

The Free Church Council of Wales

The President's diary of events ((No 5–September – December 2018)

Sept 25. Attended the 2018 **Interfaith Seminar and Dinner** at City Hall, Cardiff arranged by the Muslim Council for Wales. The key note speaker was The Venerable Master Chin Kung an eminent monk of the Pure land school of Mahayana Buddhism. With some 500 present all the introductions were in both Welsh and English with representatives of all faiths attending what was a memorable evening. Presentations were made to several individuals; including Carwyn Jones, the First Minister, for their contribution to various aspects of community life in Wales.

Oct 4. Gave a **talk** about the work of the FCCW to the Glamorgan – London Presbytery of PCW held at Port Talbot.

Oct 10. Attended the launch of "**Dock of the Bay**", at the Exchange Hotel, which celebrated the launch of a four-part itv Wales series on the history and diverse cultures of Cardiff Bay and its dockland communities.

Oct 29. Attended an interfaith event "**Invest in Peace**"/ **Adeiladu Pontydd** under the auspices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and CTBI (Churches together in Britain), arranged by St David's Uniting Church Pontypridd and Cardiff Reform Synagogue. The Synagogue was nearly full with very effective presentations by two young men, the one being a Palestinian and the other an Israeli.

Nov 5. Attended the Welsh government's **Faith Communities Forum** under the chairmanship of the First Minister. There were presentations and discussions on five issues: 1. An update on religious education in the Curriculum. 2 Lists of Inter Faith Week events. 3. Human rights. 4. Nation of Sanctuary Plan for Refugees and Asylum seekers. 5. European Union Transitional Fund Projects - 3 to commence in April

Nov 7. An extremely populous meeting of the **Cross part Group on Faith** at Y Senedd. The topic was "**Islam and Extremism**" The Guest Speaker was Dr Saleem Kidwai, OBE who emphasised by many references to the Quran that Islam was for community of moderates.

He showed how Islam was misunderstood and that a lot was due to media bias and ignorance. An intelligent and useful discussion ensued.

Nov 11. Attended and presented a prayer at the **National Service of Thanksgiving – Armistice 100**, broadcast from Llandaff Cathedral on both BBC1 and S4C.



Nov 16. Attended a **meeting at the Welsh Government** with other Faith Leaders to receive an up date and to respond to the documentation concerning Religious Education in the new curriculum. Final documentation will be available in April with a period of full consultation. It is vitally important that **ALL Denominations** as well as individual churches respond to that document when it is published. The future of Religious Education depends on that happening. We have to be alert to the substantial influence and demands of the "non-religious".

Nov 23. Our **Council Meeting(FCCW)** Not only was there a good attendance from members but it was augmented substantially in the morning session by Denominational officers and College lecturers with responsibility for **Theological/Ministerial Training**. The session was led most ably by Dr Catrin Haf Williams, University of Wales Trinity St Davids.

There was a detailed and thorough discussion with everyone contributing freely. There is clearly a will to co-operate and co-ordinate among the denominations. There were a number of practical suggestions. **It was agreed** that Rev. Bryn Williams (PCW) would convene a meeting of the key individuals from the denominations in early 2019 after consulting with the St Padarn's Institute. It was **also agreed** that the re-establishment of the ' Ecumenical Validation Board ' would be valuable and the President expressed that he would mention this to the Archbishop of the Church in Wales the next time he met him. The need for a revision of the "**Community Ministry**" document produced in 2000 was noted as was a Welsh version produced by three General Secretaries in 2016 but which had not been published. Peredur Owen Griffiths **agreed** in his role as the Faith, Order and Witness Enabler at CYTUN to co-ordinate this work and produce a bilingual document in co-operation with the relevant groups. Expressions of thanks and joy were given for the co- operation with CYTUN especially with the development of a **new web site** where information about FCCW will be more obvious and much easier to find. The **President's Report** was received and he was thanked for his work representing FCCW. In the same vein the **CYTUN bulletins** and detailed and consistent work of Gethin Rhys were much appreciated. There were written reports on **education developments** by Vaughan Salisbury referring to the conferences that took place in the autumn and it was noted that time will be required next time to discuss the final proposals for the new curriculum and religious education in particular. It was noted that **Estyn** had published its report: Religious education at Key Stage 2 and key Phase 3 and that it was positive in particular at Key Stage 2. Nominations for **SACREs** and the importance of securing representatives were discussed. A report was received from the **Treasurer** and it was **agreed** that the sum of £5,325.47, transferred from North Wales as Gee Medals money, was to be transferred to the Welsh Sunday Schools Council provided that it was earmarked for Gee Medals.

It was a delight to **welcome new members**: the Rev Dyfrig Rees (General Secretary of the Union of Welsh Independents); Peredur Owen Griffiths (Faith, Order and Witness Enabler at CYTUN); Rev Aled Davies and Mrs Nerys Siddall (North Wales representatives); and two in a new role – the Revs Irfon Roberts and Eirian Wyn (South Wales representatives). It was noted that it is important that any **local groups of Free Churches** who meet should inform and give information of their activities to the representatives of the South or North as appropriate.

(a full copy of the minutes can be obtained by e-mail from Helen Jones, Secretary of FCCW- rhys.helen.jones@btinternet.com)

Dec 10 Contributed to the discussion on the BBC programme **Taro'r Post** on the matter of **Collective Worship in schools**. The issue started with petitions some eighteen months ago and is still unresolved. We, as Christians, must be alert and vigilant if we want to preserve this part of our heritage.

Dec 11 I was privileged to represent FCCW at First Minister **Carwyn Jones' farewell reception** at Y Senedd. There were several of us representing different faith communities which was a fair reflection of the way in which Welsh Government shows its support to faith communities; with the First Minister (as indicated above) chairing the Faith Communities Forum which exists under the auspices of the Welsh Government.

A Happy New Year full of blessings to all.

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