

Free Church Council of Wales

Minutes of the Council held on 23 November at South Wales Baptist College, Richmond Road, Cardiff.

Present: Rheinallt Thomas (President) Catrin Haf Williams (University of Wales, TStD); Bryn Williams; Paul Rochester; Nerys Siddall; Irfon Roberts; Eirian Wyn; Peter Dewi Richards (Past President); Judith Morris; Ian Morris; Aled Davies; Gethin Rhys; Martin Spain (Treasurer); Dyfrig Rees; Peredur Owen-Griffiths; Peter Stevenson; Marc Owen; Ed Kaneen; Chris Gillham; Aled D. Jones; Vaughan Salisbury; Euros Wyn Jones; Alun Tudur; Steffan Wiliam (Translator); Helen Jones (Secretary)

Apologies: Hefin Jones; Aled Edwards; Gareth Morgan Jones; Ieuan Elfryn Jones; Meirion Morris; Ifan Roberts; Sally Thomas; George Baker

1. Welcome: The President welcomed the Council members, guests and especially, Dr Catrin Haf Williams to the meeting. Four members were attending the meeting of the Council for the first time. They were: 1. Reverend Dyfrig Rees – General Secretary of the Union of Welsh Independents. 2. Peredur Owen Griffiths, Faith, Witness and Events Enabler for Cytun and representative of the Covenanting Churches. 3. North Wales representative: Reverend Aled Davies, Sunday school Council and Minister of 3 denominational churches in the Chwilog area. 4. North Wales representative: Mrs Nerys Siddall, Manager and Education Officer of Mary Jones' World, Llanycil. The South Wales representatives are: Reverend Irfon Roberts and Reverend Eirian Wyn.

2. Prayers were offered by Reverend Dr. Peter Stevenson, Principal South Wales Baptist College. The President referred to Peter Stevenson's book "Preaching" which was recently translated into Welsh by Reverend Olaf Davies.

3. Minutes: These were accepted as true reflection of 24 May Meeting. They were proposed by Reverend Peter Dewi Richards and seconded by Reverend Ian Morris.

4. Matters arising: 1. Chaplaincies: G. Rhys said that Eifion Howells of Hywel Dda Health Board Trust had responded. He stated that he would be raising the matter in the January meeting of the Trust. There will be a full response by the May meeting of the Council. Alan Taylor from Cardiff and Aneurin Bevan Health Board Trust had responded by accepting that it was difficult from a budget perspective to advertise vacancies and to have Welsh speakers for the role. In the future, vacancies will be advertised in the interdenominational 4-pages.

2. Education –The situation in England is unchanged.

3. The President reminded the Council members of the May and November 2019 dates – so that there would not be a clash of committee and/or church meetings.

5. Theological Training: Before introducing Dr. Catrin Haf Williams, the President said that the subject had been an Agenda item for a long time. Following the May meeting the denominational representatives were asked to send details of the theological training courses available in the colleges to the President during June. Hefin Jones from the "Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol" – "National Welsh College" hoped that the Universities in Wales would prepare a National Theology and Religious Studies Course by the February meeting of the Academic Board of the Council.

There was no response from Elfryn Jones, North Wales Baptist College, Bangor. Unfortunately, Denis Morgan was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. Other training provisions were sent by email to all the attendees before the meeting. It was noted that Jeremy Duff had not left the Padarn Institute as had been thought at the end of June.

Dr Catrin Haf Williams was introduced officially. She thanked the Council for the invitation to attend. Papers were sent to members and guests before the meeting.

A lively, informative discussion followed and relevant discussion points were raised. The students at South Wales Baptist College are fortunate in that they are able to study Religion and Theology and follow courses in the Welsh language because of the connection with Cardiff University. The number of students vary – 45 this year. Residential Courses are offered in Trefecca College Centre. There are provisions in place for students to follow Ministerial and Chaplaincy training. Some thought it would be beneficial to offer Theology Courses in partnership with the National Welsh College – Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. The use of technology like “Skype” makes it possible to study, interact and expand the number of students.

It was asked if it was necessary to have three establishments to train students. Did the colleges need to compete with each other rather than cooperate? It was suggested that an academy be established to oversee standards and accreditation. The Padarn Institute is modern and facilitates Anglican resources for the 21C. Legislation changes annually and patterns of training change.

There is a need for collaboration between the various denominations for training. Currently, the individual denominations are responsible for accreditation of ministers of their own denomination.

There does not seem to be sufficient training provision in Wales and there is anxiety that students have to study Theology in England. It is hoped that eventually these students would return to Wales and be able to train through the medium of Welsh. The main problem with Welsh Colleges is supply and demand and the costs thereof. It was noted that there is a need to cooperate with many students who for a variety of reasons are unable to go away to study and need support. It is essential to have a system of Accreditation and Training. Practical theology is important and meeting people is the nature of the work - in their varying circumstances – in communities, prisons, hospitals etc. It was suggested that even though discussions had taken place in the past, there was a need for one person to coordinate the training of ministerial provision between the denominations looking at patterns and plans and collate them in a manner which would be acceptable to all.

There used to be an “Ecumenical Evaluation Board” before establishing St. Padarn’s Institute but this has ceased to exist. It was agreed that it would be good for it to be reinstated as this meant that there was a common evaluation across the denominations. Currently all the denominations have their own Evaluation Training board. It was expressed that there was a need to focus on the structures of the denominations and how practical provision could be offered especially training through the medium of Welsh. . It was noted that the FCCW had no authority but would appreciate that discussions were reported back during next year. The President said that he would have a word with the Archbishop of Wales when he went to the farewell/ leaving reception for Carwyn Jones as First Minister of Wales in the National Assembly on 11 December.

<p>ACTION POINT: 1. The members agreed to attend a forum chaired by Rev. Bryn Williams. 2. There is a need to reinstate the Ecumenical Evaluation Training Board. 3. The President to discuss with the Archbishop of Wales that the FCCW hoped it would be possible to reinstate the Ecumenical Evaluation Board.</p>
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The President thanked Dr Catrin for her presentation and her contribution to the discussion.

6. Presidents Report and Diary

This was sent out with the meeting’s papers. The President stated that it was a pleasure to be at the Baptist Union of Wales’ Annual Meetings in June at Nant Gwrtheyrn. The President aims to accept all invitations positively and to date had only failed to accept 3 invitations. He had appreciated taking part in the Wales National Service of Remembrance for the Armistice on 11 November at Llandaff Cathedral. The

next invitation is to attend the reception for Carwyn Jones' retirement as Wales' First Minister at the Senedd on 11 December.

A letter was received from Rev. Ifan Roberts concerning the document Guidelines for Area Ministries – which should be followed during discussions before forming new Ministries. It was noted that the document "Area Ministries" dating back to 2000 needed updating, a new version had been produced in 2016 by the 3 General Secretaries but it has not been published.

ACTION POINT: Peredur Owen Griffiths in his role as the Cytun Faith, Witness and Events Enabler to coordinate the work and to produce a bilingual document in cooperation with the relevant groups.

Updating the Web page: Peredur Owen Griffiths has been working on this and everyone was asked to look at it on www.cytun.co.uk. The link to the website was changed. Gethin and Peredur were thanked for their reports.

7. Reports

A. Cytun:

Cytun Bulletins were sent with papers for the meeting. The Council was asked to look at the last page, which noted the problem of closing Banks and the difficulties businesses and the public were experiencing in order to have financial transactions and cash. A letter was prepared by Cytun and a draft was presented at the meeting. The intention is to open a dialogue with the Banks and three practical suggestions (note the letter). Gethin was thanked for preparing this. There were concerns that new chargeable ATM's were increasing and the lack of information in Welsh in local branches. A suggestion was made that the public should regularly use their local branches. An article about the problem will appear in the 4-pages Interdenominational paper. Gethin hopes to meet senior Executive banking officials in order to discuss the population's concern nationally.

Peredur thanked those who had assisted him during the Eisteddfodau – Urdd and National and the Royal Welsh Show in Llanellwedd. Concern was expressed that consideration as to the future location of the Eisteddfod's Morning Service would be held at a different location rather than the Pavilion. There will be discussions and it will be emphasised that there is an unbreakable link between the Eisteddfod and the Morning Service which commences the Eisteddfod. The correct place to begin Eisteddfod week is to hold a service on the Eisteddfod Stage – even though this year was an exception due to its location.

B. Education: The Education Report was sent before the meeting

Concentration was given to Point 2 of the Report – **In June Estyn published its Education Report on Key Stages 2 and 3.** Vaughan stated that it was good to see a positive report.

The last recommendation stated that it was important to have clarity in the Religious Education course within Humanities.

1. The place of Religious Education within **Humanities Curriculum**

North Wales SACRE's met in Llandudno in September. A draft version was introduced and this was an improvement on the original paper even though there were strengths and weaknesses - it is a good and exciting scheme.

There is also a great concern that Advisors have been reduced and a deputation from SACRE will meet with Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams in January. She will be asked who will lead the schemes and ensure that they will meet the highest standard possible.

2. Another concern was that not enough teachers were sufficiently qualified and trained to teach Religious Education. The Government would have to finance this substantially.

3. On the latest paper on Humanities it is noted that “religious” and “non-religious” are mentioned every time. What does this mean within the context of a Religious Education lesson? Are SACRE promoting this or should one worry? This undermines the work of the Professor Donaldson Report and also the Religious education laws. In April the complete document will be published in its final form and its content will be discussed in the FCCW May meeting.

4. Concerns were raised over the provision of Welsh material and this was not improving. Welsh medium teachers have to prepare their own notes and translations resulting in inconsistent material. It was stated that the Welsh Publishers were in discussions with the Welsh Government. Publishing such books are expensive but benefits the Welsh economy. Religious Education will be taught separately from Humanities from September. There will be no change in the Law.

SACRE will provide the framework within Humanities for Religious Education in the future and every school will have to provide “due diligence” to the subject when they draw up the curriculum.

It will be necessary for schools to follow SACRE’s directive. Denominational/Church Schools will follow the directive from their denomination.

Two circulars will be sent quarterly. 1. Dealing with worship. 2. Dealing with Religious Education. It is believed that these are separate issues and should be treated as such. Vaughan was thanked for his report.

ii. SACRE Nominations: Gethin stated that it is the responsibility of the FCCW to nominate names or else the places will be lost. There were a number of spaces which needed filling.

1. Newport: 2 places to fill – i. Gordon Creswell a ii. to be filled by UFC /Presbyterians. (Elin Maher was named)

2. Monmouth: 4 places in total – i. Peter Brain – Baptist ii Salvation Army iii a iv. Required. Gethin is eager to fill these spaces quickly.

3. Carmarthenshire: i. Rev. Aled Jones but ii. (Baptist required) a iii (Presb. required)

4. Pembrokeshire – 2 empty spaces - i (Baptist) ii (Presb). Gethin was thanked for this information.

B. Denominations:

The Methodist Church: Rev. Trevor Hoggard has been appointed as a Minister in North Wales and he will be the Superintendent of the North Wales Circuit. Trevor Hoggard is originally from New Zealand and is a linguist. He is eager to learn Welsh. He will begin in September.

Bedyddwyr: The Baptists try to follow the GDPR rules. Team for Wales have begun their mission work in the Arfon district of North Wales. 2 people will be interviewed next month with the intention of being possible Ministry candidates. 2019 will commemorate a century since the death of the missionary to China - Rev. Timothy Richard. Plans are being drawn to remember him.

C. Treasurer:

£5325.47 were transferred to the FCCW Account from the North Wales Branch. This will be transferred to the Accounts of the Sunday School Council in order to ensure that there are funds for Gee medals in the future. The Gee family does occasionally transfer money into the account for Medals to be minted. The Medals are a special cast and a large number have to be minted in order to keep costs down.

A financial Report showing the Gee Medal Account will be published annually as part of the Sunday School Council Accounts.

Irfon has transferred £1,000 from the South Wales branch of FCC. There are some Medals remaining. Irfon also stated that there are certain active cells particularly in South Wales and that they contribute annually to the Branch. He said that it was important that any individual **local group of the Free Church Council** who meet should publicize and provide information about their meetings to the representatives of North or South Wales. Any contributions should be sent to the Treasurer of FCCW, Rev. Martin Spain.

The Treasurer suggested raising the membership fee from the denominations. There will be more information and a suggested sum in the next meeting. By then he will have more information about the President's Annual Costs.

The Treasurer is eager to pay travel and any other costs incurred for any representative if they so wish. Martin was thanked for his report.

9. Rev Paul Rochester Free Church Group Report – No report this meeting. Will ensure FCG Report will be higher in the Agenda in Future.

10. AOB: Good wishes and prayers sent to Mr Vivian Williams, Llanelli.

Thanks to - Steffan Wiliam for translating and to Helen for organising the meeting

11. The Grace was recited to conclude the meeting.

The meeting finished at 3.15.

Date of next meeting: 10.30 am. 23 May 2019 South Wales Baptist College Cardiff.