

Minutes of the Council Meeting
12-13 July 2019
Nottingham

Present

Sandra Turner

 Suzanne Nockels
 Martin Spain
 Peter Butler
 John Bentham
 May-Kane Logan
 Margaret McGuinness
 Chris Gillham
 Jill Stephens
 Eric Fenwick
 Betty Bentham
 Foday Kamara
 Hilary Biggin
 Sue Wade

Representing

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

Participant Observers

Yvonne Campbell
 Mark Tucker

 Bill Bentham
 Ruth Leeming

General Secretary
 Operations Manager/
 CFL Company
 Secretary
 Council Supporter
 Council Supporter

Apologies

Janet Wootton
 Gerry Simonis
 Stella Wallace-Tween
 Judi Holloway
 Caroline Stott
 Roo MacRae

President Elect
 CF Scotland
 East Midlands
 South West Midlands
 South West
 Council Supporter

Friday 12th July 2019

Opening Worship and reflections were led by the Martin Spain. This included readings from Genesis 41v37-49 and Acts 7v9-16.

God has a plan, but we will never know how long we have to wait but like Joseph we have to keep praying and trusting.

Although Joseph went from prison to leader in one day, God waited 13 years for His plan for Joseph to take effect.

Stephen's plans and preaching were condemned by the pharisees and Stephen pointed out how people like Joseph were similarly criticised but on looking back, it is clear their decisions were the right ones.

Session 1

1. Welcome and Apologies

A warm welcome was given to all attendees by Sandra Turner the Interim Chair of Council. Sandra specifically welcomed Suzanne Nockels who is President Elect; Ruth Leeming and Bill Bentham who have been elected by churches to work with Council following the proposal at Assembly.

Apologies were noted as above.

2. Congregational Federation Limited Trustee/Directors Meeting

Minutes are recorded separately.

3. Chair of Council

Council were very happy to receive a further application.

A discussion took place on the process that was taken at the last meeting ensuring the system was fair for all.

The consensus was that the process was good and not onerous, as Chair of Council is a distinctive position within the Congregational Federation and at times there may be difficult situations to deal with and we have a duty of care.

No appointment was made in April because of a duty of care to applicants.

Best practice from HR procedures is that the same process must be adhered to for the new applicant. Unfortunately, the applicant had not been asked to make a presentation, and this was not a normal Council business meeting, so there was no suitable section of the meeting for them to be able to chair.

Proposal by Foday Kamara – to ask the General Secretary to ring the applicant this evening and ask them not to come to the meeting tomorrow but invite them to the meeting in November and follow the same process used in April.

Action – General Secretary to ring the applicant, apologise and invite them to the November meeting.

Timescale – this evening (12/7/19)

Post Meeting – General Secretary spoke to the applicant who was very understanding an appreciated process was being followed as previously.

Proposal by Martin Spain – for the General Secretary to contact the Free Churches Group and ask for an Independent Representative at the November Council meeting so that the process to appoint a Chair remains the same.

Seconded May-Kane Logan

Action – General Secretary to contact Hugh Osgood at Free Churches to arrange representation at November meeting.

Time scale - asap before November meeting.

4. Interim Chair

Discussion took place regarding who will become Interim Chair as Sandra has resigned with effect from the end of this meeting.

Sandra stands by her resignation.

Betty Bentham formally thanked Sandra Turner for all her hard work in leading Council through the past 12 months.

There was no decision made about a replacement and council members asked to sleep and pray about putting names forward.

Closing worship led by Martin Spain which included an old Congregational hymn “Father of love and power”.

Saturday 13th July 2019

Opening worship was led by Suzanne Nockels, President Elect who talked about her experience as a Chaplain in Glastonbury.

The reading Psalm 40 v 1-4 was used - God is our Rescuer – Suzanne reflected on the phrase “It was his own stupid fault”

God helps us out of our mess when we or churches have needed help.

Session 2**4. Interim Chair – continued.**

Discussion continued but no Council representative put their name forward.

General Secretary and Operations Manager volunteered to Chair jointly as they would be doing all the preparation anyway as part of their roles.

It was suggested that in the past if there was no Chair the President had chaired the meeting.

There are no restrictions or rules noted in the Constitution.

After discussion knowing General Secretary and Operations Manager would complete all the preparations, Hilary Biggin allowed her name to go forward.

Proposed: Chris Gillham

Seconded: Jill Stephens

all in favour.

5. Assembly Review

It has been noted that the Assembly 2020 weekend will now be a Bank Holiday weekend because of VE commemorations – the bank holiday having moved from Monday 4th May to Friday 8th May.

Assembly is planned for Saturday 9th May 2020.

Discussion took place, but it was agreed to keep Assembly to the set date as it was felt to be an opportunity rather than a hindrance – people could now travel on the Friday (if need) and therefore be able to attend the Fringe or other activities planned for the Friday.

The Children and Youth volunteers want to hold a conference or Assembly in 2020 too.

Action – General Secretary to confirm date of Assembly 2020 with the NW Midlands area and the venue (Renewal Church – Solihull) being used for Saturday 9th May 2020

Time scale – asap

Formal thanks were given to the Scottish area for hosting such an uplifting and encouraging Assembly. It was agreed that the popular city location and the good weather all helped to make it a positive experience.

Comments noted included that:

- next year we formally welcome the deaf community/signing church.
- we make sure the band have enough room and are fully briefed.
- Assembly were together and there was consensus on decisions
- Acknowledgement that there had been a lot of people praying for a peaceful day at Assembly and we give thanks to God for a successful day

Dates for 2020 (confirmed)

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| • Council | 17 th /18 th January |
| • Church Support Committee | 21 st March |
| • Finance and Support Services | 18 th April |
| • Council | 24 th /25 th April |
| • Assembly | +8 th /9 th May |
| • Council | 10 th /11 th July |
| • Church Support Committee | 26 th September |
| • Finance and Support Services | 10 th October |
| • Council in St Katherines | 20 th – 22 nd November |

6. Collaboration Process

Interim Chair of Council updated the meeting and read an email from the President summarising where we are up to with the process.

A discussion took place about the timeline and process created in January 2019.

Since the April meeting the proposal that was agreed at Assembly for Council to lead on the process itself and for 3 people nominated and elected by the churches to work alongside Council leaves the timeline in need of being updated and changed.

There now wouldn't be a need for the Presidents Group meeting, or the events as planned in the Autumn 2019.

The Presidents agreed the timeline needed to reflect these changes and that the Presidents would not be leading on the process, but be a part of it, as every other member of Council.

The Meeting agreed that the timeline was now obsolete and needed to be updated at the November meeting.

A long discussion took place on the next stage. Including the following comments/questions.

- We need to ask and answer bigger questions.
- We have raised expectation, but we haven't yet worked out what we need to do.
- We need to find the big questions based on the results and the themes already drawn out.

Some questions as examples were raised

- We need to ask what shape we want the CF to become?
- How do we support our churches?
- Do we become a grant making body?
- Does the participatory model of CF work and is it what churches want/need?
- Do we need to change the geographical areas?
- What is the role of the trustee body?
- What is our vision? Is it for maintenance or building new churches?
- Define who we are; there is a confused relationship between CF and CF Ltd.

Interim Chair shared a document she had put together of the themes from the Open Space conversations.

It was suggested Council go into small groups and make comment and questions on the first 5 articles of the Constitution, to consider what is the appropriateness for 2019, for now, in light of what has been said in the Open Space conversations?

Council split into 4 groups to discuss followed by a plenary session.

Notes from the feedback were taken by the General Secretary and can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Discussion took place on what's next and it was -

Agreed: Council to formulate some proposals for change; using the Open Space conversations and the research group summary. As a precursor for the November Council. Each to write 2 or 3 questions. (I wonder questions, think the unthinkable questions, pray the Holy Spirit speaks to us all and questions are clear and together).

Council all affirmed their commitment to the process and working together.

Action: 2/3 questions to be sent to the General Secretary.

By whom: All council members in attendance and those who sent apologies.

Timescale: by the end of July 2019 (if not end of August at latest).

7. Church Support Staffing

Operations Manager and General Secretary have now received a formal resignation letter from Johnny O'Hanlon, Church Support Worker.

Council want to thank Johnny for all his hard work and contributions to the life of the Congregational Federation and its member churches especially for the Open Space initiative.

Discussion took place on whether Council plan to replace the post straight away.

Council agreed to take a step back to review the post following 2 years of the changes to the Church Support Department and restructure.

Hilary Biggin proposed that Council don't look to appoint a replacement Church Support Worker until Council have re-evaluated the structure.

Seconded: Sue Wade

All in favour

8. Any Other Business

This will be Sue Wade's last meeting as South East Area representative. The Area will nominate a new representative asap.

Interim Chair thanked Sue for all her contributions to and time spent on Council.

Closing Worship was led by Suzanne Nockels, President Elect with the reading from 2 Corinthians 2 v 14-16.

Suzanne shared more of her experiences as a Chaplain at Glastonbury and how as Christians we should share the fragrance of Jesus with others.

The meeting finished with a prayer called Someone Somewhere written by Suzanne.