

**Church Support Committee Minutes****Time:** 10.30am – 2.30pm**Date:** Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023**Location:** Nottingham Office**Attendees:**

Barbara Bridges  
Colin Brown  
Steve Richards (Zoom)  
Margaret McGuinness  
Eric Fenwick  
Anna Lachowski

**Representing:**

Chair APCC Group  
CF in Wales  
CF in Wales  
CF in Scotland (rotational)  
Chair of Communication Group  
East Midlands Area

**Staff:**

Yvonne Campbell    General Secretary  
Maddy Varley        L & D Administrator / Minutes (Zoom)  
Luzia Watt            Church Support Worker  
Neil Chappell         Website and Social Media Officer  
Catherine Booton    L & D Manager (Zoom)  
Lisa Vickers            Safeguarding Officer (Zoom)

Keith Bradley  
Alan Kennedy  
Peter Young (Zoom)  
Joy Howell  
Ruth Green  
Jan Hocking  
Ian Jones (Zoom)  
Kevin Dudman  
Ivy Barclay (Zoom)

North East Area  
North West Area/ICB Chair  
South East Area  
South West Midlands Area  
Chair  
North West Midlands Area  
Eastern Area  
South West Area  
CF in Scotland (representative)

**Participant Observer:**

Elisabeth Sweeney Smith    President Elect (Zoom)

**Apologies**

Nick Gleich                    Chair of CIPT Management Board  
Mark Taylor                  President

**Abbreviations:**

APCCG	Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordinator Group
CC	Congregational Church
CF	Congregational Federation
CIPT MB	Congregational Institute of Practical Theology Management Board
CSC	Church Support Committee
CSW	Church Support Worker
FX	Fresh Expressions

**1. Opening devotions**

The Chair welcomed committee members to the meeting, with a special welcome to Kevin Dudman as the new rep for the South West area.

The Chair opened the meeting with a reading and prayer.

**2. Apologies**

As noted above.

**3. Minutes of Last Meeting (25<sup>th</sup> March 2023) (Paper B)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting; however clarification was made to the South East area report (page 8) confirming that it is the building at Highbury Quadrant that has been temporarily closed rather than the church itself, which is still active.

**4. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda (Paper C)**

- It was confirmed that the Robinsons Trust and Christian Aid are both still seeking representatives from the CF. The GS and CSW will attend the Christian Aid conference so the CF will be represented.

**Action:** Share opportunity sheet with Area as appropriate.

**By who:** Area representatives

**By when:** next assembly meeting or communication

- Work on the anti-bullying leaflet is on hold as the writer is unwell. However, we now have a designated contact at 31:8 who is supporting our work and recommended their 'conversation cubes' as a resource for anti-bullying.

## 5. Notice of Any Other Business

There were no notices of AOB.

## 6. Area Representative Summary Reports - A joy and challenges from the Areas (Paper D)

The GS thanked the Area reps for their reports. Highlights from the reports will feed into the action plan for the Church Support Team over coming months.

Positives from the reports included growth and new memberships. Ideas are needed to continue growth and worship.

The challenges outlined included:

- difficulties in finding preachers – a list of those available for preaching is a possible idea, and more submissions to the Sermon Vault are requested.
- Prayer and prayer ideas
- A booklet on the role of Deacons has been requested, and volunteers are sought to assist with this.
- There have been a number of incidents involving fire. Fire safety will be added to safeguarding checklists in response to this.

Joys and challenges were given by each Area rep:

- **Eastern Area** – There were many positives for the area including a building reopening following roof repairs, growth in numbers, good community work and new initiatives. A particular challenge has been for one church, who are needing funds for a new boiler. Some funding has been provided by the Area, but not enough to cover the full cost. There is no Area Treasurer and therefore Area grants are now being managed by the CF Financial Controller through ITTB.
- **South East Area** – There have been building redevelopments at both Highbury Quadrant and Isle of Wight. Two churches are celebrating 145 and 150 years of service this year! There is much to be thankful for and new people are attending in some churches. There has been sadness due to the deaths and illnesses of some longstanding members, and this also highlights the issues of aging congregations.
- **CF in Wales** – The feeling throughout the Area was mainly positive. A very successful one-day conference was held in July. This was held in a new venue which was well received. The speaker was Rev Dr Aled Edwards, Chairman of the Brecon Beacons Park Authority, who spoke on his personal health and faith journey. Smaller churches are doing well, for example Upper Killay hosted a Bible school activity week for children in different age groups, which was very successful. Haverfordwest have a new minister starting tomorrow (Anthony Batterton). There is a Minister in the Area who is unwell. He and his family are in need of support. The church is continuing, but prayers are needed.

- **CF in Scotland** – IB thanked MM for her report.  
Summary of the report presented. Pleased IB volunteered to be a Church Support Committee representative. November Church Support Group meeting will be a crucial review of CFS. To date 2023 seen: Closure of Cathcart; Ardrossan leaving CFS remain with CF; Larkhall leaving CF remaining with CFS; Reawick in process of closing building; Ageing congregations; Vacant churches; Few nominations to office bearers positions. Plus - Weekly online service from Tom Bonner; Minister at Kirkcaldy attending Assembly and last Church Support Group taking part in discussions; Churches appreciating national visits. Lucia Watt, Church Support Worker, with enthusiasm for job and sharing resources and grants. Providing ideas and support; Guest speaker at our Annual Conference Nigel Lindsay and General Secretary Yvonne and President Elect Elisabeth also attending; We will have return of the Friday evening social; Some response from churches to the CF Creative monthly prayer; Lots of things happening in churches some in the report, e.g. Parkhead 150 Anniversary. New office bearer updates - Chairperson Rev Roo MacRae and Pastoral and Ministries Convenor Rev Gerry Simonis also our Treasurer.
- **North West Area** – The main challenges have been with small congregations, and there are some churches that have problems with buildings. With the deadline for completion of safeguarding certificates approaching, there are some churches who need support and encouragement to begin the process.  
There are many joys within the Area, with stories of growth and a focus on children, young people and creative thinking. Rob Cross is being ordained in October at Brierly Green.
- **North East Area** – There is still no Area Chair, so there has been a lack of drive and organization within the Area, however the Exec are active and have been making decisions.  
The summer gathering in Scarborough was very successful and it is hoped that a similar event will be held in York next year.  
One minister has stepped back due to poor health and a new minister has been appointed.
- **East Midlands Area** – After a year of vacancy, there is now an Area Secretary in place, however the post of Treasurer is now vacant. Small churches have been very active and innovative, which is to be celebrated. Unfortunately, around 50% of churches do not engage with the Area and have not sent a report. It was suggested that the CF run a national campaign to raise awareness of Congregationalism as a whole.
- **South West Midlands** – There are lots of churches trying new ideas, which is positive, however they do not always let the Area know what they are doing! Some older members are finding it difficult to sustain the responsibilities they hold, but unfortunately younger members are too busy with work, family, and other commitments to take on these roles. It is the same issue with Area roles and currently only the Area Chair post is filled.

Some suggestions to help with these issues included supplying job descriptions for the various roles (however it was also thought that this might put some people off), considering job-share for some roles and buying in support for bookkeeping etc. This solution would depend on the funding available within the Area but is being considered by the East Midlands Area.

- **South West Area** – The Area Rep only took on the role this week. A joy has been how hard the Area has been working and has held a successful Area Assembly. Adding a Zoom option to Area meetings has increased participation. The Area is still struggling to find an Area Treasurer. There are still some churches that do not engage, but the Area would like them to be more involved and is encouraging this.
- **North West Midlands Area** – There are many positives within the area, particularly with growth and expansion of congregations. One church has many new attendees from overseas including Hong Kong and Iran, which is a blessing, but has created challenges with language and outreach work etc. Prayer support is requested. Three churches are working closely together and are in excellent spirits; supporting and sharing with each other is working well. One church has a member with a terminal illness and they are looking at different options for moving the church forward. Again, prayers are requested. While many of the churches in the area are seeing new growth and families, some are considering ways to attract those who only attend events to come to services too.

## 7. Budget Papers – (Paper E)

Thanks were given to Gary Baker and the finance team for preparing the budget papers. The GS highlighted areas of the paper that showed exceptional increases in expenditure or income and the reasons for that. For example, CIPT shows increased income due to an increase in the number of students, but this also means that expenditure will increase. There are new budget lines for the new travel grants for ministers and students. These are now being awarded, so there will be new expenditure in these lines. There are other increases in expenditure for meetings as more of these return to face to face meetings, so incurring travel and hospitality costs. There have been significant investments in safeguarding training, publishing, and children's work.

The GS reminded the committee that Ministry and Mission fund donations are no longer split 60%/40% with CWM. 100% of donations are now home donations. This has meant that CF donations to CWM have fallen considerably (although we do support them in other ways) and if churches wish to make a donation to CWM, they should do this separately from their Ministry and Mission donations.

There were queries regarding the line for Ministers Pensions which appeared to show a discrepancy, and the income line for CIPT graduation, which showed an income of £3500 in 2022 despite there not being a graduation ceremony. Both queries will be referred to the Financial Controller for comment.

**Post Meeting Note:** The £3500 income for CIPT has been confirmed as a coding error. IT should have been coded as a specific grant (used to support students and their studies). This has been recoded to the rolling balance for specific grants by the finance team.

## 8. Impact Grants – (Paper F)

Paper F1 was available to committee members prior to the meeting and provides a breakdown of the grant fund expenditure.

There is currently approximately £146,000 available for grants. The committee was reminded that this fund is made up from 10% of the income generated from closed churches. There were two applications for grants since the last meeting.

### **Impact Grant application #1**

Crediton CC has applied for a grant of £18,000 towards the cost of fully upgrading their audiovisual equipment, including new wiring etc. This upgrade has been endorsed by the Area. Although the quote for the work totals around £40,000 the church is contributing half of the cost and are in the process of applying for other grants too. As the cost is a one-off upfront cost, the application request is for the amount paid in full rather than split over three years.

**Proposal:** To agree an Impact Grant of £18,000 (paid in one year) to Crediton CC towards the cost of fully replacing and upgrading their audiovisual equipment.

**Agreed:** Unanimous

### **Impact Grant Application #2**

Hay Mills CC have applied for a grant of £18,000 over three years to support the appointment of a Community Pastor for 9 hours per week. The church has on average around 30 attendees on a Sunday and 130 people joining online each week. They are already involved with many community groups and hope to expand their work in the community. Despite its growth, the church is struggling financially and most of their income comes from various grants.

The application meets all of the grant criteria.

There was some discussion as to whether approval of the grant should include a requirement for the Community Pastor to undertake the Foundation Degree. It was suggested that completing the Newbigin Pioneering course may be more appropriate in this case, and the Foundation Degree may follow later, if they are working towards accreditation.

**Proposed:** To agree an impact grant of £18,000 over three years for the appointment of a Community Pastor

**Agreed:** Unanimous

At the previous meeting it had been agreed to ringfence £18,000 to support churches with the increase in recommended minister's stipend. Applications to this fund have now closed, but there was one final application that arrived just before the deadline, and approval of this grant would take the spend to £20,000. Approval was sought by the GS to approve this grant for one church.

**Agreed:** Unanimous

It has always been the case that church cannot apply for an impact grant more than once in any five-year period. It will now also be clarified on the application form that a church cannot apply to finance a project that has already received a grant, even after the five year period has passed.

### **Church Support Team Reports (Papers G1-G4)**

#### **Church Support Worker (G1)**

The CSW reported how well the children and youth assembly had been received and thanked JH for her input and support.

A summary of the impact grant reports from churches had been included with her report.

The planned weekend away with children unfortunately had a poor response from churches mainly due to travel to the venue and churches preferring to host their own events.

It is being considered whether to host more regional events, but this would require considerable organization, which is wasted if there is not much interest.

The CSW is working on preparing the children's assembly for May, working with the Eastern Area to ensure another successful event.

### **Website and social media (Paper G2)**

The Website and Social Media Officer report had been circulated in advance of the committee. There were no questions relating to this report.

### **Safeguarding (Paper G3)**

The Safeguarding Officer has made some adjustments to the GDPR and Safeguarding policies, which will be communicated with churches in due course. This includes information about the use of fire grab-bags containing useful equipment such as building plans, phone numbers and hi-vis vests, to assist the fire services in the event of an emergency.

There has been a good increase in the number of churches applying for their safeguarding certificates, and there are approximately 30 that remain outstanding.

It was confirmed that churches that are currently meeting outside of their usual church building will still need to have a policy in place and then a Checker will visit once the building has reopened.

More Safeguarding Checkers are needed, and anyone interested in this role should contact the Safeguarding Officer for more information.

Any church that has not got, or is not working towards gaining a safeguarding certificate, will not be invited to reaffiliate to the CF for 2024. The Safeguarding Officer, General Secretary and Safeguarding Checkers are all available to help and support where there are difficulties or barriers. The CF do not want to lose churches and will offer as much support with safeguarding as needed. For any church that is not able to reaffiliate it was confirmed that CF Ltd will remain as trustees of the buildings.

The committee were reminded that the need for safeguarding policy is a governmental requirement and is designed to protect both the church and the CF - we are affected by any negative news about any denomination in the media and need to ensure that we have robust policies in place.

The three 31:8 safeguarding training sessions that CF have hosted have proved very successful, with places filled up, although there are still some spaces available for the Spiritual Abuse training.

LV has trialed training on safer recruitment and found it very useful. This is something that may be rolled out more widely in the future.

### **Learning and Development (Paper G4)**

CB was formally welcomed to the committee and congratulated on her post as Learning and Development Manager.

Her report had been circulated prior to the meeting and there were no questions about this.

She confirmed that CIPT had 12 new students starting the full Foundation Degree this year and several who had already expressed an interest for 2024.

### **Correspondence from Shillington (Paper H)**

Correspondence had been received from Shillington Congregational Church relating to the difficulty in finding preachers, CB is going to preach there in the new year, and one current student already supports them.

The L&D Manager confirmed that while CIPT cannot 'send' students to preach at churches who are struggling to find preachers, they can be encouraged to do so. The course helps to encourage and equip students to be confident in leading worship. The opportunity to do this at churches other than their own will help them gain skills and confidence. They can choose to preach at other nearby CF churches, even crossing Area boundaries, as well as within other denominations. The Sermon Vault is also available for churches to find pre-recorded sermons, and students are also encouraged to contribute to this.

The Chair of CSC has responded to this correspondence and the GS will follow up on it.

#### **Action:**

- Encourage more students to preach at CF churches other than their own and contribute to the Sermon Vault.
- Follow up on communication with Shillington CC.

**By whom:** L&D Manager and General Secretary

**By when:** ASAP

### **Pioneering Working Group**

At the previous CSC meeting the Pioneer Working Group were tasked with redefining the role of a pioneer minister. Their chosen definition is: *"Someone called by the Holy Spirit to help birth a new form of Church in a non-traditional context and who is actively engaged in the work."*

There was some discussion as some committee members did not like the use of the word 'birth', and also around the differences between church planting and pioneering.

**Proposal:** To accept the new definition of pioneering ministry.

**Agreed:** 8

**Against:** 2

**Abstentions:** 1

The proposed definition will now be taken to Council for agreement.

Some discussion followed on how to encourage more pioneering settings within the CF. Council will be asked to make more finances available for pioneering opportunities. For various reasons there are no CF members involved in the Newbigin Hub this year.

### **CWM**

#### **Report from Nigel Lindsay**

NL had sent his report in advance of the meeting. He is due to be visiting the UK very soon. His time at home does include some rest, but also lots of planned visits to share details of his work.

Four CF members will be travelling to Grenada next year to visit with NL and to assist with some the projects there.

#### **MSP4**

in 2019 we were given funding for a mission project, but lockdown began shortly afterwards so there was no opportunity to implement the plans.

Clemmy Gilmore will now be taking this project forward. The discipleship project is in three main parts – Discipleship, Active Listening and Doing.

The Legacy of Slavery project has now been broadened from just focusing on the transatlantic slave trade to also include the good work of the missionaries, education, training and modern-day slavery. It has been renamed the Onesimus project. The GS will be working on how we respond to this in 2024 and anyone wanting to be part of this should get in touch.

The GS will be attending the CWM General Secretaries conference in Singapore in October. Four representatives have been identified to attend the CWM Assembly in 2024.

#### **Mission 2024**

CF have always partnered with Christian Aid and were looking at the possibility of partnering with another global charity for 2024, however it has become apparent that we are committed to supporting the work of Christian Aid. Christian Aid have a focus on giving, acting, and praying which give more opportunities for us to be involved. It may be that churches would want to be more focused on acting and praying rather than fund raising. This could be in the form of demonstrating, writing letters to MP's or holding a special monthly prayer for example. More awareness could be raised using social media.

There are two mission projects that we could support for 12 or 18 months (or longer). These projects are separate to the fundraising that takes place throughout Christian Aid week.

Area Reps were asked to take details back to the churches for feedback and a decision will be made at the next CSC meeting.

**Action:** Area reps to take details of projects and opportunity for acting and praying instead of, or alongside fundraising back to churches.

**When:** ASAP

#### **9. CIPT Management Board (Paper I)**

The Chair of the CIPT Management Board was not present at the meeting but had submitted his report in advance of the committee.

His report asked the committee to consider two proposals that had been approved at the CIPT Management Board.

**Proposal 1:** To raise tutor marking fees to at least the national minimum wage hourly rate. This would be applied per assignment marked rather than as an hourly wage. This would be reduced to 50% per assignment for second marking and the marking of formative assignments.

**Agreed:** Unanimous

**Proposal 2:** For this rate to be reviewed annually in line with the minister's stipend and staff wage rises, and to be adjusted according to the same percentage increase.

**Agreed:** Unanimous



The L&D Manager led a discussion about the CIPT budget, which shows that expenditure has decreased dramatically since 2019. This was due to lockdowns where teaching and meetings were delivered online. Now teaching and meetings have resumed in person, expenditure will rise significantly compared to recent years. CB sought agreement that CIPT budgets for 2024 should be set using 2019 figures rather than the more recent reduced figures.

**Agreed:** Unanimous

#### **10. Interchurch Board (Paper J)**

A thorough report was submitted to the committee. The Board met in May prior to the assembly. The terms of reference need to be reviewed by the Chair.

High lights from the report included:

Free Churches Group leaflets were distributed on how churches can support students and their families when they are going to university for the first times, and also on how churches can make new students welcome in their congregations.

The recent International Congregational conference was held in Fiji, which Janet Wootton attended. The next meeting is in 2025 and will be held in Greece making it much more accessible and a great opportunity for those who wish to attend.

There have been no further updates on the trip to America after the 2020 conference had to be cancelled.

#### **11. Accreditation and Pastoral Care Group (Papers K & K1)**

Discussions have been held with the General Secretary and L&D Manager regarding a review of the accreditation process.

Only half of Areas currently have a Pastoral Care Coordinator. PCC's attend the accreditation interviews and ideally should be from the applicant's Area. Area reps were asked to encourage people to volunteer as PCC's. Anyone interested should contact the Safeguarding Officer. It is best if there is a team working together, but a coordinator is required to ensure the team works well.

Accreditation interviews take place on 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Some training for PCC's is always delivered during the interview days, and this time it will be focused on Congregational history and principles.

Only five people attended the visit to the National Memorial Arboretum. It is always a good opportunity for people to gather together and pray for the churches who have lost members during the year. It was suggested that this event could be attached to the CSC meeting, which may encourage more people to attend.

BB was asked to review the book 'Pastoral Care in Practice' for the next Refresh. More copies can be ordered if required.

**Action:** Amend APCCG previous minutes to include Joy Howell, who was present but not listed as an attendee.

**By Whom:** Barbara Bridges

**By When:** ASAP

**12.AOB**

None

**Dates of next meetings**

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2025