

## Free Church Council of Wales

### Minutes of the meeting of 24 May 2022 held over Zoom

**Present:** Rev. Simon Walkling (President); Rheinallt Thomas (Former President); Aled Davies; Chris Gillham; Gareth Morgan Jones; Judith Morris; Meirion Morris; Dyfrig Rees; Ian Morris; Peter Dewi Richards; Irfon Roberts; Vaughan Salisbury; Eirian Wyn; Steffan Wiliam (translating); Helen Jones (Secretary)

**Apologies were received:** Martin Spain (Treasurer); Bryn Williams; Nerys Siddall; Gethin Rhys who joined later;

**1. Welcome:** The President warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received.

**2. Devotion:** The devotion was led by the President. He read part of John 17: 20 - 27 – The Prayer in the Garden. In his reflection he spoke of the organic organizing union - the united church and the need for humility in our ecumenical life.

**3. Minutes of meeting 23 June 2021:** The Minutes were accepted with Rheinallt proposing them as a true record and seconded by Peter Dewi Richards and the other members of the Council present. The Secretary was thanked for recording them.

**3i. Matters Arising – None**

3ii. Area Ministry Document

The report was led by Judith Morris. She stated that the situation would not change at all until a successor was appointed to follow Peredur Owen Gruffydd. Meetings are regular and constructive in content. She added that Ainsley Griffiths of the Church in Wales is now part of the group.

Meirion Morris and Dyfrig Rees had nothing to add. Aled Jones stated that he had understood that Cytûn would not appoint a successor until the end of the year - this was a concern as it meant that the Covenanted Churches would not meet before then.

Rheinallt added that Archbishop Andy John in his speech on his enthronement had called on the denominations to come together to work together. He hoped that in the future that there would be centres of ecumenical arrangement in place but sadly there could be a lack of provision in more sparsely populated areas.

Judith was thanked for leading the discussion.

**Action points: The group to continue to meet and report back in November.**

### 4. President's Report

Simon stated that he received invitations from the Welsh Government. He represents the FCCW on the Faith Communities Forum. If anyone needs information about the Interfaith Community Simon will be happy to share. As Covid's arrangements have diminished, places of worship Task Group meetings have slowed down.

Simon attended the Reverend John Lomas' Installation service of the Bishop of Swansea and Brecon in February. Rheinallt represented the Council at Bangor Cathedral when Andy John was installed as Archbishop of Wales. The President was unable to attend the Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church.

## **5. Cytûn Report - (Report sent out in advance)**

1. Gethin joined the Council at 11.40.

Point 2 - Property Matters. He drew our attention to the date, Thursday 30 June for the EcoChurches meeting online conference. He emphasized that if anyone wanted to join the conference to email him urgently.

2. Cadw and the 3 denominations are now working together on the historic nature of the ancient monuments of Wales led by Susan Fielding. There is a concern that church history is getting lost. Before churches are demolished or changed in appearance it would be good to have photographic images.

3. Page 3. Point 6. Constitutional Future Wales - Arrangements are under way between the Secretaries of the denominations to meet with Bishop Rowan Williams and Laura McAllister for the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales. This is organized by Reverend Aled Edwards, Chief Executive of Cytûn. The Most Reverend Archbishop of Wales Andy John has also said that he wants to meet with the Secretaries of the denominations.

4. Point 7 Education and Youth Work. Responses must be received by the end of the day - 24 May to register.

Gethin was thanked for joining the meeting during his meeting break.

## **6. Training**

Concern was expressed that Bryn Williams had not sent a Report to the last two meetings.

Sympathy was expressed to him in his recent bereavement. A group chaired by Professor Eryl Wynn Davies meets regularly. There is concern about the accreditation of Welsh theological training. It was noted that discussions were ongoing with South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff. It was emphasized that a written report was needed on the meetings and discussions going on and for either Bryn Williams or Dr Eryl Wynn Davies to communicate with the committee in the future. Meirion was thanked for his Report.

**Action point: Report of discussions required by November meeting.**

## **7. Reports**

### **i. Education - Vaughan Salisbury (Report sent out in advance)**

Vaughan mentioned that important developments are in the pipeline. Laws will be in place and the new Curriculum will be implemented in Primary Schools from this September. Many County Councils have accepted Religion, Values and Ethics as the subject name of Religious Education. The Secondary School Curriculum will not start until September 2023.

2. Point 1c. It was mentioned that an Erasmus replacement program "Journey" is in operation again for students to have the opportunity to broaden horizons and travel abroad as part of their academic course. This is in addition to the English scheme.

3. Rheinallt and Vaughan contacted RE Today's Zoe Keens. A draft of Key Stage 2 resources relating to the translation of Religious Education's anti-racist resources has been adapted for the Curriculum for Wales. Vaughan will be meeting Zoe over Zoom on June 15. Angela and Rheinallt will be joining in the meeting.

4. There have been thorough discussions on obvious concerns that there are not enough Welsh language resources to support teachers with the new syllabus. The missionary element of some viewpoints to teach in schools was questioned as the subject is supposed to be impartial. The main religion is Christianity but also teaching about other religions as echoed by Kirsty Williams when she was Education Minister.

5. Heritage is an opportunity for local churches to be part of the Education Curriculum. The Bible Society Education Officer in Swindon is coordinating a project of resources explaining the place of the Bible in the history of our country. The resource pack will be bilingual in due course. It was stated that it was important for Nonconformity and the local denominations to have a voice and a link with schools in Wales as well as the Church in Wales.

6. It was suggested to look at the Council's book of publications in 2002 showing the connection of churches with schools. It was agreed and seen that there was an opportunity for churches to take advantage of opening their doors to explain the differences between denominations. It was suggested that a digital resource be created from the paper. This would be useful as a resource for teachers in Welsh. It is copyrighted by FCCW and FCG. It was seen that it would need to be revised to respond to the situation regarding the Curriculum. Rheinallt, Vaughan and Aled D. agreed to look at the booklet and add if necessary.

**Action point: It was decided to look at the Council's publications brochure in 2002 "Connecting Churches and Schools". Collaboration with the Sunday School Council.**

## **ii. Sunday School Council Report - Aled Davies (Report sent out in advance)**

Aled reported that there are now 5 websites under the umbrella of the Sunday School Council. Many devotional colour books for children are published annually. This year is seen as an opportunity to reconnect with the public by being able to attend the Urdd Eisteddfod, the National Eisteddfod and the Royal Welsh Show. A Sunday School Council will be organizing a tour of Wales from mid-July to September to meet church leaders.

He expressed the need for groups of local churches / chapels to promote the work of the Gospel as there is no longer any evidence to hold Sunday Schools due to the weakness of churches. It would be good if a branch of the Free Church / Cytûn Council reached children / young people and young families after the pandemic. The pattern of Sunday has changed and consideration must be given to how the news of Jesus Christ can be shared into a town or village. Everyone should have a vision as to their church's priority in the future and a missionary campaign will be required over the next two years. It was suggested that if there was a problem for a Sunday School to convene regularly it might be beneficial to consider a workshop on a working night instead.

## **iii. Treasurer - Martin Spain (Finance Report sent out in advance)**

The Balance Sheet and Report were accepted. Rheinallt Thomas proposed to accept them, Meirion Morris seconded and all present unanimously showed their approval.

A question was asked about the number of local branches of Free Churches in existence. In reply it was stated that there was no longer a single contribution from local Free Church Groups and all were now under the auspices of Cytûn.

## **iv. Denominations**

### **i. Baptist Union of Wales - Judith Morris**

The Annual Conference will be on 24/25 June in Carmarthen. It will be a joint Union conference – (English and Welsh) - with one President, the Reverend Dr Densil Morgan.

The churches are still feeling the impact of Covid - some churches have not reopened and others have decided to close. Glyn Nest Home is still feeling Covid's impact on the occupants and staff there.

## **ii. Synod Cymru Methodist Assembly - Ian Morris**

The denomination looks forward to establishing a bilingual Methodist Synod in September 2022. The Chair for one year will be Stephen Wigley for the English section and Jenny Hurd continuing with the Welsh section. In 2023 Andrew Charlworth will be Chairman. Ian Morris will be the leader of the Welsh Circuit and looks forward to extending the work in the Welsh language.

## **iii. The Presbyterian Church of Wales - Meirion Morris.**

The Assembly will resume its meeting in Cardiff in September. The PCW has appointed Reverend Nan Powell-Davies as its secretary general from 1 July.

The worry and implications of property rents are shared – a new law comes into effect in July. There are questions arising from the retention of unnecessary buildings. Co-denominational work on training and the weekly “Cennad” paper continues. A review was undertaken of Coleg Bala and Trefecca. The staffing level in the Cardiff office continues but the building is now shared with the Christian Aid office.

## **iv. Union of Welsh Independents - Dyfrig Rees.**

Normal worship activities have resumed if arrangements are in place and people have returned to their churches/ chapels. Some are still using Zoom services and this is much appreciated.

The Union will meet in Carmarthen the second week of July.

Office staff are partly home-based and review and revise as required.

The “Tyst” is pleased to buy 3 pages from the other interdenominational paper and Reverend Alun Tudur appreciates this co-denominational co-operation.

There are new projects being introduced by the denomination this July with an emphasis on climate change, the economy and Dementia.

## **v. Congregational Federation - Chris Gillham**

The denomination will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its incorporation. There will be a celebration on 8 th October at their Conference

## **vi. United Reformed Church - Simon Walkling**

It will also be the 50th anniversary of the incorporation of URC. There are new Office staff. There are new ministers and lay ministers being ordained.

## **8. Free Churches Group - Paul Rochester - No report**

It was expressed that the new President of Rev. Helen Cameron is keen to come to Wales and to the next meeting. She would be accompanied by Paul Rochester.

## **9. AOB**

The President thanked Meirion Morris for his contribution to the Committee over the years. He wished him a happy, healthy retirement. We were asked to pray for Nan Powell Davies as she takes over as General Secretary of PCW.

Helen was thanked for recording and Steffan for translating effectively.

## **10. The Blessing**

The meeting concluded at 12.30 with a prayer and grace shared by the President.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 22 November 2022 – Tŷ John Penri, Swansea and Zoom**