



Congregational Federation

2023 Assembly Review

49th Assembly of the Congregational Federation

13th May 2023 at the Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre, Taunton

Live Streamed

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Order for the day

9.30am doors open and refreshments are served

Stands are available for people to browse

- 10.25am Housekeeping announcements
- 10.30am Welcome and introduction of ecumenical guests and Worship led by the President including act of remembrance and constituting the Assembly
Collection taken for Christian Rebuild and Samaritan Church Grenada
Children leave for their Assembly
- 10.45am Church Support Committee Report including recommendations
- 11.15am Finance and Support Services Committee Report including recommendations
- 11.30am Chair of Council Report and Discussion
- 12.50pm Notices
- 1pm Lunch served in the reception (stands are open)
- 2pm Worship including Presidential Reflections
Induction of new President
- 2.20pm Presidential address
- 2.35pm General Secretary Report
- 2.40pm Recognitions
Accredited Ministries
Long Service recognition
New Churches
Serving the Community Awards
President Elect
Ecumenical Guest encouragement
- 3.15pm Children and Young People Presentation
- 3.30pm Time to consider what we take away with us
Invitation to next Assembly
Closing prayers and *Laus Deo*
- 3.50pm Tea

Collection information

Today's collection will be split equally between Christian Rebuild and the Samaritan Church in Grenada that Nigel Lindsay currently serves as a CWM Partner in Mission.

Here is a little bit of information about each one and where your donation will go. Please give generously.

Christian Rebuild is very grateful for the generous response of the Churches to its emergency appeal following the February earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

We have a long-standing relationship with the Armenian Evangelical Churches in Aleppo and, knowing how well they have used aid in seeking to restore society in the city after the ravages of war, we have channelled our aid through them.

Blessedly, the large central Bethel Church and school complex was not damaged. It was opened at once to provide shelter for those whose homes had been destroyed. Distributions were made of food, milk and medications. Then came clothes, warm blankets and mattresses.

These necessities continue to be provided while more long-term aid programmes are re-established offering health care, education and the love and community that belong in the Christian Church.

"We believe that we will overcome these difficult days with the providence of God and the continuous support of charitable organisations," says Rev Haroutune Selimian, President of the Armenian Protestant Community in Syria.

Aleppo was a great and historic trading city. The aid that you give through Christian Rebuild is helping its people to recover from trauma and start the process of bringing it back to its old, vibrant self.

CWM Partner in Mission, Samaritan Church in Grenada, Nigel Lindsay

I am working with two schools and a small Presbyterian church in the north of Grenada. Support to the Church has been shrinking, before Covid19, but that made things worse. I walked around the island and we have raised enough to do lots of needed repair and lots of this has now been fixed. Here are three plans which need some financial help.

1. We hope to restart our Sunday school soon, but we do not have a separate space to do it. At Present I set a Challenge which they do at the back of Church, but as numbers grow so does the noise. First, we have to put up like a car port to do it under, which can be used for a variety of other things to attract people into the building.
2. We plan in May an after school drop in for any age, Homework can be done, table games and some outdoor games in our car park. We need to get table games, some more folding tables. We are also trying to get adults to read with children who done get this support at home. I hope to put up a net so balls don't go into the road and river, this would help for Youth group too.
3. I have been speaking to the Art department at Mac Donald's College (Secondary school) about doing a mural on the wall outside the Church. We have three panels and so maybe 3 stories. Good Samaritan, Feeding of the 5000 and Jesus calms the

storm. This would bring a good message to the community and to those going past. (We have a number of tourist buses come past) It would also help the relationship between the Church and MDC. Whilst it would be a teacher / student project we would need to pay for the resources.

Your support is welcome, Have a good day, Rev Nigel Lindsay

Report from Chair of Council – Jim Lyon

I want to start my report by recording my sadness at the loss of Walter Riggins in June last year.

On June 11th last year I was celebrating at a close family wedding near York when I received a call from Mark Tucker, informing me of Walter's death. Like all who heard the news, I was deeply shocked. Walter was always full of life and joy and was a great encouragement to me personally. While a death in these circumstances is an incredible shock for those left behind, we know from his family that Walter loved his work at CF, and it is a comfort that he was doing what he loved when he passed from this life to the next – where we believe his fellowship with The Lord is perfect as he lives and reigns with God himself.

We have also been saddened by the decisions of a number of churches to leave CF. We pray that God will continue to bless them in their work proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

I am now in my fourth year as chair of council, and feeling a bit less of a novice in CF than I did three years ago.

I want to start my report by talking about the financial position of CF, something on which many have expressed a concern that we often have deficits that seem to be covered by Closed Church receipts. This sometimes creates the impression that we are simply spending this money on the day to day running of CF. To set this in context, it is important to note that the assets held by CF have generally increased in value. Between the end of 2018 and the end of 2022, assets held by CF have increased from around £14m to around £16.5m, and free reserves have increased from about 10.5 months of CF expenditure to 14 months, meaning that currently we have a substantial cash buffer giving time to make any changes to the organisation in a planned way, with appropriate consultation.

This position is a healthy place from which to review our strategy, focussing on how we can more effectively further our responsibilities for the advancement of The Christian Faith through supporting healthy congregational churches.

While recognising the need to do this, it is quite difficult to do this effectively in our normal twice yearly council meetings. At these meetings, which normally also include meeting as the board of directors of CFL, we are quite a large group with significant regular business, including our custodian trustee responsibilities. To allow us to look at strategy more effectively, council has established a strategy group made up of 6 people to make recommendations to council on key changes to the organisation, which can then be brought forward by council for discussion at Assembly and in member churches.

One of the key areas of concern is that of our overall governance. There is a general feeling that council is rather too large to act effectively as a trustee body, and the mechanisms for appointing trustees depend on the functioning of bodies such as areas and national associations which are, correctly, outside of the control of CF trustees, and which may or may not function. We are therefore recommending a change to the constitution, such that the only bodies required for CF to function are churches themselves – without which there would be no point in having CF anyway. In proposed structure, CF would be fully a "Federation of Independent Churches" where churches are not required to be part of any other structure in order to participate in the election of trustees of CF.

The recommendation in this respect is that 9 trustees of CF are appointed by direct election from churches – three of whom would be appointed each year for a three year term. The proposed new trustee body would also include the immediate past president, and the trustees could decide to appoint a chair from among themselves or to co-opt a chair. It is also proposed that the elected trustees have the power to co-opt up to four non-elected members. This would allow chairs of

committees to be part of council, without locking any particular committee structure into the constitution, and would also allow for specific expertise to be co-opted where deemed appropriate by the elected trustees.

We are also recommending that voting at Assembly be revised to a 1 church 1 vote principal, with personal members considered as one church. For future assemblies operating on this basis, there would need to be dedicated seating area for personal members wishing to participate in the decision on the use of that vote.

It is proposed that CF areas continue to be represented through the committee structure, but in future areas might decide to merge, or re-organise in other ways to provide effective support to participating churches. Such changes could then be recognised by the trustee body and reflected in committee representation. It may be that over time, member churches form support networks based on criteria other than area – examples might be rural churches or fresh expressions. Where such groupings are established by churches, these could also be encompassed within the committee structure.

The changes above are a significant change and require a revised constitution – a draft of which will be circulated if the above changes are agreed by assembly. Constitutional changes require a minimum of six months consultation, and approval by a large majority of churches. It is proposed to initiate this process at Assembly in 2023, on the basis that if the changes are approved by the churches, a revised constitution can be adopted at Assembly in 2024.

Report from General Secretary – Yvonne Campbell

Welcome to Assembly!

As we are gathered, Jesus is here; one with each other, Jesus is here.

Joined by the Spirit, washed in His blood, part of the Body, the Church of God.

As we are gathered, Jesus is here, one with each other, Jesus is here.

This past year I have tried to be pause more, reflect and acknowledge the presence of Jesus in the moment. One of the ways I have done that is with the prayer app lectio 365. Life can get busy, so it has helped me gain a sense of perspective.

Last year being the 50th Anniversary of the Congregational Federation it was good to reflect on the past and share memories and photos. I loved hearing the stories about how much hope there is for Congregational Churches. I particularly enjoyed meeting Clifford and Monica Hill and listening to their hope for the Congregational Federation 50 years ago as founding members.

Last year we also took time to stop as we mourned the sudden death of our colleague Walter Riggans - he was such a joy to work with and is missed very much. It's been a blessing to get to know his daughters, we have laughed and cried together and they have generously donated lots of Walter's books to the library.

My sincere thanks to Neil, Maddy, Lisa and Luzia - we have grown together as a team through our shared grief and are enjoying face to face meetings again. We were thrilled to welcome Catherine Booton to the team during Easter week, a time of new beginnings and renewed hope.

The reports received from the Church Support Committee have encouraged me so much because there are so many stories of growth. One church holds a Lego church on a Friday evening which sees over 30 children running to come in! The warm hubs have seen growth and new memberships, in fact lots of churches have welcomed new members including Springhead; Lapford, Bretherton, Union Heathfield, Market Harborough, Bethseda to name just a few. We do have membership certificates, so do ring and order some when you need them.

I have led three vision days this year to help churches and areas think about what they love and what they want to change. If you would like the resources or would like me to come and lead a session with your church, just let me know.

I also support lots of churches through their ministerial vacancies, this can be general advice or more hands on working with the church. We know one of the big issues for churches is willing volunteers in different church roles and we have produced 2 booklets which we hope will encourage people into secretary and treasurer positions.

We also launch today sermon vaults for churches who struggle to find preachers each week. Lots of sermons have been pre-recorded so they can be shown on a screen in church, with suggested hymns readings and prayers. We want to encourage you, so can also help with what you might need, including recommended equipment and even grants to help finance anything you can't afford.

I pray this new project will bring a new confidence for people to lead small parts of worship and challenge you as you hear new people preaching that you may not have heard before.

I am also delighted to share about two new grants now available for accredited ministers and students. One is for help to meet travel costs to attend and be part of training or national Congregational Federation events. The other is for Continued Ministerial Development to encourage those in ministry to be informed and inspired.

Alongside this, I have been trying to develop a series of webinars called Ministry matters - so far we have run one on building healthy relationships and one on supporting people with trauma. There will be a virtual retreat on 18th May and online safety training in June.

Every Tuesday at 2pm I host the ministries zoom meeting, which is a time of fellowship and prayer, open to anyone in ministry within the Congregational Federation to give encouragement, sharing ideas and build community.

Every Monday afternoon at 1.30pm I host a national CF bible study. We have worked through many different studies, but in January we started reading the Immerse Bible which has 6 volumes and is the bible as you have never seen it before, no chapters and verses and the order completely changed! It has been a revelation to us as the Holy Spirit has refreshed our desire and knowledge of scripture. If you would like to be part of the group or want a copy of the first volume then please ask.

As a new initiative I have recently brought together on zoom the personal members of the Congregational Federation and they would like to start a quarterly meeting to include worship.

I enjoy working with Andrew Halloway and Eric Fenwick on the Refresh magazine, my thanks to them both and also Christine Denwood for her excellent proofreading skills.

I love being part of the Congregational Federation, I love serving and encouraging congregations, which are all amazing in their own way. This year I have visited lots of churches I've never been to before and wherever I go, I am made to feel very welcome and a part of the fellowship.

I am also engaged Ecumenically with the Free Churches Group and it was a delight to plant a tree at Horningsham in January for the Queens Platinum Jubilee. I was chosen to be part of the group who went to Buckingham Palace as the Free Churches are one of the privileged bodies. Helen Cameron gave a presentation about the work we do.

I also had the privilege of reading at the URC 50th Anniversary service of thanksgiving in London.

I couldn't do my job without the continued support of my family and the support from Clare and Sam in the office.

I pray you enjoy not just the day but the whole weekend of events. I hope you enjoy fellowship with others and leave having been encouraged and inspired.

Message from the President – Mark Taylor

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love.”

I shared with you in Birmingham last year my surprise at being handed the huge privilege of being the Federation’s President for the year.

And what a privilege it has been.

Here are some of the highlights for me:

- Attending the Churches Together in England President’s Dinner at Lambeth Palace, ending with the Archbishop of Canterbury leading a service of Compline in the crypt;
- A wonderful weekend near Belfast with the Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland;
- Representing the Federation at the Ecumenical Prayer Service for peace in Ukraine at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Family in London;

all experiences I wouldn’t have had but for being granted this office which I am passing on to Oliver Kinchin today. Things I will remember for ever – thank you to the Federation for the opportunity and thank you to the amazing members at my church in Newark for giving me the time off to do it.

But, enjoyable and memorable as these events were, the role has importantly given me a platform to talk about my theme for the year, which was Hope. I’ve shared my thoughts about the future of the church with those Congregational Churches around the country who have invited me to preach. I’ve without exception been greeted with warmth and hospitality. People have made some kind comments about what I have had to say about inclusivity, about the need for reaching outside the doors of our buildings by taking the gospel to where people are (both physically and spiritually) and about exploring new ways of ‘doing church’. If you haven’t heard my message but would like to it’s on YouTube.

I’m sure that not everyone has agreed with me. (One person did tell me that he agreed with every word I’d said – but he was the only one who told me this. 😊) In my view there’s no point being given an opportunity like this and then not being prepared to speak your mind.

Now, so soon, my Presidential year is drawing to a close but my Hope for the future remains undimmed. If that Hope is going to be fulfilled, though, the approach I’ve been advocating can’t stop today. I promise to do all I can to support those who would like to continue the journey with me.

Now – where did I put that Presidential medallion...?

Report from Chair of Church Support Committee

Report from Acting Chair of Church Support Committee

It has been my privilege to chair the meetings of the Church Support Committee (CSC) this year. I am delighted that Ruth Green, Minister at Pennymoor Congregational Church has been voted by the committee as the new chair.

The majority of the work is carried by the various groups that report to it which are:

- Congregational institute for Practical Theology (chaired by Nick Gleich)
- Inter Church Board (chaired by Alan Kennedy)
- Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordinators Group (chaired by Barbara Bridges).

You will find reports from each of those elsewhere in this review booklet. We thank all the members of each group for all the work they do not just at their meetings but throughout the year.

The committee also appreciates the work of the staff members working within Church Support. The sudden death of Walter Riggans last summer affected them all and left a large hole in the team. In the few years that he served the Federation he impacted many people, not least the students. We will remember him with thanks and love. It was good to hear of the appointment of Catherine Booton to the Role of Learning and Support Manager and we wish her well in the job. Some members of the team will be speaking from the platform at Assembly. I hope you will take the time to visit others at their stands to hear about their work and, hopefully, to thank them for all that they do.

At each meeting we hear reports from the area representatives about the joys and challenges experienced by churches in their Area. These help to shape the programme of the Church Support Team. While it is always more enjoyable to hear of the joys, we recognise that there are challenges and take time each meeting to prayerfully consider them. Challenges that have been highlighted this year include:

- Safeguarding
- Repair and maintenance to buildings
- Participation
- Vacancies
- Smaller churches

One challenge, however for many churches has been the large increase to the minimum stipend this year which is linked to the rate of inflation. The committee made a proposal to offer some financial support. Details of this will be shared when details have been agreed.

The committee also hears about the work of the Council for World Mission (CWM). Since the decision was taken that church donations to Mission would all go to the CF Ministry and Mission Fund and not be shared with CWM, the CF donation to CWM has, understandably, reduced. If your church would like to make a donation to CWM the treasurer needs to make this clear when the money is sent to Nottingham. For the first time for many years there is a Mission Partner from CF working with CWM. Nigel Lindsey is serving in Grenada.

Many of you will be following his news. It is hoped to arrange a visit to offer him support in 2024, watch out for information if you would be interested in taking part.

For quite a few years we have partnered with Christian Aid and raised money for various projects. The committee is considering whether to seek a different partner next year. Several have been suggested and the decision will be taken at the next meeting. Information will then be shared with the churches.

There have been several well received publications produced including another CF calendar, the 50 Reflections booklets and a new safeguarding leaflet. It is hoped that the new books on the roles of church secretaries and treasurers will be launched today as well as the sermon vault initiative.

I end with thanks to all the members of the committee and to Yvonne Campbell and the Church Support Team for all their hard work. I wish the new Chair well in the role.

Barbara Bridges 6th April 2023

Recommendation

That the following be included on the Roll of Ministries

Helen Keighley, Minister

Kathy Shaw, Minister.

Message from Ruth Green

I have been a member of various Congregational churches for the last 28 years and am deeply grateful that this has afforded me the opportunity to study for what was then a Minister's certificate without having to pay fees and to do it mostly at home as I had a young child to look after when I began. I am also grateful that it has given me the opportunity and support to open a new church and help two other churches to get back on their feet. After so much support having been given to me I feel that it's only fair to give something back so I've served on various Committees and as a Safeguarding Checker for many years. Now you know why I think that the work of the Church Support group is so important, and I am looking forward to chairing the group towards working together to help lots more people and churches to grow.

I would also like to be as accessible and supportive as possible to everyone, so if you like, you can phone me anytime or even ask me to visit and I will do my best.

Report from Partner in Mission – Nigel Lindsay

What a great Country to live in and your welcome to come out and visit Grenada, the scenery is stunning, lots of windy hilly roads and sea views. By the time you read this I will have been in country serving with the Presbyterian Church in Grenada for over 20 months. I work with the small Samaritan Church, as Chaplin to a Primary and Secondary school all in the north of the island. The pace of life here is slow and for me who likes to be starting new things, finding people to help has been a problem. We have tried things and some have worked and other things have stopped. The youth group has continued to attract between 10 and 20 on a weekly basis. We have a mixed programme of games, bible/social discussion, snacks and they will volunteer to pray.

We took our Family time (messy church) out to a community and it worked well the first time and we were invited back, but since they that community all been elsewhere, so we continue at our building. I do lots of walking around the community and will stop and pray with people, some of my home visits are done on a balcony, people walking past join in the hymns.

My work in schools involved regular assemblies, some teaching on RE or guidance issues and individual mentoring. It is a great opportunity to speak into young people lives, some go to churches but many do not.

I have been part of the Conference of Churches and get chance to feed into national issues and I am currently looking at young people's particularly Behaviour in schools. I will be back to the UK in Oct/ Nov this year and can speak at you church or community.

If you want to ask, I am happy to Zoom in or have a What app chat

Report from Inter Church Board

National Ecumenical Officers Group

This is part of Churches Together in England and brings together representatives from a number of denominations. Alan Kennedy represents the Congregational Federation.

National Ecumenical Instruments` Roundtable (NEIR)

This group evolved from the Coronavirus Ecumenical Roundtable group, which itself evolved as an additional network to the national Ecumenical Officers Group. There are representatives from all the ecumenical national bodies across the British Isles and meet online with agendas which focus on post-pandemic challenges common to all our traditions.

Churches Together in England Enabling Group

The Enabling Group carries out important business on behalf of CTE including; vetting and receiving new member churches and associated bodies, theological reflection and study on relevant issues such as racial justice, fostering initiatives in mission and evangelism and encouraging ecumenism across the country.

Northern College Manchester (United Reformed and Congregational)

Oliver Kinchin and Alan Kennedy represent the Congregational Federation on this body.

Visit to New England 2024

A number of us were looking forward to attending the International Congregational Fellowship Conference in Massachusetts USA in July 2020, which due to Covid was postponed until 2021, when it was held online.

For those who would still like to visit the Boston area and sites associated with the Pilgrim Fathers, Alan Kennedy and Mike Fales of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches are exploring a way in which visitors from the CF can join with an existing NACCC meeting in Boston next year, combined with site visits to Plymouth Rock etc. Please contact Alan if you are interested.

CYTUN Churches Together in Wales

Rev Aled Edwards is retiring from the post of Chief Executive. He has been a great support to CF Wales and has lifted the profile of the Churches in Wales. His successor is Rev Sion Brynach.

As the major events in the year's calendar resume after lockdowns, CYTUN will have a major presence at the Royal Welsh Show, the Urdd Eisteddfod and the National Eisteddfod.

Chris Gillham's term as a Trustee of CYTUN will come to an end later this year and he will not seek re-election but shall hope to be replaced by Dr Brendan Mason.

ACTS / Scottish Christian Forum (SCF)

A Roundtable on the Future Shape of Scottish Ecumenism was held in January. This was a very positive meeting including churches such as Ukrainian Catholic to the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Quakers. Various models of collaboration were presented and it became clear that no one single model fits all and that the preferred way forward was for ACTS to become part of the new SCF.

It is also possible that the SCF could be accommodated by one of the churches, rather than seek its own expensive office space. As was said towards the end of the meeting: “Ecumenism is alive and well in Scotland, but it’s not ecumenism in its traditional form.”

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)

CTBI held their AGM in Manchester and presented a new strategy document. Their areas of work include:

- Racial / Social Justice
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Interfaith
- Asylum Seekers and Refugees Justice

Free Churches Group

The FCG has a chaplaincy focus but also plays an important role in speaking a Free Church voice into Government policies.

Free Churches now have a pathway into the Chaplaincy in the Armed Forces which is highly significant for smaller denominations.

Helen Cameron is the Moderator of the Free Churches and one of the President of Churches Together in England.

The Free Churches Group chose Horningsham Congregational Church to plant a tree for the Platinum jubilee and Helen will preach at the church on 9th July – all are welcome.

The Free Churches were one of the Privileged Bodies invited to pledge their loyalty to the King and update him on their work. The General Secretary was privileged to attend.

The United Board

In recent years, the UB has expanded its member denominations. Initially set up to manage the call of chaplains to the military from Congregationalists, Baptists and Methodists, it now serves the call process for chaplains from Baptist, URC, Congregational, Elim, Assemblies of God and Churches in Communities International denominations to serve in the chaplaincies.

There have been requests from other denominations to be part of the United Board and to facilitate this, the Free Churches Group in England now have a seat on the Board as participating observers with the aim of acting as a go between for those denominations.

There are legal and procedural issues over which denominations are accepted by the Ministry of Defence to be on the United Board, and this initiative will be tested in the years to come to see if the Free Churches Group can play a more prominent part.

The United Board has been recruiting new chaplains to each of the three services, but there is still a shortage of suitable candidates. Chaplains can serve as Regulars, Reserves, and/or in the Cadet Forces and it would be good if we could have another Congregationalists in the ranks!

Report from Congregational Institute of Practical Theology (CIPT) Management Board – Chair Nicholas Gleich

Introduction

The Board convenes twice a year in order to discuss CIPT activities and its budget. After each meeting a report is submitted to the Church Support Committee (CSC) and the minutes are available to CSC and Council. The Board receives verbal reports from the Learning and Development (L&D) Director and the Chair of the Course Board. In addition to representatives from the CSC, Tutors, and Students there is also a representative from an academic institution (not York St. John's University) to give an external perspective.

Since Assembly 2022, CIPT has continued the recovery from the disruption of the Covid lockdown and restrictions of its teaching activities. Lessons with respect to the viability of online teaching and the value of meeting in person have been learned and put into practice.

The loss to CIPT of Dr. Walter Riggans the L&D Director, who died in the Summer of 2022 has been keenly felt.

In late 2022, from an excellent field of candidates, the selection committee recommended the appointment of Catherine Booton as L&D Director. She took up her duties in April 2023.

CIPT in Partnership

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies at York St. John's University (YSJU) partners with CIPT to validate the academic standing of students' achievements.

The courses of the CIPT are taught by tutors drawn from across the Congregational Federation. These unpaid volunteers are accredited by the CIPT's academic partner, as is the course material. There is a strong working relationship between YSJU and CIPT.

All course material is developed by CIPT tutors. YSJU review it to confirm that it is of the appropriate academic standard, but it is to the credit of tutors that standards are consistently met.

Through longstanding relationships, CIPT has informal links with other institutions, e.g., the Martin Luther King Centre for Theology and Ministry in Manchester.

The 2022 Summer School, which was open to anyone, not just CF members, was a significant success. This initiative, alongside the increasing use of social media, the CF website and other activities will be used to share the message of the quality, accessibility, availability, and value of CIPT, to the widest possible community.

CIPT at Work

CIPT currently has 18 students completing the full course and 2 taking an individual module, something that CIPT is encouraging people to consider and take up. There has been a very positive number of enquiries from people keen to start the course in September. There will be 7 students graduating in October and 2 other students who completed the course last year but postponed their graduation.

CIPT currently has 11 tutors, and the L&D Director is keen to hear from anyone suitably qualified and experienced who is ready, willing, and able to join the team. There are details in an advertisement on the CF website.

A residential weekend took place on the weekend of 15th April, and the first Exam Board of the year is in June. An open day for new students is planned for July, which is a new event.

The Alumni Association continues to facilitate a network of former students with opportunities to hear and share matters of interest. It is completely independent, though its link to CIPT and support to students, staff and tutors is much appreciated.

CIPT is important to CF because it is the one place that Christian Theology is taught in a Congregational context. The principles of the congregational way of "doing church" have stood the test of time and should be commended as widely as possible. There is room for many more students on the various CIPT courses both to aim for a Foundation degree or to enhance one's knowledge by taking a couple of individual modules. All are welcome.

Conclusion

The CIPT Management Board continues to support the L&D Director and the Chair of the Course Board, and their respective colleagues in achieving their objectives.

It is conscious of the need to keep the provision relevant and cost-effective to the Federation.

Report from Chair of Accreditation and Pastoral Care Coordination Group – Barbara Bridges

Having chaired this group for over 6 years I expect this to be my last report to Assembly. No-one has yet come forward to take over the role so, as I write this report, I continue as Acting Chair. Perhaps by the time of Assembly there will be news to share of a new Chair. Please consider if there is anyone in your church who would be suitable to take on the role.

The group continues to be responsible for ensuring that Pastoral Care is available to current and retired Ministers and their families, students and churches without anyone in pastoral charge. Most of the Pastoral Care Coordinators (PCCs) have a small team around them to help them with this work. Unfortunately not all Areas and National Federations have been able to find anyone to serve as either PCC or a member of a pastoral team. As churches continue to emerge from Covid people are very busy but I do hope that this year more will feel able to come forward to support others in this way. Training and support is offered including the annual gathering at the National Arboretum. This is an opportunity to meet, share experiences and to remember in prayer members of our churches who have died during the past year. All are welcome and details are shared through PCCs and other Area contacts.

An important part of the group's role is overseeing the Roll of Ministries. At the meeting in February it was good to hear that 9 people are starting the journey towards Accreditation. We wish them well in their ministry and look forward to meeting them again at the National Interview stage. Having so many candidates meant that some Areas were involved in Area Interviews for the first time for many years. This highlighted the need to update the guidance and report form for Area Interviews. This work has been undertaken. Some candidates are seeking to become Pioneer Ministers. To be accredited they need to be working in Congregational Pioneer settings. It would be good to know that more such projects are being supported around the UK. Work continues in discussing how best to support Pioneer Projects and Pioneer Ministers.

As a result of National Interviews the group are pleased to recommend that Helen Keighley, Minister at Harden in the NE Area, and Kathy Shaw, Minister at Padfield in the NW Area, be Accredited as Ministers on the Roll of Ministries. Church Support Committee and Council have supported these recommendations.

Thank you to all members of the group and their pastoral teams who continue to seek to offer pastoral support across the 3 nations. I pray that you will soon find a new Chair to lead you and support you in your work.

Recommendations

That the following be included on the Roll of Ministries

Helen Keighley, Minister

Kathy Shaw, Minister.

Report from Chair of Finance and Support Services Committee , Susan Austin

The FSSC meets twice a year to examine and discuss the Federation's finances. Significant income derives from investments and the Investment Trust and Trading Board (ITTB), which reports to the FSSC, meets three times a year to scrutinise investment policy and performance and discuss these with our investment manager.

2022 continued to be a year of turbulence and volatility on the economic and financial fronts there's seems no respite from economic challenges – so it is encouraging to report that the Federation's financial position at the year-end is a very positive one.

Monitoring the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) gives a good indication of financial performance, not solely over the past year but also over time to indicate trends:

Total net assets: the value of these remains stable with a slight increase in 2021 and 2022 to £16.8 million.

Income and expenditure: income has picked up since the dramatic fall of the pandemic. A sharp rise in 2022 is due to the write-off of the loan to CFL of £1.2 million: it should be noted that this is a technical transaction and not a cash injection. It is in part offset by unrealised investment losses of £976k ('unrealised' because the investments were not cashed). Closed church receipts amounted to £807k, 90% of which was allocated to the Protected Programme Fund.

Expenditure fell during the pandemic and has remained at a similar level since then, in part due to the continued use of Zoom for online and hybrid meetings, which has reduced the cost of meetings. Expenditure is likely to rise in 2023/2024 as activities increase.

Free reserves: the policy is to maintain 8-12 months' worth of expenditure in reserve. Reserves have fallen from 14.9 months in 2021 to 13.9 months in 2022 so are still above the policy threshold but likely to reduce with anticipated expenditure in 2023/24.

Protected Programme Fund (PPF): this now sits at £5.86 million, its highest ever level, and in 2022 generated £139k in investment interest. This is the principal source of funding for CF's core activities.

Core operating deficits: taken as a whole, expenditure and other non-cash 'costs' (such as depreciation) exceeds income, so technically CF runs at a loss. The deficit has remained at around £200k since the pandemic (from a high of almost £600k in 2016) but is likely to increase over 2023/24 to a more realistic level. This deficit is covered in the longer term by unrealised investment gains and it is therefore important to take the longer view with investments to even out the years which are less productive.

The PPF is the Fund to which 90% of closed church receipts and unrestricted legacies are allocated for investment in order to generate investment income to support core operational activities and to make up program deficits at the year end. The PPF is key to supporting services provided to churches: CIPT training, safeguarding, accreditation, youth and children, church support workers, payroll, pensions and investment services.

CF has also been able to offer support of almost £140k to churches in the form of Starter grants, Mini-grants and Impact grants, help with affiliation fees and grants from Area Funds.

In summary, CF is in a healthy and positive financial position but as in previous years, the approach needs to be one of prudence and caution. Domestic interest rates, inflation and politics will have their impact and there remains a high level of global uncertainty which affects investment performance.

Finally, I would like to thank the Finance team for their hard work and support and the members of the FSSC and ITTB committees for their input and contributions.

	2022
	£
Operating Deficit	(225,184)
Closed Church Receipts	807,094
Unrealised Investment Gains	(976,490)
CFL Loan Written-Off	1,255,342
Surplus/Deficit for the year	860,762

Recommendations

1. That the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022 are received.
2. That the budget for 2024 be adopted.
3. That the Assembly approves the re-appointment of UHY Hacker Young as the Federation's auditors.
4. That the affiliation fees for 2024 to be £165 per church and £9 per member.
5. Personal membership for 2024 to be £44.