**Free Church Council of Wales**

Minutes of Zoom meeting held on 23 May 2023

**Present:** Parch. Simon Walkling (President); Judith Morris; Dyfrig Rees; Ian Morris; Siôn Brynach; Aled Davies; Dawn Mason; Anna Jane Evans; Peter Dewi Richards; Vaughan Salisbury; Paul Rochester; Aled Jones; Gethin Rhys; Martin Spain; Helen Jones (Secretary) Catrin Parri (translator);

**Apologies**: Rheinallt Thomas; Nan Powell-Davies

**1. Welcome and Apologies**: There was a word of welcome from the President. Everyone present introduced themselves at the start of the meeting. Reverend Siôn Brynach, Chief Executive of Cytûn who had joined us for his first meeting, was especially welcome. He was wished well in his new post. Unfortunately, there were problems with the translation link and most of the meeting had to be in English.

**2. Devotion**: We were led by Martin Spain. He read part of Galatians 6: verses 7 – 10. He said that there are lessons for us as a Council of Free Churches to encourage each other and not to get tired of doing good even though there are challenging situations around us. He prayed that the meeting would show guidance and that God will be faithful and perfect our weakness.

**3. Minutes of 22 November 2022 and Matters arising**:

i. **Minutes**: The Minutes were received. It was expressed that some confusion had arisen between Welsh and English versions in point 4 Education. Vaughan and Helen would discuss. The correct version will be on the FCCW site on the Cytûn website.

ii**. Area Ministry Document**: Plans are moving forward. Cytûn will have a meeting to discuss in October. Local arrangements exist in Pembrokeshire.

**4. President's report (circulated in advance)**

Point 5 was noted - Joint Greetings with leaders of Christian churches (The Church in Wales, Roman Catholic and Nonconformist). After recent national events, there was an opportunity for the leaders to get to know each other better, discuss issues and ensure collaboration in the future. Following this, Simon will prepare a Christmas message on behalf of all the Churches this year. There was approval of the decision. It was expressed that Nonconformist churches were more numerous than the other traditions in Wales. In special services over the year, there was collaboration because the Senedd counted FCCW as part of Eglwys Ynghyd (Churches Together) on their Protocol list.

**5. Cytûn Report (circulated in advance)
The Policy Bulletin** would be sent out during the week.

Attention was drawn to:

a) **UK Covid Inquiry.** A strong voice was required from the churches. The date for receiving feedback is 15 September. The investigation will begin in February 2024.

b) **Peace Appeal 1925**. The reaction is positive. Our attention was drawn to the last paragraph - the churches should celebrate together not individually.

c) **Spiritual care.** We were reminded that it is the health system in Wales that appoints Chaplains. (In England FCG does it.) A budget to fund this in the future will come from the Health Authorities because the importance of spiritual care is valued. Spiritual care guidelines will be revised and the hope would be to integrate them with the Scottish and English systems.

d) **Standing Advisory Councils (formerly SACRE’S**)

i. It was noted that Monmouthshire was looking at the process and wanted to ensure that the cross section of representatives of faith groups in the area was balanced.

ii. Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire. With the Reverend Aled Jones moving to England and having resigned as a representative in both counties, the Councils have asked for a representative from the Union of Welsh Independents to fill the position. UWI will have to make their representative's name known through Cytûn. There are 22 authorities in Wales following the guidelines.

Vaughan expressed the need for a representative in Wrexham from the Independents as well.

iii. Paul Rochester said that the Elim denomination has been a member of the FCG group since September 2022. (They are not part of Cytûn in Wales.) Helen Cameron is keen to expand FCG's membership in England.

Questions were asked:

Regarding the Covid investigation: Had churches sent much feedback?

It was emphasized that feedback from churches was essential and Cytûn would collect the evidence and place it before the Senedd. Gathering the evidence among local churches is important to show the cooperation that took place during the period.

It would be necessary to mention problems that arose such as omitting immersion baptism and the laying on of hands in an ordination service.

It was said that PCW would support sending evidence like the other denominations.

**Director’s Report – Siôn Brynach**

1. He thanked the Council for the welcome and also the work of Gethin Rhys.

2. Church leaders and Cytûn will meet in Shrewsbury on 19 October. The guest speaker will be Reverend Dr. Susan Durber, British President of the World Council of Churches.

3. The trustees have requested the updating of the Cytûn Website. This is in progress. There will be space for FCCW.

**6. Training** – There was no report.

**7. Reports**

**a. Education (circulated in advance) Vaughan Salisbury**

1. He noted that there a need for examples of collaboration between schools and local churches by the end of September. Some examples have been sent. See the revised booklet sent during October 2022 "Connecting churches and schools". He indicated that churches would only need to send more than 10 lines in their report. Vaughan would like to collate the information over the Autumn and have a result by Christmas.

**2. Anti-Racism Paper** - "RE Today" is still revising the paper. Only a bilingual version will be accepted in Wales. Vaughan said that the intention was to ask for money from FCCW at the November meeting to contribute to the costs of the translation. He explained that PCW were willing to contribute to the cost of translation and suggested that other denominations within the Council's membership could offer something similar. The Treasurer said he was pleased with the explanation. He was concerned that FCCW would use all their money to finance this project. We were reminded that typesetting and design needed to be considered and this would add to the cost of the document. The cost is estimated to be around £8,000. It was decided that the Council would suggest a contribution after the costs became clearer.

Gethin Rhys expressed his concern that humanists have given their opinion on HWB and that Christian resources need to be placed on it urgently. It is important that the resources are of good quality. Aled Davies expressed that the Bible Society is working on putting resources on the HWB link but that there is a difficulty with the operational teams in terms of staff. The current operator has started the work of preparing resources.

**3. Shortage of teachers** - Problems continue in Wales to secure teachers of Religion, Values ​​and Ethics (numbers have been static for several years, around 30), Welsh and STEM subjects.

**4. Estyn** - The Estyn Inspectors have been focusing on the impact of the Pandemic on pupils' well-being. They are now moving on to teaching assessment.

**5. Urdd Peace Message 2023** - presented an anti-racist message

**6. Education Officer** - Vaughan expressed his desire to finish as Education officer two years ago but he waited to see the start of the new Curriculum in the Primary and Secondary schools in Wales. By September, a new Curriculum will have started in the Secondary schools. He will finish his role as PCW Education representative next Easter after 10 years. He expressed his willingness to continue as FCCW Education Officer until then. The President said that would be very valuable and asked members to nominate people who could fill the gap.

**b. Treasurer**

The Treasurer reminded that the FCCW financial year runs from January to December. The May meeting asks the Council to formally accept the Balance Sheet. It is a pity that some denominations do not contribute at all.

It was asked whether the denominations' contribution should rise. In 2019 the last contribution was raised after being static for 10 years. Martin said there was no need to raise the amount at this time. A suggestion was made that looking at the budget every 3 years would be a practical idea. Adding new members would contribute to the budget and enable funding of new projects.

The Council formally accepted the Accounts.

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| **Action Point:** Review the denominations' contributions at the November meeting. |

**c. Denominations**

No reports were received but it was suggested that written reports be sent to the Secretary and she will add them as an Appendix to the Minutes. **None have been received**.

**8. Church Council Group Report – Paul Rochester**

1. Paul said that the Ministry of Defence registers Nonconformist Denominations that are interested in the Armed Forces to extend their Chaplaincies. The Ministry has approved a place on the Board for a Church Council Group. This means that new chaplaincies will need to be filled with the Armed Forces.

2. Strategy – The Church Council Group is ready to collaborate with FCCW. A meeting with the President will be arranged in order to engage with the work in Wales.

Paul was thanked for his report.

**9. AOB**

1. The President thanked Reverend Aled Jones for his service on the Council. He wished him every blessing on his move to London. He assured him that he would be in our prayers when he begins his new ministry. Aled thanked the President for his kind words and was grateful for them.

2. The Secretary will coordinate the date and location of the next meeting.

**10. The blessing** - The Grace was recited to close the meeting.

**Next Meeting Date - 14 November 2023**

**Venue – South Wales Baptist College, Richmond Road, Cardiff**