

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING -

THURSDAY 11TH MARCH 2021

On-line

Present: David Cavanagh, Duncan Whitty, Iain Hampson, Imogen Gibson (Comms Officer), James Patron Bell, Marjory McPherson (Convenor), Paddy Ferry, Sandra Endicott (Treasurer), Stephen Manders, Steven Turner, William Pearsall, Fiona Bennett.

Apologies: David Clarke, Doris Caldwell, Judith Scott, Stephen Holmes.

Opening and Welcome: MM opened the meeting with a reflection and prayer. A warm welcome was given to SA representative David Cavanagh.

1. Minutes of last year's AGM on 12th March 2020 approved.

2. No Matters arising

3. Annual Report There was general approval of the Annual Report and the Communications Officer was thanked for putting it together. Despite the pandemic severely limiting face to face worship and other activities, the AR showed how quickly churches adapted and innovated to continue worship and fellowship in some form.

4. Treasurer's Report The treasurer, SE, reported on the year's finances, confirming that ECT's bank balance is healthy as we go into 2021. SE repeated the importance of getting another signatory approved for the ECT bank account. MM willing to be signatory in addition to SE.

ACTION: SE and IG to liaise over this.

5. Parking Fiona Bennet, (Minister at Augustine United on George IV Bridge) described the difficulties for the church caused by both the current pandemic related parking restrictions and the imminent Sunday parking restrictions to be brought in by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC.) Although there is a general agreement that traffic reduction measures are important for the health of the population, no alternative means of travel, e.g., increased bus services, have been put in place. There was a general agreement that CEC had let church and faith communities down by failing to give them opportunities to air their views. ST provided a link to CEC consultation hub with closing date Sunday 14th March. IH pointed out that the Sunday parking restrictions are going to affect most city centre churches as almost all are gathered churches with people coming from afar. DW said that it is not an issue with churches outside the city centre at the moment. There was discussion as to what the way forward might be for negotiation with CEC: requesting a later start time for Sunday parking restrictions appears to be pointless as WP said signage was already being put up around the city. Campaigning for better bus services is a more realistic option as this would help shops and businesses as well as churches on a Sunday. SE asked if other faith groups had been brought into the discussion. FB said past discussions on this subject, the imam at the Central Mosque had been very supportive as restricting parking erodes religious space in the city. SM

suggested that it might be wiser to plan action and get collaboration now and then approach CEC in the Autumn when life has 'normalised' a bit more.

Action: MM to ask Iain Stewart of EIFA for support from other faith groups.

6. Plan for Nativity Scene MM recently met with Sir Tom Farmer, Archbishop Leo Cushley (RC) and Bishop John Armes (SEC) to discuss plans for a Nativity scene in Edinburgh, the former one created by Tim Chalk having had its last outing this year. Sir Tom is keen to fund a new project but wants this to be taken forward with ecumenical collaboration in the form of a letter from ECT to CEC. MM said this would put forward the idea of a competition to create a new artwork that would have its own permanent site for the next ten years or so. The site would be accessible to all and would be somewhere that choirs, speakers etc. can gather. It would also be displayed for the 12 days of Christmas. There was unanimous agreement that a letter should be written.

Action: MM to write letter

7. Pandemic – lessons learned JPB described how Zoom has had a positive affect on Central Methodist worship and fellowship with every Wednesday service getting at least 30 participants often from overseas and a healthy participation in study and activity groups. He said people were more likely to join in as travel time had been eliminated and Wednesday service will probably continue as a zoom event even after lockdown is lifted. PF agreed that Zoom had enabled him to take part in an international meeting based in Ireland with over 230 participants – something he would not have been able to do otherwise. ST said the SA's members are often elderly and face to face contact is the only way to keep in touch with them. Many have no access to the Internet. The pandemic has highlighted the 'digital divide' – those who have etc. training and knowledge as well as the money to support internet access and those who simply don't.

Action: MM to send link to all concerning this subject

8. Ecumenical sharing of Ministry and Mission MM said that lack of finances has been a big issue with some churches in CoS unable to open again. CoS also facing a crisis with many ministers due to retire. Is it possible to share venues/ministers ecumenically? This could be considered for the future.

9. COP: Carbon Neutral Churches Last year, ECT was going to have an event on the subject of climate change but this had to be cancelled due to corona virus restrictions. MM wondered if an event around carbon neutral churches with practical advice might be useful before COP in Glasgow due to take place later this year. DC said that if this was linked to COP it would definitely have to be of a practical nature. An event would need to start some kind of process. FB recommended St Columba's Church's excellent webinar series entitled 'Change in a Time of Chaos'. Registration for the next one at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cvLqqzJYSDe3wea0DYqDZQ As there are so many events happening regarding this subject it might be better for ECT to support another initiative rather than devise yet another event. DW said he had put forward the idea of heat pumps for the church but people were wary of investment and change without adequate research and proof it works. Inviting other churches who might have invested in new technology like this would be a good step. FB said collaboration with other churches is the way forward in terms of building use and this links back to item 8. It was agreed that we need to share what we know and invite participation.

Action: next newsletter should be a climate change issue.

10. Election of Office Bearers WP very kindly agreed to take on the post of vice-convenor for the next year. This was unanimously supported and agreed by the council.

11. Staff Salary A pay rise for the Communications Officer was not disputed.

Action: **WP and MM to evaluate**

12. Priorities for Year Ahead PF said the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity should definitely be a priority and all were in agreement. Otherwise, items in last section of Annual Report to remain as priorities

13. Date and Venue of Next Meeting: 7pm 10th March 2022. Venue TBC