

Chair Approved

### Church Support Committee Minutes

**Time:** 10.30am – 12.30pm

**Date:** Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Location:** Zoom

<b>Attendees:</b>	<b>Representing:</b>	<b>Staff:</b>	
John Bentham	Chair	Yvonne Campbell	General Secretary
Barbara Bridges	Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordinator Group	Walter Riggans	L & D Manager
Eric Fenwick	Chair Communications Group	Neil Chappell	Website & Social Media Officer
Nick Gleich	Chair CIPT MB/SW Midlands Area	Luzia Watt	Church Support Worker
Colin Brown	CF in Wales	Lisa Vickers	Safeguarding Officer
Steve Richards	CF in Wales	Maddy Varley	L & D Administrator / Minutes
Vacant	CF in Scotland		
Anna Lachowski	East Midlands Area		
Ian Jones	Eastern		
Keith Bradley	North East Area		
Alan Kennedy	North West Area/ICB Chair		
Joy Leathers	North West Midlands		
Peter Young	South East Area		
Ruth Green	South West Area		
		<b>Apologies:</b>	None

### Abbreviations:

APCCG	Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordinator Group
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 thanked Joy Leathers for her service and offered good wishes for her retirement on behalf of the Committee. The Chair led the Committee in prayer.

### Apologies

There were no apologies. It was confirmed that the CF in Scotland Representative position is still vacant.

### Minutes of Last Meeting (26<sup>th</sup> September 2020) Paper B

Queries were raised as there was no mention of the APCC Group or ICB despite reports being submitted. This was due to the Committee being requested to ask questions on each report: the APCC representative having sent apologies, was not present at the meeting and therefore no questions were raised.

Page one should say Minutes not Agenda

Minutes would be amended to show reports received as agenda

Confirmation was given that the correction to the Area for Highbury, Cheltenham, on page 2 of the Mission and Ministry had been amended to read South West Midlands Area.

### Matters arising not elsewhere on the Agenda

None

### Notice of Any Other Business

The question was raised as to whether there was an anti-bullying policy, in addition to standard employment policies, for churches. This item was covered in the APCC group section.

Chair Approved

### **Budget Papers Paper C**

The budget papers were shared with the Committee, and an overall summary sheet was tabled. The budget holders walked the committee through the papers highlighting significant amounts and changes.

It was confirmed that the cost savings made by having one CSW rather than two, are available to be used as consultancy fees for specialist support when required.

There has been increased investment into Youth and Children's work and also Safeguarding through increasing and improving the training provided.

### **Grants update**

The Committee was advised that 100% of funds collected for Ministry and Mission are now used within the CF for that purpose. If churches wish a proportion of their donation to go to CWM they must make this clear and be specific about the amount to be donated to CWM. Area reps were asked to ensure that they communicate this to churches. The General Secretary confirmed that she writes to thank every church after a donation has been made and makes this clear. Donations to the Ministry and Mission fund have been significantly reduced since lockdowns were introduced, as churches have not been meeting or able to fundraise.

The question was raised as to whether the CF can still meet their obligations to CWM if our donations are reduced? The GS confirmed that we have no financial obligations to CWM and where this might be reduced the CF contribute greatly in time and resources, and support CWM as requested. CWM have been very generous with their gift of grace amounts and grants, which churches should be made aware of, this should in turn encourage them to want to make donations to CWM. This year we will become a sending church which is exciting and will help to raise the profile of the work of CWM.

### **Impact Grants**

The Committee was reminded that the fund for Impact Grants is made up from 10% of the income from closed churches, and the Ministry and Mission fund.

There were 2 applications for impact grants in both cases the Grants group have recommended a slightly higher grant award than the church has applied for.

Oakham have applied for a grant to assist with the employment of two part-time ministers. The grant is to be used towards expenses rather than fixed wages over a 3-year period. Half of this cost is to be met from their own funds. It is hoped that this new ministry will grow the church and increase their own funds within three years.

**Proposal:** £12000 (£4000 per year over three years) for the expenses of two new part-time ministers.

**Approved:** 7

**Opposed:** 4

**Abstain:** 0

**Decision:** Approved.

Stambourne have applied for a grant to assist with the appointment of a Community Worker supporting vulnerable people within the local community. This role has been in place in a voluntary capacity for the past three years. An appointment to the paid role has been made and is also supported by partial funding from other partners. The application was made for £12000 over 3 years, however the grants group have recommended increasing this to £15000 over three years.

**Approved:** 10

**Opposed:** 0

**Abstained:** 0

**Decision:** Approved unanimously.

Chair Approved

**Action** – Request approval for two grants from Council  
**By whom** – CSC Chair  
**By when** – April Council meeting

#### **Area Reports**

The General Secretary thanked the Church Support Team for all their hard work under difficult circumstances in recent times.

The Area reports highlighted new areas for action for the Church Support Team going forward.

These include:

- Illness/Bereavement
- Pastoral Care for Ministers
- Retirement
- New church officers
- Vacancies
- Post-Pandemic plans
- How churches interact with each other
- Sustaining community cohesion

#### **North East Area**

Few churches have opened and there are some ministers with significant health issues.

Area workers have been making regular phone calls and have produced a quarterly newsletter for ministers/pastors. The Area are looking into ways of making Zoom available in every church.

#### **North West Area**

A monthly newsletter has been produced containing news from the churches. Some churches have opened while others have continued to offer online worship.

#### **North West Midlands**

Churches have worked hard to maintain worship, even when the use of technology has proved difficult. Contact has been difficult in rural areas but has continued by post.

#### **South East Area**

One church has decided to permanently close, partly due to the pandemic. The Area currently does not have an Area Support Worker, and so the support offered has been limited.

Most churches are delivering online services; some churches are open, and some are offering 'blended' services. Some churches have seen dramatic increases in attendance at online services, including people from much further afield and are exploring the opportunity to offer hybrid services longer term.

#### **South West Area**

Many churches have 'hunkered down'.

The Area are praying for and encouraging people to volunteer and get involved in different ways to help the Areas stay connected.

#### **East Midlands Area**

There have been some positive initiatives within the Area, such as Carols in Car Parks and elves delivering food parcels which have been very positively received within the community.

#### **Eastern Area**

There is currently no Area Treasurer, so the support offered to churches is limited.

12,000 people have joined Norwich the Old meeting house service through their Facebook group, including some from overseas, therefore it is planned to continue with this after lockdown has ended.

Chair Approved

### **CF in Wales**

There is a lot of illness and there have been a number of bereavements. There has been a significant loss of income due to churches not meeting. Consideration is being given to the challenge of how to bring people back together once restrictions are lifted.

There are grants available to churches in Wales where there is loss of income from being unable to let out church buildings. Some churches have been able to claim through their insurance for loss of income.

### **South West Midlands Area**

The regenerated church at Ruscombe is serving the local community well. They have also been working with the local Anglican church on a community eco-church.

### **Church Support Team**

Church Support Worker:

The CSW has been working with 10-12 churches to hold online parties for children, which have included crafts and cooking etc. These have been very successful; the light party having had over 250 views online alone.

Luzia has found different ways to get involved with churches despite not being able to visit them.

There has been an online youth and children's leaders' event which was attended by 27 leaders.

Luzia is currently working on online sessions for children and youth at the May Assembly.

The Committee thanked Luzia for her hard work and enthusiasm and was commended for her passion in her new role, made even more challenging by the pandemic.

### **Website and Social Media Officer**

Monthly tech sessions have been held to support churches with the practicalities of using new technology and resources. This has been very successful, and attendance has reduced over the weeks as churches have grown in confidence in using technology. Many of the skills learnt can be taken forward and built on in the future, and Neil is happy to continue to support those that need it. The Committee gave thanks for all the hard work that had gone into supporting churches.

### **Communication Group**

The new Refresh magazine has been produced and looks good. It has an independent editor, who will help to keep the content fresh. The cost of this has come in within budget. The magazine is sent out directly from the printer, so it is a very smooth operation and saves a lot of work in the office.

The printing of the yearbook in its new format was considerably cheaper than the previous format, however improvements can be made over time. Feedback will be gathered in due course as to the preferred format.

A new booklet intended to be used during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year entitled 'Being Congregational' was sent to Area Representatives. This is still a working document and feedback is welcomed.

### **Safeguarding**

127 DBS applications have been processed (this figure does not include churches in Scotland as they are processed differently and there are no statistics available). It was confirmed the CF policy is for DBS checks to be renewed every 5 years unless there is a role change.

50% of churches still do not have a safeguarding certificate. The aim is to increase this to 100%. Area Representatives are asked to encourage those churches that do not have a certificate in place to apply for one. Lisa will offer support in any way required.

Council have agreed that having a current safeguarding policy is to become a matter for affiliation as it provides a safety net for the church and its members. Formal communication of this change will be communicated in due course; however, Area Representatives can begin discussions informally with churches as appropriate.

Chair Approved

New safeguarding training is up and running, and there is specific training for those in specific roles. Ministers are encouraged to wait for more information regarding the advanced course.

Churches were reminded that copies of Safeguarding policies and certificates should be forwarded to Lisa.

#### CIPT

The theme for the annual Alumni Association event has been confirmed as being on Chaplaincy as this is an area that is growing in importance. This will be held on 30<sup>th</sup> June, and the presenter is confirmed as army chaplain Jonathan Woodward.

There are currently 28 students taking the course. These have all been sent a letter of encouragement from the General Secretary to encourage them in their studies which have been held remotely for the past year.

Walter would like the Committee to explore appropriate contemporary issues highlighted by statistical trends, which include factors we should be aware of. It was agreed that this discussion should wait until the committee is able to meet face to face again, due to the limited time available in Zoom meetings.

#### Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordinators Group

The Areas have coordinated well and have been very busy responding to pastoral care needs. Support has been offered to many ministers, retired ministers, students, widows /widowers etc, although it has become apparent that there are many people who do not ask for help when they need it. Those who require support are encouraged to make contact.

The APCC group recommend that it should be mandatory for all those on the accredited roll to complete safeguarding training. There are two dates being offered and paid for by the CF. It was felt that those who refuse should be removed from the roll. It was confirmed that the training could not be made compulsory for everyone in ministry, but the session held in June will be open for all those in church leadership, and all are encouraged to complete the training.

Proposal – Safeguarding training be mandatory every 5 years for those on the Accredited Roll of ministries

By whom – GS and Safeguarding Officer

By when – asap

In acknowledgement of the work of the APCC group and no face to face training having been available this year, they would like to have a day trip to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire in September, to support and thank each other instead of their usual meeting. During this visit some quiet time will be spent remembering those lost through the pandemic. The visit itself is free of charge, but travel expenses will be covered from the APCC group budget and car sharing will be encouraged. The group agreed that they would produce an article on their trip for the Refresh magazine, which would also help to promote the work of the group.

**Proposal:** the APCC group to use some of their budget for travel expenses for a day trip.

**Approved:** 9

**Opposed:** 1

**Abstained:** 0

**Decision:** Approved.

#### Anti-Bullying Policy

The question was raised as to whether the CF has an anti-bullying policy for churches.

If a church is an employer this should form part of their usual employment policies, but it became apparent that not all churches apply such policies to volunteers who may feel unsupported with no official means for intervention. It would be best practice for all churches to hold an anti-bullying policy. These need to be produced by the churches themselves, however a guide to creating a

Commented [WR1]: Shouldn't we mention the destination? It's not a trip to the seaside!

Chair Approved

policy could be produced and churches encouraged to do so. These are not always employment issues and may sometimes be a wider church issue. The book 'The Church Bully' by Sheila Martin was recommended as useful reading on the subject.

The Safeguarding Officer will seek advice from Mark Tucker on gaining further advice for churches as an employer.

This is a complex and important topic and will be planned in for discussion at a future meeting.

**Action** – Further advice be sort on bullying within churches

**By Whom** – Lisa Vickers

**By when** – next meeting September 2021

#### Accreditation

All those seeking accreditation are expected to undertake some form of training. It was confirmed that those who come with some qualifications and/or experience, particularly whose background is with another denomination may still be required to undertake training. As outlined in the Accreditation policy, any exemptions to the training course are discussed and agreed on an individual basis. Each situation is unique and dependent on various factors determined by the LDM setting out length of time needed and modules to be completed to be recognised as Congregational Accredited Ministers. The full policy is on the CF website. Each Area has an accreditation representative who will help guide individuals through the process.

There have been 2 form A applications and 3 form B applications for accreditation. Some were brought to the Committee's attention:

Debbie Taylor (Form A) has been called to Pioneer Ministry. This is complicated as she cannot be accredited until she is called into a pioneer setting, and there are few opportunities to be called to. Debbie is working in different community settings, and it is often the case that pioneers need to create their own settings.

Simone Ramacci (Form B)

Further clarification had been sought from the church as his application was not clear about his calling. Although this clarification has now been given it was largely felt by the accreditation group that he needed more time to deploy his ministry and grow in confidence. It is hoped that he can be accredited next year.

James Gregory and Sue Rayner are both already accredited but have sought further accreditation in the role of Tutor. The Chair of the APCCG brought both names to the committee for approval. Both were approved unanimously by the Committee for accreditation for the role of Tutor.

**Action** – Council approve James Gregory and Sue Raynor to be nationally accredited as Tutor

**By whom** – CSC chair

**By when**- April Council meeting

#### CIPT Management Board

A new volunteer member of the CSC is sought to sit on the CIPT Management Board, due to the resignation of Lee Rayner. This Board meets twice per year (currently held on Zoom) and assists with overseeing CIPT quality control, budget etc. There were no willing volunteers at the meeting, and it was subsequently agreed that the Area Representatives would rotate in this role every 12 months. Ruth Green agreed to take the first rotation and attend the next Management Board meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> September.

#### Inter Church Board

The ICF is holding an online conference over three evenings in June. The conference is free to attend and the ICF would like as many people as possible to attend. All are welcome.

Post meeting note – Dates are 23-25<sup>th</sup> July 2021

#### Christian Aid Partnerships

Chair Approved

A new CF representative is sought due to Joy Leathers' resignation.

£800 has already been donated for the Kenya appeal. Churches are encouraged to continue to collect and donate if they can.

#### **CWM**

The generosity of CWM was acknowledged. They have provided funds used to pay affiliation fees and Gift of Grace Grants for churches struggling financially. Four churches have also applied for Gift of Grace grants mission projects.

The MSP4 grant for creating a discipleship resource has been received and we are hoping to appoint a project worker next week.

**Post meeting note:** an appointment has not yet been made for this post.

Four webinar days are being planned in response to needs identified by churches. The series of If Only... events held throughout 2021 will assist churches in overcoming a range of difficulties. CSC reps are encouraged to share the information

If only we could hear God's voice more clearly (thinking about Spirituality)

If only we could make better use of our building

If only we had a better website and social media presence

If only we could be part of a new fresh outreach

#### **Assembly**

Invitations and registration instructions for the online May assembly will be sent out before Easter.

This will be a very different assembly but brings lots of new opportunities. The Committee were asked to encourage people to get involved.

#### **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting is Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

The Chair thanked the Committee for their input and closed the meeting in prayer.