Free Church Council of Wales

Minutes of the meeting held on 24th May 2018 at the South Wales Baptist College, 58 Richmond Road, Cardiff CF24 3UR from 10.30am to 3pm.

Present

Rheinallt Thomas (President), Peter D Richards, Judith Morris, Ian Morris, Paul Rochester, Gethin Rhys, Ifan Roberts, Irfon Roberts, Eirian Wyn, Vaughan Salisbury, Debbie Hodge, Steffan Wiliam (Translator), Helen Jones (Secretary)

Apologies

Martin Spain (Treasurer) Aled Edwards, Chris Gillham, Aled Jones, Gareth Morgan Jones, Hugh Osgood, Marcus Robinson, Meirion Morris, Sally Thomas.

1. Welcome

The President welcomed everyone, especially Peter Kennedy from the Education Dept.of the Welsh Assembly. He was also pleased to see the former President Rev. Peter Dewi Richards present. Rheinallt was concerned about the number of apologies as there was a conflict of meetings with the Covenanting Churches. He hoped that meeting organisers in the future would check their diaries so that the dates would not clash. The date of the FCCW are arranged through Sasha Perriam from Cytun's office at least 12 months in advance. The dates for the 2019 FCCW were given as 23 May and 14 November at the end of the meeting. The members were reminded that GDPR forms were to be signed by the end of the meeting to continue receiving communications.

2. Opening prayers were led by Rheinallt Thomas

3. Minutes 14 November 2017. These were accepted as a true reflection of the November meeting. Vaughan Salisbury proposed and Rev. Ian Morris seconded.

4. Matters arising: **(a) Gee Medals**. A service will be held on Saturday, 29 September 2018 to present the North Wales recipients. The medals thereafter will be presented in North and South Wales with Aberystwyth being the demarcation line between North and South following a recent meeting held with Isolene Greenhalgh presiding. The medal nominations in the future will be in the hands of the Sunday School Council with Rev. Aled Davies coordinating. Money from the local branches of the FCCW will be transferred and held by the main FCCW Treasurer – Rev. Martin Spain and not the Sunday School Council.

(b) Constitution - The simple changes were accepted – 1. The FCCW now has a Secretary. 2. There were changes to the North and South Wales structure. In the future 2 member nominations would be accepted as representatives to the FCCW from both North and South Wales to meetings. Reverends Irfon Roberts and Eirian Wyn represent South Wales and Mrs Nerys Siddall is one of the representatives from North Wales.

5. Religious Education/ Humanities Curriculum

Peter Kennedy was welcomed and introduced to the meeting. He is an officer with Manon Jones – Religious education specialist in the Welsh Government Education department. Peter began by stating that Professor Donaldson's report needed updating. It was mentioned that the purpose of the new curriculum was to teach life skills. The Welsh Assembly Government has been in consultation WASACRE and last November they presented a paper which has been considered as a major step forward. The Welsh Assembly Government will not be insisting that Local Education Authorities follow a particular syllabus/scheme of work.

Peter Kennedy presented a DRAFT document on the Humanities – Areas of Learning. This document is available in both Welsh and English by emailing Helen Jones (rhys.helen.jones@btinternet.com)

<u>Humanities AoLE proposals</u>

<u>Statement detailing how the AoLE supports the 4 purposes</u>

Humanities is the study of the human experience in the past and present. It includes historical, geographical, religious, political, economic and societal factors and concepts.

Through exploring ‘what matters’ about the humanities, learners will study the past and present, imagine possible futures and learn about people, place, time and beliefs in order to become ambitious, capable learners. They will build, communicate and apply effectively a solid base of knowledge and understanding of historical, geographical, political, economic, religious and societal concepts.

Learners will develop a range of skills and dispositions to become enterprising, creative contributors and responsible citizens, improving the lives of people in their local community, Wales and the wider world. They will contribute positively to these and engage critically with local, national and global issues.

Through understanding and respecting different beliefs and understanding how to exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities, learners will become ethical, informed citizens. They will consider, explore and make informed choices about sustainability and the impact of their actions. They will learn about rights, values, ethics, beliefs and philosophy.

By developing their personal stances on matters of faith, spirituality, sustainability and social inclusion, they will become healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society. Exploring their environment will help them to develop their well-being and their sense of place.

Humanities AoLE draft progression steps

1. Our natural world is diverse and dynamic, influenced by physical processes and human actions.

Studying the humanities helps learners to identify, understand and analyse the dynamic nature of Wales and the world. Human responsibility for our natural world, can be influenced by diverse beliefs, practices, ethics and philosophies. Innovation, economic and technological developments have shaped and continue to shape our natural world. It is also important to understand how human actions can be influenced by, and affect, the natural environment. Physical processes have major impacts on places, environments, landscapes and the lives of people. Appreciating these complex patterns and connections between the past, present and future is important for the understanding of the cause and consequences of change.

2. Society has been shaped and influenced by human behaviour and beliefs

In the past, societies have been formed and influenced by individuals, communities, political and economic factors, cultural values and religious beliefs and practices. Societies have experienced continuity and change that affected people's lives, in Wales and the wider world. The causes and consequences of human interactions in the past have shaped the world and how it has developed in different times and places. Exploring past human interactions has intrinsic value.

3. Humanity faces many challenges and opportunities, that require informed and considered responses.

Understanding current local, national and global challenges and opportunities is essential to be an ethical and informed citizen. Learners should develop informed views about political, economic, technological, social, religious, cultural and environmental challenges and opportunities that people in Wales and the wider world face. Learners understand that beliefs, experiences and circumstances can influence the varied responses of themselves and others. By engaging with fundamental and philosophical questions about the challenges and opportunities that face humanity, learners will develop the knowledge and skills to form and justify opinions, and understand values, beliefs and viewpoints.

4. People view the experiences of humanity through a range of lenses.

Humanities provides learners with a variety of lenses through which they develop an understanding of the human experience. These lenses are drawn from a growing understanding of the disciplines that make up the Humanities, and the way in which they interconnect. They give learners an understanding of how others construct narratives to record and represent the human experience and how to understand, interpret, and represent the experience of humanity themselves. Learners appreciate how and why interpretations and representations are constructed in order to critically question and evaluate their validity.

5. The process of enquiry allows people to make sense of and engage with the world.

Studying the humanities develops the skills of disciplinary enquiry. Learners pose questions and develop hypothesis across the humanities. By gathering, evaluating and analysing evidence from a range sources, learners can interpret layers of meaning and connect information to attain relevant knowledge to inform their understanding. Through thinking critically and reflectively about the evidence they've analysed, they learn to make coherent, substantiated judgements and responses. Learners critically evaluate the effectiveness of the enquiry process followed and how well it has helped them to make sense of and engage with the world

6. Citizens should be ethical, informed and engage in life and work

Humanities encourages learners to think critically about ethical, economic, entrepreneurial or social engagement in their communities. Learners will understand their rights and responsibilities as ethical citizens, and the importance of ensuring that they respect the rights of others. Learners understand individuals' legal and moral responsibilities and the consequences of failing to act accordingly. Learners will develop an understanding of identity and self-awareness and are conscious of their own role in society and of the religious, moral and ethical influences on people's lives.

An hour of lively discussion followed and these minutes reflect only a short snapshot of the debate. It was noted that Religious Education would continue to be a statutory subject in schools – along with History, Geography, Economics and Business Studies. The subjects would be studied individually to GCSE. Peter Kennedy was asked if there were any constraints on Religious voluntary schools e.g. Methodist/ Roman Catholic/Anglican Church schools. He responded by saying that they would probably place a greater emphasis on their religious viewpoints but it was stressed that there was a need to teach about the wider relevance of religion to life in the 21st Century especially as we live in a multi faith ethnic society. It is essential to teach pupils to become well informed members of society. Peter Kennedy emphasised that Religious Education had not been side lined or forgotten.

Comments were made that the subject required specialisation and teachers needed support. In some schools Religious Education is taught by non-specialist teachers and this is demeaning for the subject. The Welsh Government and SACRE's have future plans for training teacher's noting that there will be small pilot group of schools pioneering the new plans and they will be able to judge where there should be changes and restructuring of the curriculum.

He was questioned if there were allocated times on the timetable for the teaching of Religious Education in the future. The answer was negative. Another raised the question of monitoring lessons. Reassurance was given that the LEA's and Estyn Inspectors would be involved with this. When asked if anyone was currently monitoring the situation the answer was negative and furthermore there were no LEA advisors within education authorities. It was mentioned that there were timetable restrictions in schools and the plan of the new curriculum was to be less dogmatic. No subject in the future would have a specified set time.

Since there is a religious tradition in Britain Christianity is still relevant. Recently, Humanists have been able to secure a seat on SACRE but Christianity is still the main religion of Great Britain. The definition of Religious Education may be broader in the future and pupils would realise that education expands horizons and shows relevance across the whole education spectrum.

Peter Kennedy was asked if Islamic Schools taught Christianity. The answer given was that if they were state schools they would have to, but as there were none in Britain currently, they do not have to.

Another valuable question was the requirement of bilingual text books for both teachers and pupils. Assurance was given that this was being prepared. There was a concern that the current "A" level Religious Education books were published in Welsh 2 years after the course had begun.

In conclusion, Peter Kennedy stated that this proposal was an unfinished document – a work in progress! He would be delighted to receive feedback from the FCCW. A white paper will be published by the end of the year. There will be a period of formal consultation with individual groups, churches and local authorities. The Department will respond to all who contact them.

Point of Action: 1. Peter Kennedy's email**: PeterRay.Kennedy@gov.wales 2. Rheinallt and Vaughan will respond to 24th May report. The denominations will have copies of it. A report will appear on 4 Tudalen/ Denomination papers and to Peter Kennedy. The response will be official. Rheinallt, Vaughan and Helen will minute this officially.**

6. President's Report and Diary

The list of the President's Diary was attached and sent in advance of the meeting with other papers. Rheinallt stated that the Reverend Doctor Geraint Tudur will retire as General Secretary of the Welsh Independents at the end of August. He was thanked for his service and support and was wished well in the future. His successor will be warmly welcomed to future meetings. It was announced at lunchtime that the Reverend Dyfrig Rees from Bridgend was appointed as successor to Geraint Tudur. It was announced that Reverend Beti Wyn James will be the new Vice President of the Welsh Independents from 2020 – 2022.

Action Point: 1. Secretary to write on behalf of FCCW to Reverend Geraint Tudur to wish him well on his retirement and also to send a congratulatory message to Rev Dyfrig Rees on his appointment. 2. The Secretary also to write a congratulatory letter to Reverend Beti Wyn James.

7. Cytun Report

The March and May circulatory letters were distributed with other papers for the meeting. It was noted that Gethin Rhys' reports were substantial and appreciated. The President stated on behalf of everyone that we are pleased to receive them. There was a query as to whether foodbanks should be got rid of instead of proudly boasting weekly contribution to the organisation – Trussell Trust. It was an intolerable situation in reality. "End hunger" is one campaign supported by churches. The organisation provides hot meals for school pupils during holiday time for children who would ordinarily benefit from receiving free school meals. The Welsh Government has this provision in place and the principal has been established, therefore there was no need to begin a campaign here in Wales .As "End Hunger" in the future will expand its remit there will be an opportunity for churches in Wales to support the cause. Gethin was thanked for his update.

8. Theological provision ****Notes and papers were sent before meeting

It was noted that University of Wales Trinity St. David was the only place with provision for Theological training. The South Wales Baptist College in Cardiff will work with Reverend Dr. Densil Morgan to offer 1 module course through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh Independents College will cooperate together with other denominations such as Coleg Gwyn in Bangor or the Presbyterian Church to provide courses in Welsh. The external examiner on the Academic Board is Dr. R. Pope. The Reverend Jeremy Duff from St.Padarn's institute in Cardiff has recognised that the courses provided at Llandaff will be in English only. He will be leaving his current position at the end of term and the situation is unlikely to change.

Mrs.Kirsty Williams the Welsh Government's Education Minister is anxious to meet the needs of Welsh Medium Education and has an open door to discuss finance in order to provide courses in Welsh. The shortage of Theological Students is a problem and there aren't many fluent Welsh speakers availing themselves for the ministry or seeking to study theology through the medium of Welsh.

It was suggested asking the persons responsible for theological training within the denominations provide details of their courses. It would be advantageous to have this information available for distribution before Dr Catrin Haf Williams attendance at our next meeting. It was accepted that there was a difference in following a Theology/Divinity Course and Theological Training Course.

Point of Action: Secretary to invite Dr. Catrin Haf Williams to our November meeting in order to discuss theological provision

9. Guest speaker – Wynford Ellis Owen – Counselling Coordinator Cynnal

The President welcomed Wynford Ellis Owen to the meeting. In his introduction he said that our guest had recently retired as CEO of The Living Room. Currently he is working 2 days a week with CYNNAL – church counselling service Wales. He is responsible for counselling clergy, ministers of religion, their families, doctors and gamblers. CYNNAL addresses multiple problems with addiction. Wynford is also the Secretary

of the Cross Party group on gambling and addiction in the National Assembly. Wynford Ellis Owen thanked the Members of FCCW for the invitation to explain his work. At Cynnal a holistic view of the individual is viewed as body, mind and spirit. A spiritual dimension of life is recognised and where appropriate the individual is referred to others who can provide spiritual advice.

Cynnal's roots are in the faith communities in Wales. It prepares spiritual answers to problems and deals practically with the problem which arises as a result. Wynford asked if people were aware of anything missing from their life. He explained that everyone is looking for heaven – of some kind – a means of escape. Unfortunately, it is the poor, the destitute and the troubled of our society who are attracted to earn money quickly e.g. gambling and selling drugs. This mind set targets some young people who desire a fast track to improve their lives.

Wynford said that everyone needed to know themselves. Everyone has strengths and weakness in their personality and are slow to face and accept their imperfections. Basic beliefs from childhood influences perceptions of the world. He stressed that spiritual poverty is the root of most depression problems. People lose the need to search for God and his blessing. People tend to lean on their own resources in order to have a false yet fast approach to deal with their problems. This leads to teenagers looking for alternative ways to be accepted within a social circle without thinking of the consequences of their action. Wynford stated that there were four occasions a person faced trauma in their life – Birth – Adolescence – False Personality - Death. Wynford finished by stating that life is a journey of self-knowledge and that some are not able to understand that they have a spirit within them who wish to know God their Father.

Wynford was thanked for his time and this valuable insight and contribution to the day's meeting.

10. Hospital Chaplaincies – Reverend Debbie Hodges

Reverend Debbie Hodges was welcomed to the meeting by the President. Debbie Hodges is the Secretary for Healthcare Chaplaincy and provides leadership on Healthcare Chaplaincy work at a national level for the Free Churches as well as in a multi-faith context. Her work involves the publication of a Chaplains' Register, providing awareness seminars and training for Chaplains and Chaplaincy Volunteers and the management of a number of pilot project supported through NHS England funding. This activity serves the public good by supporting pastoral, spiritual and religious care in NHS hospitals and other care settings.

Debbie began by mentioning that chaplaincies had changed during the last 5 years. Until 2012 it was the work of the Health Department to administer chaplains. With the change in the Equalities law in 2013 the provision of service in hospitals was changed. There has been a new development for Healthcare Chaplaincy in England through a merger of the two main bodies in Healthcare Chaplaincy in England. The new name of the group is the **Healthcare Chaplaincy Forum for Pastoral, Spiritual and Religious Care.**

The chaplain's work is to provide spiritual care for the community in hospitals, and after the patient has been discharged to their home. The chaplains work as a multi-disciplined team to provide holistic care for patients and those close to them. There is support for Christians, people of other faiths, humanists, and unbelievers within the NHS in England. It was explained that patients, families and staff need purpose, spiritual support, prayer, sacrament or even a sensitive listener to give meaning to the patient or care person. Emphasis was made that the correct type of Chaplain needed to be appointed in health care and should have the ability to walk the boundaries of faith.

Whilst there was an appreciation on the development in England questions were asked about provision in Wales within the six health boards which have been devolved. Debbie suggested that FCCW write to the Lead chaplains in Swansea and Cardiff to enquire about pastoral care provision in Wales to Welsh speakers and especially the elderly. Ideally the Lead chaplains should meet the needs of the population in the whole of Wales. Debbie suggested that she will work with Gethin to contact the chaplains and to ask questions as a fact finding exercise on behalf of the FCCW. Debbie was warmly thanked by Rheinallt.

Point of Action: Gethin to write to Health Boards and seek clarity on points raised by Debbie

11. Reports

Education

Reports were sent before the meeting and the following points were raised:

1. Educating tomorrow's teachers – Major reforms are due. The children's and Young People's committee on Education will be monitoring.

2. Estyn are considering the methodology proposals received. There will be provision for Foundation and Further Education in the future. Changes are due to the inspection process from the Welsh Government.

3. SACRE's – Book has been published and every school has received a copy.

4. Joseph Champion Report – This is a major legislation and will be discussed with the Welsh Assembly.

5. Code of Conduct – School Visits – This a guideline for individuals / groups visiting schools and useful for the "Open the Book" teams.

6. SACRE's – The Group has accepted that humanists can become members – civil rights reasons for this. They will be included in Part A and an application will have to be made to the LEA's who decide if they may have a seat within the group. A letter from the Welsh Assembly Education Secretary Mrs Kirsty Williams clearly explains this. The number of Humanists within areas are few and does not allow for them to have a powerful voice. Gethin was thanked for his work with SACRE's and as a member of the Humanities and Education group.

7a. FCCW will have to discuss "Life in all its fullness" – even though it is irrelevant in Wales. There has to be a response to the document. The cost of translating the document would be £1,500 for 20.000 word document. It was noted that Welsh education had influenced churches in England and in a historical context Welsh people have been in the forefront in education generally. It was suggested that FCCW has an early input to these type of discussion papers in the future and before asking for comment on documents already produced.

Point of Action: 1. Vaughan and Rheinallt to discuss – Is there any interest in adapting this paper. 2. Ask denominations to (i) consider the document (ii) make a financial contribution in order to have copies translated into Welsh (iii) FCCW to contribute financially also.

7b. Reforming Christianity – Parents, Communities and families – this document will be ready for publication on 12th June 2018. It was noted that the problem of translating and adapting will arise. It was suggested that placing the content on the internet website rather than publishing would reduce costs. It was also suggested that Bethan James of NAFRE would be able to assist.

The next WASACRE meeting is 6th July 2018 in Anglesey.

Denominations

Presbyterian Church in Wales: 1. £200,000 was transferred to "Corwynt Cariad."

2. President Rheinallt has attended 2 Sasiwn meetings – North and South during May.

3. The General Meeting will be held in Wrexham in July.

Baptist Union of Wales: 1.Helen Wyn has resumed work after illness. Christian Williams who was filling in is now looking after GDPR.

2. It is hoped that there will be a "Team for Wales" in place for September. The next placement will be in North Wales and one intern has already been selected

3. 6 people have visited Nepal as part of a BMS visit.

4. AGM in June in Nant Gwrtheyrn. Churches are facing difficult but challenging times.

5. Tonteg Project – the Corporation has decided to support John Birch and his vision of a community Mission. He will have help to buy a house in the village.

Methodist: 1.The Reverend Jenny Hurd has been re- appointed as Director for another 5 years.

2. The Welsh and English Synod hope to unite as Synod Cymru. This will provide an opportunity for those who are Welsh speaking and who worship in English to develop the use of Welsh within their churches. The Welsh Synod will discuss this and a timetable has been organised. The Methodists wish to expand the work of the Deacon to pastoral care within the community. The Presbyter will work in the chapels. The Carms/Pembs Circuit have joined and they will appoint a Deacon to work in the area and develop their work bilingually.

Welsh Independent Churches: 1. Reverend Geraint Tudur will retire as General Secretary at the end of August.

2. During the meeting we were told that the Reverend Dyfrig Rees, Bridgend was appointed as successor. Both were wished well.

3. Reverend Beti Wyn James was elected as the new Vice President from 2020 – 2022.

C. Financial Report

Report was sent beforehand and accepted with thanks. The Treasurer from FCC – North Wales branch is in the process of transferring £5,325.77 to the FCCW account. The FCC - South Wales branch will do so shortly. We were asked to remember Vivian Williams in our prayers. Martin asked everyone who had incurred costs to email him with their Bank details in order for payments to be made.

12. Free Churches Group – Reverend Paul Rochester

Rheinallt welcomed Paul to the meeting. Paul explained that he was currently on a working party for "Churches and Social Cohesion" group. This is a pilot scheme in Bolton. There are questionnaires being circulated in the area in order for them to be presented to THEOS.

A green paper on integration cohesion is ongoing with the Government in Westminster. The Churches are participating and aiding the Government in England. Social Cohesion and Integration has been devolved to Wales.

Two recommendations were made: (i) to tighten the immigration laws (ii) change the marriage laws – marriages to be registered in registry offices before holding a religious service. It will not be possible for places of worship to lawfully register marriages.

Prisons – Welcome Directory continues its work. Churches are slow to accept ex-prisoners. The FCG are looking at ways to help churches and offer support.

Mike Cavannah HMPS – Prison Chief Chaplain is retiring. Adverts for the post have been publicised. Traditionally, the Chief Prison Chaplain is a member of the Anglican Church. Mr. Bob Wilson the Prison Secretary will be advising on this.

Paul was thanked for this update and for his time.

13. AOB

Rheinallt thanked all guest visitors for attending the meeting. It was suggested that there should be fewer Agenda Items in the future.

Helen was thanked warmly for minuting and arranging the food for lunch. Steffan was thanked for translating.

2019 meetings to be noted – **23 May and 14 November** at the South Wales Baptist College.

14. The Grace was shared at the end of the meeting. The meeting finished at 3.20.

Date of next meeting – 10.30 am FRIDAY 23 November 2018