

Free Church Council of Wales

Minutes of 14 November 2019 meeting at South Wales Baptist College, Richmond Road, Cardiff

Present: Rheinallt Thomas (President); Gethin Rhys, Martin Spain (Treasurer) Vaughan Salisbury; Irfon Roberts; Eirian Wyn; Aled Davies; Judith Morris; Alun Tudur; Ian Morris; Simon Walkling; Brian Matthews; Meirion Morris; Steffan Wiliam (Translator); Helen Jones (Secretary)

Apologies: Peter Dewi Richards; Chris Gillham; George Baker; Tim Daniel; Nerys Siddall; Gareth Morgan Jones; Dyfrig Rees; Aled Jones; Bryn Williams; Peredur Owen Griffiths; Paul Rochester

1. Welcome – Everyone was welcomed to the meeting. Two new members were present - Brian Matthews from Wrexham, Past President of PCW and Simon Walkling (URC) from Pontypridd. The translator Steffan Wiliam was also welcomed. Ian Morris announced that he would be leaving the meeting at mid-day and Eirian Wyn after lunch. Apologies were accepted. The Council was informed that Peredur Owen Griffiths would find it difficult to attend some meetings in the future due to his work as an Enabler with the Covenanting Churches in Wales and undertaking the role left by Sally Thomas for Cytûn after her retirement.

2. Devotion – Despite her absence, Nerys Siddall sent the devotion for the meeting which was read by the President. There was an appreciation of Nerys' effort and her message.

3. Minutes 23 May 2019 – The minutes were accepted as being an accurate record of May's meeting. Aled Davies proposed their acceptance and Martin Spain seconded.

4. Matters arising from Minutes.

3ii. Theological/ Ministerial Training – It was noted that the 3 denominations were represented at the meeting with Coleg Cenedlaethol (National College) last May.

3iv. Area Ministry Document – It was noted that there would be a meeting in January.

8. Eisteddfod Sunday Worship/ Service. It was decided that the FCCW should write to the Board of the National Eisteddfod requesting that the Sunday Morning Worship should be re-established in the Pavilion. It was noted that there had been a past problem distinguishing between those who attended the service for whom there was no charge for entry and the fee paying public who wished to attend the Pavilion competitions. It was explained that the Welsh Government in Cardiff intended to pay the Sunday tickets for locals who lived within a 20 mile radius of the Eisteddfod. Hence, guaranteeing free entry to the local community. This would mean that there would be a worthy attendance to the Sunday morning worship service. There are no large chapels in the Tregaron area to accommodate the numbers who had attended the service at Seion, Llanrwst.

9. New Curriculum Consultation Document – Action Point (May): Aled was thanked for the information received. Members of FCCW should inquire within their denominations about work done in schools by volunteers and inform Aled. Denomination Secretaries should send an up to date register to Aled by November 2020. Aled was thanked for his work. It was noted that it was important to remember the difference between collective worship and religious education lessons.

11. Two services were held to distribute Gee Medals in September. One in North Wales and the other in South Wales. Everyone received an appeal letter from the Sunday School Council. An invitation was given to attend the Thanksgiving Service for the work of GIG (Hope for Wales) and beibl.net on 29 February 2020 at Penuel, Carmarthen.

<p>Action Points: 1. Write to the Board of the National Eisteddfod requesting the re-establishment of the Sunday Morning worship service in the Pavilion. 2. Individuals and Denominations to send revised data to Aled Davies concerning volunteer work in schools and update information already given by November 2020.</p>

5. Child Punishment – Jon Luxton – Cognition Associates

Jon Luxton from Public Relations Company "Re: cognition" was welcomed to the meeting. This is the company which has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to engage with the public concerning the new bill on Child punishment. Jon was anxious to attend the meeting and make a short presentation, answer any questions raised and give his contact details if further information was required.

It was a clear concise presentation with an opportunity for reaction and discussion about the Bill's obligation. Jon said that evaluation was required to appreciate how the faith community throughout Wales reacted to the Bill. He had already visited many faith communities and realised that they all had differing viewpoints on the subject of child punishment and that they were not necessarily literal in their belief within the differing religions. The main worry of

religious bodies was that the state was interfering with personal family life and that parents were being punished for disciplining their children.

The background: The purpose of the Bill is to abolish the common law defence of reasonable punishment so that it is no longer available in Wales to parents or those acting in *loco parentis* as a defence to assault or battery against a child.

The defence currently applies in both the criminal and civil law. Under the criminal law, it applies in respect of the common law offences of assault and battery; and under civil law, in respect of the tort of trespass against the person.

The Bill is intended to support children's rights by prohibiting the use of physical punishment, through removal of this defence. The intended effect of the Bill, together with an awareness-raising campaign and support for parents, is to bring about a further reduction in the use and tolerance of the physical punishment of children in Wales. There is an effective video which can be downloaded at www.Childrenwalesbill.gov.wales Jon Luxton will write to all denomination secretaries to explain the bill.

It was explained that this Bill was equivalent to that which existed in 53 other countries and complemented the rights of the child. It would take away the right of bad/cruel parents from providing the argument that lawful punishment was their sanction for their children. There is a campaign to publicise and aid parents from many other cultures that laws and values in this country are different. There are parents in Wales who share a similar mentality regarding punishment which belonged to ideals of previous generations. Many of these believe that this takes away their choice of parenting. There are classes to be had to aid parents. The hope is to create better parents but emotional matters will arise. There will not be a great change in the law but the Bill takes away the element of "reasonable punishment". Jon and his associate partner Louise were thanked for their contribution and explanations of the Bill. Jon Luxton may be contacted via email: info@cognitionassociates.co.uk

Ian Morris left the meeting.

Action Point: The secretary to forward email addresses of General Denomination Secretaries to Jon Luxton in order for him to fully explain the child punishment Bill to them.

6. Education (note Appendix sent with meeting papers)

Jon also stayed for the Education item on the Agenda. It was understood that he would be present as a Government consultant. Vaughan was thanked for his report which was distributed as an Appendix before the meeting and for his response to the questions raised in the Curriculum paper concerning Religious Education lessons. Two points were raised: the right of parents to remove their child from Religious Education lessons and the second was the change of name to Worldviews because the content regarded the humanist standpoint. From an educational perspective future religious education lessons will be a part of the Humanities subject. This will follow themed lessons within the subject. Some 15 minutes will be a Religious Education lesson and it will be attached to either a history and/or geography lesson. There has been a custom of removing children out of lessons but with the new Curriculum it would be impractical to assess a child's progress if they were removed for 15 minutes of the lesson. It was noted that the child would educationally lose out by being ignorant of Religious Education and this would lead to biased opinion. In order to ensure a complete Religious Education there needs to be a broad outlook on religion instead of children who are ignorant about the subject.

By changing the name of the subject to "Worldviews" – this would create new problems which needed to be addressed – as the word is plural. CORE in England decided on the Curriculum without consulting and visiting Wales. Their report was rejected in Wales because of this.

Jon Luxton said that Vaughan's contribution was similar to many others he had heard. It is obvious that there were many differing opinions on the name of the subject. Cardiff University suggested that the name remain the same because the content was valuable and included Faith, Philosophy and other religions. It was stated that there wasn't a basic definition to be had. Vaughan noted that the paper undermined "non-religious" and this often infuriated the situation.

There was a wide range of opinion on the subject by other organisations. It was mentioned that the Welsh Humanist Society had successfully lobbied M.P.'s and A.M.'s. There are less than a 1,000 members of the society compared with 60,000 Christians who are members of the FCCW. It is worrying that a small minority could successfully have their name on the subject.

At the end of the discussion the President asked if everyone was happy with the response on Vaughan's Consultation paper and there were no objections. Rheinallt was thanked for translating the English response of the paper into Welsh on behalf of Vaughan. Vaughan was thanked for his considered response. Jon Luxton was thanked for remaining to listen to the Council's discussion and making general comments on behalf of the Government.

New President elect

It was announced that Simon Walkling, National Synod Moderator in Wales of the United Reformed Church would be the new President of the Council and will be installed at the next meeting in May as successor to Rheinalt Thomas. The President mentioned that Simon Walkling had been a Moderator for the last 7 years. Simon lives in Pontypridd. His background has meant that he has been involved with Non-conformist denominations for years. This will be the first time that a President of the FCCW will be an English speaker although Simon is learning Welsh. His nomination was accepted by the Council.

Book launch “Gair Duw ar Waith” - Parchedig Denzil John

The book was launched before lunch. It contains a series of devotions concentrating on placing faith into practice in our everyday lives. The President presented the first copy to the Reverend Denzil John in the meeting. Copies are for sale through Cyhoeddiadau'r Gair costing £6.99.

Education Report - 6b The Education Report continued noting the points raised in the education paper that had been sent out.

6c. Ministry Training –A message was received from the Reverend Bryn Williams stating that the Board would be meeting in January 2020 and that there would be no Report available until then.

7. Chaplaincy (Carolyn Castle – Cwm Taf Morgannwg N.H.S. Trust)

Carolyn Castle was introduced to the Members. She explained her background on how she became a hospital chaplain. She began by volunteering with the Free Churches Group in London. She was ordained as a minister by the Elim Pentecostal Church. She then explained the different aspects of her work ministering to patients, their families and staff within the Trust. Her work deals with the spiritual life of all who come under her care and meets people of different religions and contacts the religious leaders as the need arises. Carolyn explained how to apply for the post of Chaplain – through the NHS Wales website. A “warning” appears on the website when a post is advertised and after registering one is able to volunteer. There is a bank of volunteers in Wales who work with the Health Boards overnight. Until recently, the post of Chief Chaplain was filled by Church in Wales clergy but currently there are 3 Anglicans and 3 Non-conformist Chief Chaplains. (The main reason being the shortage of clergy and the Bishops are reluctant to free their clergy for full time posts). The post of Health Board Chaplains will be advertised bilingually – Welsh and English - from mid-November. The question of the availability of Multifaith clergy was raised and it was said that it depended on the needs of the area. Every Chaplain is paid but the sum varies from one Health Board to another. Carolyn was thanked for her presence and her explanation about her work.

There was nothing to report on the discussion with Powys Health Board. (See Minutes May 2019)

Action Point: Item Agenda for May 2020 –1. Gethin Rhys – To seek information concerning the FCG and the SHAW group. 2. Gethin Rhys – To report on discussion with Powys NHS Trust (Minutes May 2019)

8. Free Churches Group – Paul Rochester – No report.

9. President’s Diary

The diary with the President’s engagements since May was presented along with other papers before the meeting. The President noted that this week – November 11 – 14 had been very busy with different activities including a meeting on Monday evening celebrating Inter-faith week and a Faith Forum meeting in the Senedd with the First Minister on Wednesday. This had been a session of 1½ hours. It was understood that people were eager to join this group which has grown over the last few years.

10. Cytûn Report

The September Bulletin had been sent out. There is currently an Election Bulletin on the Cytûn website with instructions on how to hold “husting meetings”. The first meeting of prospective candidates will be held in Swansea on Tuesday, 19 November. A warning was given that candidates should not call on people to canvas after dark. A full list of candidates will be available on Friday, 15 November. As there are agreements in place between candidates of different parties in some areas, it will be possible to hold simple meetings within churches. Cytûn is prepared to assist in arranging such meetings but churches will have to invite the candidates in their areas. Other matters for concern include Climate change and Brexit. Gethin was thanked for his contribution and his work was appreciated.

11. Denomination Reports

Baptist Union of Wales – (Judith Morris) i. 2020 will be noted as a Year of Prayer – prayers will be sent out from the office to churches beginning with Advent Sunday. ii. A review was made on the work of the Union. The officials have

visited all the different Associations and are preparing a report. iii. Seren Cymru – there is a concern about its future as the numbers buying are fewer. iv. 2020, celebrates 50 years since establishing Glynest Home.

Presbyterian Church in Wales - (Meirion Morris) i. The church is working on an environmental policy. ii. There is a growing problem that income is depleting and that spending costs are increasing. Generational understanding differs. iii. The Ecumenical commitment costs £42,000. It has been asked if it is value for money. iv. There is hope in the cross denominational talks concerning training within the 3 denominations.

Union of Welsh Independents – (Alun Tudur) i. The Madagascar appeal closes at the end of the year and has raised £155,000. The money will support 4 projects in the country. It was a delight to connect 200 years of history after learning about the early missionaries. The Bible was translated to Madagasi. People from Madagascar visited Wales and Welsh people visited the island. The experience was one of remembrance and celebration of the history of the church. ii. Discussions have taken place with organisers of the Royal Welsh Show in Llanellwedd to organise a Welsh Chaplaincy. Farmers and agriculturalists are concerned about Brexit and are worried about the future of farming in Wales. iii. The Union has a fund which is being earmarked for Mission/ Evangelism and planting new churches. No money will be available for buildings from this. The Union looks forward to promoting new projects and is confidently hopeful about its future.

United Reformed Church – (Simon Walkling) i. There are new denominational plans to make communities of people disciples. There is a book on the early churches and the idea being to create such disciples. ii. The Lay Training programme is changing from being Academic to one of Mentoring. Its new name is “Stepwise”. iii. The church is evaluating its pension scheme funds. iv. The church is looking into its connection with slavery. v. The Synod sees the number of Ministry clergy depleting. vi. The Synod wishes to build on its strengths rather than its weaknesses. vii. A decision has been made to finish using fossil fuel.

The Congregational Federation – (Martin Spain) i. A new church has been created in Swansea. The congregation are people from Korea and they have been accepted officially as a church in the annual Union meetings in Scotland this year. ii. 2020 celebrates 400 years since the Pilgrim Fathers set sail on the Mayflower from Plymouth to America. Young people will have the opportunity to re-enact the voyage and sail from Plymouth to Cape Cod.

12. Treasurer’s Report - 1. A balance sheet was sent out before the meeting. 2. Membership subscription – The Treasurer wished to have confirmation from the 4 major Denominations before sending out an official letter. The annual membership subscription will be £450 from 2020. The response was positive from the 4 who will pay the same amount – Baptist Union of Wales, The Methodist Church, The Presbyterian Church and the Union of Welsh Independent churches. Their positive response meant that the other members of the Council would be asked to pay £150 annually. The Treasurer will send out his letter to action the payment early in 2020. It was agreed.

The Treasurer also stated that in the future he would work out a formula to ensure that there would be an increase every 3 years. Some members travel considerable distances as representatives and this necessitated that money was available to pay their expenses. The full Annual Budget report would be available in May. Martin would pay £500 expenses to Cytûn as was customary in November.

13. AOB

1. Vaughan wished to thank Rheinallt for translating his Education Consultation Paper into Welsh.
2. Rheinallt thanked Steffan for translating the meeting.
3. Helen was thanked for ensuring that papers were sent before the meeting, organising lunch and minuting the meeting.
4. It was announced that Cytûn would be moving their office to Hastings House, Fitzalan Place early in the New Year. In future it will not be possible to park there but there is a convenient public car park nearby.

The dates of 2020 meetings were noted and the location will be the South Wales Baptist College, Richmond Road, Cardiff.

The meeting concluded at 2.55 with the recitation of the Grace.

2020 Meetings – Monday 11 May and Thursday 18 November