthusiasm – joy in being congregational; new model learning from the past but keeping up with the future technology and children and young people; not my way but others new way; encouraged to work together; mould materials; evaluate before steaming in; value activities; find out before wading in; disagree without being disagreeable; CF worth fighting for; huge weight lifted relief after this meeting – blessings ahead; thankfulness for being part of council; not on council but with old friends – the way forward; truly Christ centred; can only start with the material we have therefore need to know what it is we have and what CF can do.; need to be proactive; God gazer – I want to be a God gazer; wonderful want CF to continue and be together to think how to keep the special thing which CF is. Pray what say we will get on with and what we have said and it will make a difference.

Thanks were given to Johnny and Judith for leading the process.

Paul Davis closed the meeting with worship including the song Will you come and follow me if I but call your name.

## Feedback on session on former surveys etc.

The table can be sorted by colour, or group so that the whole contribution of one group can be seen together, or all the ideas on one topic can be seen together

Gold = VISION; Green = PRACTICE OF CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIANITY; Pink + ROLES AND COMMUNICATION; Red = COMMUNICATION AND STRUCTURES

Colour	Group	Comments
Gold	2	Vision is for visionaries
Gold	2	Lost focus on serving churches e.g. UCCC
Gold	2	Easy bits first, - facing a task unfinished
Gold	2	Lean not on your own understanding
Gold	3A	Vision of Council limited by being Trustees
Gold	3A	Kingdom growth
Gold	3A	Helping churches to be an open channel for the Holy Spirit
Gold	3A	Break down fear
Gold	3A	To do less navel gazing
Gold	3A	Vision needs to be followed by action
Gold	4B	To increase membership of people within churches
Gold	4B	Learn to walk before we can run
Gold	4B	To raise our profile by speaking out on issues relating to justice
Gold	4B	Slowly building bridges at local level
Gold	3B	Embracing a wider view of congregationalism (tradition of different areas)
Gold	3B	From Council not from Trustee/ship angles
Gold	?	Open our eyes and see how we are perceived by our Areas
Gold	?	Christianity first
Gold	?	To serve with clarity and understanding
Gold	?	To change the way Council runs to ensure a section for Areas so that they feel they have a voice (links to structures, roles and communication, constitution and structure)
Gold	?	Time to share stories
Gold	2	Growing together, growing personal, rooted in prayer and study
Gold	2	Faith – if the Spirit is missing it is dead. No life. Same with prayer
Gold	4A	Growth, numbers, spiritual (improve overall health), within current churches, new churches – realistic
Green	2	Integrated commitment
Green	2	involvement (participation)
Green	2	Local church matters most
Green	3A	Vision and transmission of Congregationalism limited by Trusteeship
Green	3B	Different traditions and therefore practices but no recognition thereof
Green	3B	Allow for the difference
Green	?	We should not put congregational before Christianity
Green	?	Congregationalism is important to us and should be and we must not lose this identity. Congregationalism allows people to have a voice and feel part of things
Green	2	Freedom in belonging to Christ
Green	4B	Update resources, to teach, inform
Green	4B	New Congregationalists
Green	4B	Share values

Green	4B	Through roadshows – have congregational sessions
Green	4B	Interpretation of? Selective Approach? Really understood?
Pink	3A	Vision limited because of being Trustees on Council
Pink	3A	Protection against officialdom
Pink	3A	Understand that some churches cannot deal with electronic media or even simple paper forms
Pink	4B	Full time communications officer – marketing, streaming, website, Congregationalist
Pink	3B	The nature of comms may need to be different for different areas – ie what means something to some may mean something different to others
Pink	3B	So be clear about the messages and to whom they are sent
Pink	3B	Comms within an area need to recognise that help may need to be given to some churches on even basic ‘snailmail’ stuff never mind electronics
Pink	2	Stewardship vs serving
Pink	2	Language misuse
Pink	2	Resource
Pink	2	Hindrance or help
Pink	?	To serve Council and our Areas without barriers
Pink	?	Make space to share more fellowship
Pink	?	Ensure correct communication streams are being used
Pink	2	Email, respect, based on scripture
Pink	4A	Area responsibility
Pink	4A	<u>Personal</u> contact from central CF and Areas
Pink	4A	More open and transparent – honesty – tell it as it is, not spin
Red	2	Not all of CF is unfit for purpose
Red	2	Need to adapt for our time
Red	3B	Process of new constitution
Red	3B	Not to undermine the individual churches’ independence
Red	3A	Vision limited because of being Trustee on Council
Red	3A	Recognise that each church is individual and different
Red	?	Urgent change required
Red	?	Sort out trusteeship
Red	?	Constitution in place for all committees, groups – helps us to know what is expected thus valuing service
Red	4A	The Area system is not working – needs revision/restructuring/replacement
Red	4A	Redefine geographical areas (review discuss/share ideas and thoughts)
Red	4A	Reduce Committees/review structures/redefine representation
Red	4A	Do not confuse trusteeship with representation
Red	4A	Separation of CF/CFL? – minimise conflict of interest
Red	4A	Understanding trusteeship

## **Feedback on Sunday Morning Session**

(two responses)

Council – Time we have, voice of One Area to be heard, representational v trusteeship

Functions of Secretariat – GS & OM

Transparency – through Council reps in areas, sharing info

Churches – through area meetings, through Council reps in areas – sharing of information.

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Function of council – serve down, or bring up to top of the pyramid – ratifying/accept reports, minutes, reporting mechanism

Review CFL – trustees, separate CFL from Council

Representing Area views not allowed

Secretariat? – two roles – company secretary – manager – registered company – conflict of interest

General Secretary ambassador of CF

Council reps need to be equipped – written resume to present to Areas and a written response from the Areas, that they have received the information.

Clear minutes

More correspondence, in the right way

Support – the areas to support churches, more pastoral support



## Presidents Meeting Proposal for January 2019 Council Meeting

**Vision “To shape the Congregational Federation for the future!”**

**Aim – By May 2020 there will be a new Constitution and new structure presented to Assembly**

Date	Action	By who
7 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2019	Presidents Meeting	Presidents
Jan 2019	Council Meeting to discuss and agree plan	All
Jan 2019	Letter and information sent to churches	Chair of Council
23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2 <sup>nd</sup> March 9 <sup>th</sup> March 30 <sup>th</sup> March	Hold National Open Space events inviting people from all churches to join the conversation “How do we shape the Congregational Federation for the future” Invite responses from individuals, staff, committees areas and churches who may not be able to attend and offer open spaces to churches	All
Feb - April	Research group to evaluate the past reports – which will feed into the process	Janet Wooton Keith Bradley Bill Bentham Richard Pickering - TBC
28 <sup>th</sup> March	Presidents Meeting to review the Open Space responses	Presidents
9am – 5pm 26 <sup>th</sup> April 26 -27 <sup>th</sup> April	Pre- Council Meeting to discuss and agree the proposed ideas from the open space events and create a proposal for Assembly	All
11 <sup>th</sup> May	Present the proposal to Assembly including the ideas and process for change	Presidents
12 <sup>th</sup> July	If agreed at Assembly start to action the process – nominate people with expertise	All
Autumn 2019	Presidents Day/Event to encourage further collaboration and ideas	Presidents
Autumn	Presidents Group meet to review responses from event and create formal proposals for change with individuals with specific expertise and knowledge if necessary	Presidents
15 <sup>th</sup> November	Council Meeting to receive and discuss updates on process including the formal proposals for change	All
Jan 2020	Presidents Meeting to review	Presidents
Jan 2020	Council Meeting to organise further consultation with churches on changes agreed	All
Feb – April 2020	Consultation with churches, areas, committees and staff	All
April 2020	Presidents Meeting to review consultation and amend if necessary	Presidents
April 2020	Council Meeting to discuss any amendments and prepare for presentation for Assembly	All
May	Present changes at Assembly	TBC