

Church Support Committee Minutes**Time:** 10.00am – 1.00pm**Date:** Saturday 25th September 2021**Location:** Zoom (meeting recorded for the purpose of minutes)**Attendees:**

John Bentham
 Nick Gleich
 Colin Brown
 Steve Richards
 Margaret McGuiness
 Anna Lachowski
 Ian Jones
 Keith Bradley
 Alan Kennedy
 Hillary Biggin
 Peter Young
 Ruth Green

Representing:

Chair
 Chair CIPT MB/SW Midlands Area
 CF in Wales
 CF in Wales
 CF in Scotland
 East Midlands Area
 Eastern
 North East Area
 North West Area/ICB Chair
 North West Midlands
 South East Area
 South West Area

Staff:

Yvonne Campbell	General Secretary
Walter Riggans	L & D Manager
Neil Chappell	Website & Social Media Officer
Luzia Watt	Church Support Worker
Lisa Vickers	Safeguarding Officer
Maddy Varley	L & D Administrator / Minutes

Participant Observer

Suzanne Nockels	President
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Apologies:

Barbara Bridges	Chair Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordinator Group
Eric Fenwick	Chair of Communications Group

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 led the Committee in prayer.

Apologies

As noted above.

Minutes of Last Meeting (20th March 2021) Paper B

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

Matters arising not elsewhere on the Agenda

It was noted that the autumn edition of Refresh is currently with the publishers and is due out in October.

Notice of Any Other Business

CSC Chair reaching the end of three-year term.

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 adjustments. An error was identified in the 2020 heading on the report which will need clarification from the Director of Finance.

It was confirmed to the Committee that Council have not yet reached a decision on whether to increase the hours or number of posts for the Church Support Worker role, so costs may increase in future in relation to this post.

We are actively encouraging use of the Minister's Counselling Service, and therefore an amount is kept in the budget for that purpose, as contribution is made by the minister and the remaining cost paid by CF.

Thanks were given to the North West Area for the generous donation to the CIPT library.

Since all Ministry and Mission donations are now accepted as home donations, unless specified, donations to CWM have been considerably reduced. Although the CF continue to support CWM in a variety of other ways, Area reps were asked to remind churches that they should specify if they would like all or part of the donation to go to CWM.

The unspent funds from MSP3 are to be returned to CWM to close that initiative. Additional funds to support MSP4 may be used towards a Youth and Children's Discipleship Mission project, which CWM are supportive of.

The 'If only...' mission initiative funds must be spent by the end of this calendar year. As we have been unable to meet face to face for the workshops, the funds saved from not having to pay for venue hire, travel expenses and related costs were used, with CWM's full support, to provide grants supporting the mission initiative projects arising from the initiative.

Council have yet to make a decision on how the remainder of the Gift of Grace funding will be used.

£657 has been donated to the Christian Aid vaccine appeal so far.

Action

Seek clarification on 2020 budget figures (6 or 12 months) for Director of Finance.

Impact Grants

There have been applications and enquiries from five churches interested in the next round of Impact grants. There are also Starter and Mini grants available for churches to apply for.

The Church Support Worker gave a presentation based on the Impact Grant reports from two churches. The report from Loddiswell will appear in the autumn edition of Refresh. All other reports are available by contacting the Church Support Worker.

Area Reports

Not all Area reports were submitted in time to be included in the meeting, however the following themes were identified from those submitted, and the Church Support Team will concentrate on supporting these:

Safeguarding

Grants for building and development work

Supporting churches with a need for preachers and worship leaders

Supporting churches where only a few people are carrying many responsibilities

Particular prayer requests

The action plan for the Church Support Team has been updated and was shared with the Committee.

Other Federation Churches in Scotland

Two responses were received from the Other Federation churches in Scotland. On the whole,

churches are in good heart, however, there have been some bereavements due to Covid, so there have been hard times and people are cautious about returning to full services. Some are continuing to join services remotely from home, and youth work has been delivered online.

The question 'what does it mean to be a family of churches?' was raised in the report.

Eastern Area

There have been some changes of ministers within the Area with some moving on, and some new ministers coming in. There are three students graduating with a Foundation degree from CIPT, which is to be celebrated. Churches are gradually returning to in-person services, with some having returned fully and some returning more slowly.

East Midlands Area

Many churches have not yet returned to face-to-face meeting but are doing well despite this. There is a church with a big problem with dry rot, which is causing concern. Some churches are experiencing a lack of enthusiasm. There is a lot of movement within the Area, which is both concerning and exciting in equal measure.

North East Area

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. Most churches have now returned to in-person services, but some are more wary of returning. The Exec have now held a face-to-face meeting; they would like to meet up with the North West Area Exec to share ideas and mutual support. Children's work has been the slowest to return for a number of reasons, but this is a concern as it was felt to be an area of weakness within the CF.

CF in Wales

Returning to face-to-face services has been variable, with some churches nearly back to 'normal' and some still meeting online. Those that have met in-person have found that they are unable to deliver all activities that they have in the past. Some are meeting in different patterns or less frequently. Some churches feel it will be difficult to continue longer term. The Exec is still meeting via Zoom.

Sara Iles is stepping down from her role as Area Support Worker and will be greatly missed as she has made an immense contribution to the Area. The Exec are meeting next week to make a decision on replacing the role. The Committee gave thanks to Sara on behalf of the CF and wished her well for the future.

CF in Scotland

Scottish Church Support is going through a trial re-organisation. Some vacant roles have not been filled, so they are looking at different ways to proceed. For the time being a different volunteer rep will attend CSC meetings each time. Written confirmation to the CSC Chair will be required in order to allow temporary Reps to vote during meetings. Some churches are meeting in person, and some are still offering remote services, and this is still very much a transition period.

North West Area

Lots of churches are submitting articles for the Area newsletter. It is hoped that the newsletter can continue after the retirement of David Lampard, which has also left a vacancy at Greenacres and in the Pastoral Care Coordinators Group, for which a replacement is sought. Thanks were given to David, along with good wishes for the future. Small churches with elderly congregations are struggling, and the Area is keeping an eye on them. There is a student taking one module with CIPT, with a view to Chaplaincy in the future. The next Exec meeting and Area Assembly will be

held in person.

South West Area

Some churches have returned to in-person services and others have been slower to return. One church has decided to close permanently. Another church that is struggling is trying new initiatives to re-energise it and is working towards obtaining their safeguarding certificate.

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 project.

North West Midlands Area

There has been difficulty in recruiting volunteers to fill posts, such as Area reps and people are sometimes taking on roles reluctantly. David Gent is the new Area Chair, and a new CSC rep is being sought. There has been a mixed response to returning to in-person services due to the ages of many members, however this has led to some churches working more closely together than they have before. There is one church without a minister.

South East Area

There has been a difficulty in getting volunteers for Area Rep roles. Most churches have managed to have some in person meetings. The Area has continued to offer support to churches and other Areas by phone, as this has proved to be a more personal approach than email or Zoom. The Area gives thanks for all the prayers of support taking place throughout the CF. The question was raised as to whether Areas require a separate safeguarding policy that covers their meetings in case of disclosure. Council will be discussing a new staff safeguarding policy at their November meeting. Once agreed, this policy could perhaps be adapted for Area use.

South West Midlands

Nick Gleich is stepping down from his role as Area Rep, and a replacement is sought. Thanks were given to Joy Howell for all her work in keeping in touch with everyone and, for her work in offering online children's resources. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have highlighted issues that were already present within the Area, such as an ageing membership, declining attendance at church etc. Churches standing empty and unheated during lockdowns has exacerbated some physical problems with church buildings, some have been severely affected. It is unlikely that 'normality' can be achieved, but the Area are working as best they can with the resources available. The Area is also experiencing a lack of volunteers for various roles. 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 project.

Church Support Team

Church Support Worker

On Saturday 2nd October a workshop is being held at Greenacres on Post Pandemic Church. This is open to all. At least 35 people have already signed up. A national webinar is being held on 15th October. This is entitled 'Remaining church in a world of fear and uncertainty', with John and Olive Drane presenting. Area Reps are asked to promote this event within their Areas.

Over the summer connection was re-established with the Youth and Children's Workers. Plans were made for the year ahead and future vision for youth and children's work. The Youth and Children's workers have held a meeting to share experiences, knowledge and resources. Luzia is happy to visit in person to see how she can help them develop further and to offer support.

A Youth and Children's Assembly is planned for May, running alongside the National Assembly. Planning has begun to organize some national youth mission over a residential weekend, and there are also plans for a potential international youth visit in 2023, perhaps developing some international youth mission with Nigel Lindsay in Granada.

Summer clubs were held by several churches, and there is work underway planning for Easter holiday clubs. There are lots of visits planned and Luzia is happy to support churches in any way she can.

Thanks was given for the Church Support Worker's impressive report and interesting future plans.

Safeguarding

It is an exciting time for safeguarding, with lots of training taking place. Feedback on the training from 31:8 is welcomed. Lisa will contact 31:8 to see if any further discounts for group bookings are possible. An overview of churches that require safeguarding certificates was shared with the Committee. Churches without a certificate are encouraged to apply. It is CF policy that all churches have a certificate. Council communicated last year that all churches must have a safeguarding certificate by 2021 to remain affiliated.

An example policy is available on the CF website, along with lots of information to assist with adhering to safeguarding responsibilities. It is a long document, but pages 1-14 are the most important. Other pages will be relevant depending on the activities offered by the church. The committee were reminded that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and does not only relate to children. The policy should not be used in isolation; the supporting documents are intended to help and support should any part of the policy need to be actioned.

Dealing with bullying within churches is covered in the policy, along with direction to further information on disciplinary action and complaints. The policy cannot cover every specific scenario and more specific concerns of bullying within ministry should be taken to the Accreditation and Pastoral Care Co-Ordinator's Group.

Lisa confirmed that she will contact Areas if she has had no response from individuals who require a DBS check.

Action

Chair of Accreditation and Pastoral Care Co-Ordinator's Group to follow up on issues of bullying within ministry.

CIPT

Likewise days have been organised and are being held face-to-face. One successful event has already been held at Harden and a second will be held next month at Hope, Oldham. Any churches that would like to host a Likewise day should contact Walter.

Continuing Ministerial Development days have continued online. New face-to face events are now planned and information will be sent to ministers soon.

The new date for Spring School is 11th - 13th March 2022. Information will be on the CF website / social media soon, and all are encouraged to attend and share the information with their areas and churches.

CIPT are working to raise the profile of the role of Preacher as an accredited ministry. As well as the training for the accredited role of Preacher, a new module has been created for preparing for

preaching and this can be taken as a stand-alone module for those sensing a possible call to this ministry. Many churches are finding it increasingly difficult to find visiting Preachers, therefore it would be good to encourage individuals to take further training to enhance their gifts. It was noted that in the past there was a list of lay preachers included in the Year Book. Is this something that could be reinstated?

Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordinators Group

A group of 12 Accreditation and Pastoral Care Co-ordinators met at the National Arboretum. They attended a service in the morning and had a time of reflection in the afternoon, remembering those lost over the past 18 months.

CIPT Management Board

York St John University are very happy with the way CIPT is run, and students and tutors report being content, with student surveys showing satisfaction. With Covid meaning that learning has been delivered online, students report that they are still getting the teaching and experience that they want and need. The budget has varied due to Covid, but the CIPT team keep a close eye on expenditure and it is well controlled.

Level 4 students received live teaching in September, with level 5 being remote. It is hoped that full in-person teaching can resume in January, but if this is not possible, level 5 will have live teaching and level 4 will be remote. It was confirmed that it is not possible to offer a 'hybrid' learning environment with a mix of remote and live teaching, as we do not have the required technology, tutors or resources. It is a requirement of the course that students physically attend all of their teaching sessions, and university validation would not be possible for online teaching (the pandemic was an exception to this for which CIPT had temporary permission from the university). Accreditation also requires attendance and face-to-face interaction on the validated course.

Inter Church Board

Alan Kennedy attended the annual service at Northern College in Manchester, which was led by Suzanne Nockels. There are currently no Congregational students attending Northern College, although some do take post-graduate courses there. Despite having no current students, the Congregational involvement is appreciated.

The National Ecumenical Officers Group are meeting in person in November at the Church of Sweden in London. Churches Together in England are holding a residential meeting, where Alan will be leading the service, based on a book entitled 'A Theology of Disagreement'.

It is hoped that the International Fellowship gathering can take place in the USA next year and that all the cancelled activities will be able to take place then. Thanks were given to Neil for all his work on the online International Conference. This is available to view online and will be available for a few more months.

General Secretary

Northern College are looking for a new representative for their financial advisory group. We are also seeking new reps for World Day of Prayer, Christian Aid and Robinsons Trust (this needs to be a Deacon rather than a minister). Anyone interested in these roles should contact the General Secretary.

Action

Area reps to ask in their Areas for volunteers for these roles, which will represent the CF.

Christian Aid Partnership

A new partnership project for our 50th anniversary year was proposed. This project is in Nicaragua

and is based on climate change and the growing of cocoa. Our fundraising campaign would be based on '£50 for 50' celebrating our 50th Anniversary. If each church could raise £50 our total would be £11,500.

Proposal:

To raise £11,500 for the Nicaragua climate change/cocoa project with Christian Aid in 2022.

Seconded:

Ruth Green

Accepted:

Unanimous

50th Anniversary

Plans for the 50th anniversary year are going well. There is a calendar being produced, based on the parables. Please send photos of any events that could be included in the calendar to the General Secretary. Each church will receive one free copy of the calendar and further copies will be available to purchase for £3 per copy.

There is also a new 'Being Congregational' booklet in production, the Spring School, a special Assembly, a Christmas card competition and a book of reflections co-produced with the URC planned. There will be themed Life Light reflections, and souvenirs of pens, water bottles and umbrellas will be available. Support will be offered for tree and wildflower planting projects. The new 50th year logo will be used to promote events. Please contact the General Secretary with any further suggestions and ideas.

There was some discussion around achieving reconciliation as part of the 50th year anniversary. It was agreed that this is a matter for Council rather than CSC. The General Secretary is meeting with the URC General Secretary in November and will discuss some of the ways we might be able to work together in the future.

We do not have any connections yet other independent and evangelical Congregationalists. Consideration will be given as to how we might be able to start up conversations with them with.

CWM

The 'If Only ...' Member Church Initiative project has been very successful, and there is one more session to come. Previous sessions are available to watch online and there are grants available linked to the sessions.

Nigel Lindsay has settled in well in Granada, but the country has now gone into lockdown. He is happy to join events remotely.

AOB

The Chair of CSC has come to the end of his three-year term, and therefore a new Chair must be sought. The Committee may vote to keep the Chair in place for a further three-year term. John does not wish to stand for a further full term, however he is willing to stand for one further year whilst the restructuring process continues, and to allow time for a new Chair to be found. Any Committee members wishing to stand should let Yvonne know. If members know of anyone else who might be interested in the role, they should be encouraged to stand.

There was discussion around how best to encourage people to stand for the role, and suggestions included:

Shadowing the current Chair over the next year
Sending role descriptions out

Sending a message to churches from the current Chair to encourage others to stand.

It was agreed that John would remain in the position of Chair until the March CSC meeting to allow time for a replacement to be found and decisions to be reached, but any extension to his term would be backdated to September.

Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Saturday 26th March 2022 (in person at Nottingham).

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

The Chair left the meeting at this point for remaining Committee members to discuss possible candidates for the role of Chair.