

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2016  
Ebenezer Evangelical Congregational Church  
Saturday 14th May 2016**

**Welcome**

The welcome and opening greetings were given by Rev. Jackie Brown, EFCC Chairman.

**Opening Devotional Address**

Rev. Philip Swann (Llanelli Evangelical Church) gave the opening devotional address from Hebrews chapter 1.

Prayer followed.

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2015**

The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 9th May 2015 at Binfield Heath Congregational Church were proposed by Rev. Bill Harrow (Marden Congregational Church), seconded by Rev. Ian Densham (Droylsden Congregational Church) and unanimously agreed.

**Affirmation of Position Papers**

**Sexuality and Christian Fellowship** (paper circulated within the Report Book).

Mike Plant addressed the meeting giving the background to why the paper on Sexuality and Christian Fellowship was brought to the meeting. It was noted the items in red are the changes made since the paper was issued to the churches.

It was opened for discussion, Mr N Russell (Hayes Town Chapel) addressed the meeting, thanking the Committee for taking time to generate the document. Following points made:

- 1) the papers be affirmed today so that there is something in place.
- 2) the committee carry out a second revision and tidy up some of the phraseology. For instance, point 1:

“All of us are sinners and our only hope we have is through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is so regardless of our sexuality.”

I hope we can all say “amen” to that but a lawyer might ask “hope of what?”. I know this is pedantic but this is the way lawyers work. The point is easily addressed by inserting a few extra words for clarification, perhaps:

“All of us are sinners and our only hope we have *for forgiveness* is through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is so regardless of our sexuality.”

Point 3 *implies* homosexuality is a sin without *explicitly* making the statement. Is that the intention? Also point 3 has a word not in my Oxford dictionary which I think could be expressed simpler and clearer anyway.

Point 5 refers to “God’s family” and “God’s kingdom” but without definition.

- 3) a lawyer familiar with Christian teaching and diversity legislation be engaged to assist with the review.

It was proposed by Rev. David Legg (Lee Mill Congregational Church), seconded by Mr Steve Webster (Bulford Chapel) and unanimously agreed to affirm the position paper with the agreement that the EFCC Committee reconsider the paper in the light of the comments made.

**EFCC Statement on Ecumenism** (paper circulated within the Report Book).

It and proposed by Rev. Peter Beale (Bulkington Congregational Church), seconded by Rev. Ian Densham (Droylsden Congregational Church) and unanimously agreed to affirm the position paper.

## **The Relationship of Men and Women in the Church**

### **The Danvers Statement** (paper circulated within the Report Book).

It was proposed by Rev. M Rees (St Briavels Congregational Church), seconded by Rev. Neville Rees (Libanus Congregational Church, Morriston) and unanimously agreed to affirm the position paper.

### **General Secretary's Report**

This report was given by Rev. Mike Plant, EFCC General Secretary.

New Ministers – as well as the list in the Report Book it was noted that Nic Donnelly has been called to Dukinfield Congregational Church.

It was noted that Greg Haslam is leaving Westminster Chapel.

It has been a joy preaching round the churches.

Concern was shared that there are a number of like-minded churches – Unaffiliated or in the Congregational Federation or in other groupings or Independent – that they should be coming into EFCC to strengthen each other.

Noted that it has been good to see Crystal Peaks Church, Sheffield become Independent at the beginning of the year (church plant from Wycliffe Independent Church in Sheffield), real encouragement and joy to see.

Woolwich – Mike encouraged continuing prayer, mentioned in previous years but we are closer to having the new church built.

Puckeridge – it was raised why there is no strong gospel witness in the village. As reported Bill Harrow is about to move there to be the church planter/ evangelist. Prayer was requested.

Ministers' Prayer Conference – Mike shared that over the years it has been a great blessing to him personally. EFCC borne out of prayer for revival – important that we remember where we came from as we plan forward. Reference made to the paper given by Neville Rees at the 2015 Conference.

Mike shared about his situation – he has received a call to be the Minister of Honiton Congregational Church from September 2016, he has resigned from EFCC and will leave at the end of August 2016. Mike requested prayer for himself and Margaret as they move to Honiton. Encouraged prayer for the EFCC committee and Trust Board, the Committee are looking for a new General Secretary but there will be an interim period when members of the Committee will take extra responsibilities. One of these is the Regional Secretary's role done by Mike. The Trust Board have taken action that one of the Trustees (Graham Brown) will pick up work normally done by Mike.

Affinity – noted Graham Nicholls new Director – remarkable answer to prayer – it will be a part-time role. Particular grouping of evangelical Bible based churches + other groupings. WECF – always blessed by the meetings run by WECF, particularly the last one held earlier this year, listening to the South African representative speaking of living under apartheid. It was noted that Mike Plant is now WECF President, David Saunders and Alan Best still active and will give support to Mike. It was noted that EFCC will be hosting the 2019 WECF conference.

Thanks expressed from the floor to Mike Plant.

It was raised that the Committee should consider extending the Chairman's period of office during the transition period.

The Chairman expressed, on behalf of EFCC, thanks to Mike Plant for all the work he had done and also to Margaret for her support. The Chairman encouraged prayer for Mike as he starts his role as Pastor at Honiton and also his role as WECF President.

Prayer followed.

### **Trust Corporation Report**

The report was given by Rev. Gwynne Evans (Chairman).

Requested prayer for the Trust Board meetings, they have extensive agendas and also for the individual committees.

Woolwich – as reported earlier – expected in 18 months we will have the building complete.

Looking to have the flats built and sold and the church meeting in the new building.

The Heads of Terms (legal agreement) expected to be agreed soon.

Gt Haywood Chapel – at long last it has been sold.

Braughing – working through the sale, particular issue in that the Hall has to be marketed first to see if any community need prior to it being sold. Chapel position and listing a problem.

Graveyards – can also be an issue when the buyer breaks agreements.

Finance – Having investments with Castlefield has proved very beneficial – an efficient company. It was noted that churches can invest direct with Castlefield to give a better return than a bank account (BEST INCOME fund).

Giving – noted what the churches receive from EFCC, plea to the churches to consider their giving to the work of EFCC – to look to cover EFCC running costs – the delegates asked to go back to their churches and ask them to review their giving.

The Chairman conveyed thanks to the Trustees and particularly to Gwynne Evans as the Chairman of the Trustees and also for the support from Shirley Evans.

### **Office Report**

As detailed in the Report Book.

The chairman on behalf of the meeting thanked Anthony Harrison and David Smith for their work for EFCC.

Prayer followed.

### **Financial Report 2015**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Jeremy Allison (Smailes Goldie – Auditors for EFCC) to the meeting.

Jeremy presented the accounts for 2015 making reference to his report.

General Purposes Accounts – drew attention to the Resources Expended, much the same as 2014. Income shows a nett figure of £13014 and therefore reducing the deficit.

Memorial Hall grant increased from £10000.00 to £11000.00.

Noted the expended resources as detailed on page 10.

Also mentioned the breakdown of gifts received.

Trust Corporation accounts – Jeremy went through the income and expenditure account of Trust Corporation as shown on page 5 of the accounts, explaining headings:

Restricted – for particular purposes, Designated – by the Trustees, Unrestricted – free use.

Grants figure low as no sales in 2015, other income and interest – interest increased as more funds invested. Page 10 went through the detail – noted audit fees reduced, less accounts leads to less work leads to reduced fees.

Page 5 – nett outgoing resources - attention drawn to the need for churches to give.

Jeremy also commented on the good work that Castlefield are doing.

With the change in Accountant Standards it has meant that market value of properties have been brought in – to be done yearly. This accounts for the value difference on page 11 item 6.

General Purpose Account

It was proposed by Rev. Bill Harrow (Marden Congregational Church), seconded by Rev. Neville Rees (Libanus Congregational Church, Morriston) that the accounts should be accepted. The meeting unanimously agreed.

Trust Corporation Accounts

It was proposed by Mr Steve Webster (Bulford Chapel), seconded by Rev. Andrew Leach (Rochford Congregational Church) that the accounts should be accepted. The meeting unanimously agreed.

### **Appointment of Auditors**

It was proposed by Mrs Linda Webster (Bulford Chapel), seconded by Dr Digby James (Quinta Independent Evangelical Church,) and unanimously agreed that Smailes Goldie should be re-appointed as auditors for the forthcoming year.

Prayer followed.

### **Regional Secretaries' Reports**

#### **Report by Rev. Cyril Aston (Southern England and South Wales)**

Meeting at Bulford Chapel – 8 men met to share and have fellowship – it was an encouraging time to be repeated.

Timothy Dennick, St Ives – aware of his isolation, he is producing a monthly update for support and prayer.

Honiton – looking forward to the coming of Mike and Margaret Plant, encouragement to other local EFCC Churches.

Prayer requested

#### **Report by Rev. Bob Cotton (South-East England, East Anglia and London)**

The Report (previously circulated) was taken as read, Rev. Bob Cotton was unable to be with us as he was at Stanwell for their 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary meetings.

Prayer was particularly requested for the situations at Woolwich/ Bury St Edmunds/ Puckeridge.

#### **Report by Rev. Mike Plant (Northern England and North Wales)**

Report previously given.

### **Training Board Report**

The report was given by Rev. Bill Dyer (Training Officer).

Noted we have fine young men in the Ministry and young men in training, but we need more – churches need to grasp the vision, to see the need, to pray to the LORD of the harvest.

From weak churches God can revive by providing Godly Spirit anointed Ministers and their wives. Need churches to recognise men within, to recognise their potential and invest in them. Need spiritual dynamism – as in days past as EFCC came into being, God raised men up to lead, teach, pray, gospel driven – we need that today.

### **Evangelism Committee**

Report by Rev. Bill Harrow (Chairman of the Committee).

Bill Harrow mentioned the responses received to the questionnaire, these are being looked at by the Committee. Bill emphasised the need that churches should work together for gospel work and witness.

### **Pastoral Care Report**

Report by Rev. Bill Calder (Chairman Pastoral Care Committee)

The Report (previously circulated) was taken as read, Bill Calder was unable to be present and his apologies were conveyed.

### **Teacher Training Report**

Report by Rev. Jackie Brown

Neil Russell (Hayes Town Chapel) shared on the visit by Jackie Brown and David Plant as reported. It was raised what is the least amount of information you need for the child to be saved – what is the gospel. As the training went on we learnt the answer to these questions. Teaching was good to find the central truth and application. Also covered Child Protection matters. The handouts were beneficial – overall it was a very worthwhile day. Neil encouraged other churches to book Jackie Brown and team, small churches can come together.

Jackie Brown emphasised that it is important to reach out to the children and young people – they are the leaders of the future.

### **Welcome of New Ministers**

Rev. Jackie Brown drew attention to the number of New Ministers (detailed below).

#### **New Ministers**

Timothy Dennick - St Ives

Timothy Demore - Durrington

Simon Wakeling – Dagenham

Nic Donnelly – Dukinfield

Joshua Jones - Therfield

### **infellowship Report**

The infellowship report (previously circulated) was taken as read, Mr Robert Neilson (editor) was unable to be with us.

Mike Plant drew attention to the “Bookshelf” page, contributions would be gratefully received. The General Secretary’s page will be done by a variety of contributors.

### **Prayer Concern Report**

The Prayer Concern report (previously circulated) was taken as read, Rev. Andrew Leach (Editor) was unable to be with us and his apologies were conveyed..

### **Missionary Advisory Council Report**

Report by Rev. Peter Taylor, M.A.C. Committee Chairman previously circulated

Rev. Matt Rees (St Briavels Congregational Church) reported on his recent visit to Uganda.

Matt was able to meet Andrew and Julie Carter, their first year had been difficult – security paramount, they have had to have a safe room built into the house. Thankful to God that the security threat has eased. They have a new child Judah.

Andrew has settled well into his work.

Prayer points:

Church – that they will settle, feel at home and enjoy true fellowship.

Health – to be kept from illness, particularly the children, and anxiety.

Africa Bible University – for the 4<sup>th</sup> year students doing PhD and for more students.

Travel back to the UK – passport for Judah, also for time of refreshment and fellowship.

Stability in Uganda – political situation is tense.

Prayer followed

### **World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship Report**

Report previously circulated from Rev. Bill Harrow

Bill Harrow shared regarding his visit to the 2016 WECF conference in Florida as reported. Good conference, preaching outstanding – soon felt at home. Shared also the heart wrenching situation in South Africa. Needs shared in all parts of the world.

Bill encouraged attendance at the WECF conference to be held in the UK in 2019.

David Saunders shared on the tragic personal situation of a man from Manipur, also the building built in memory of his wife Joyce from the gifts given at the funeral.

David requested prayer, particularly the care of his son Mark – David will go where the Lord leads.

Prayer followed.

### **Church Reports**

Castle Street Evangelical Church, Tredegar – Minister Steve Foley

Steve shared on the difficulties in the Welsh valleys, unemployment, drugs, drink – the church is in a strategic situation, numbers small but great potential. Need more workers. They do door- door work + literature distribution. They have quarterly prayer meetings for revival – what a need. They have good relationships with other churches.

Love God/ Love His Word/Love Each Other

Ebenezer Evangelical Congregational Church, Pontnewydd – Minister Darran Dowe

Darran shared that he had been there 7 years – Pontnewydd has a population of 67000.

The church aims to be Word Centred/ Christ Minded/ Community Reaching People.

Involved in a variety of outreaches, this way – that way. They have a Foodbank and insist there is a gospel presentation. There are signs of change.

Puckeridge - Bill Harrow

Bill shared they will be moving to Puckeridge later in May, no church at present – Bill and Jan will be making themselves known in the community including the schools, will be in touch with the local press, contacting businesses – offering services. Puckeridge is a place with potential, will be contacting the local chapels to work together for mutual growth. Most of all the situation needs prayer.

Prayer followed.

### **Women2Women**

Mrs Margaret Plant reported.

The second Ladies Conference was held in April 2016, speaker Catherine Campbell.

Both conferences were well received, this time more people came on the Friday. The church reports given were well received – good to have time to listen – to talk together – to pray together. It is still a new work. Pray that other women join the organising Committee to take the work forward. 2017 conference dates 31<sup>st</sup> March – 1<sup>st</sup> April, speaker Jane McNabb.

Raised what about a Mens Conference!

### **Presentation to Mike and Margaret Plant**

Gifts were made to Mike and Margaret

Bill shared a word of appreciation for Mike on behalf of the fellowship - relaying how the Lord had provided General Secretary's for EFCC- Stan Guest/ Alan Tovey/ Mike Plant.

Mike had heard the Lord's call to serve him over these many years, he is well read, involved in other organisations to give profile for EFCC, preaching and giving pastoring support to the churches joyfully – at times being hard pressed.

First priority to Ministry/ Pastoral/ meeting those with individual needs – hence his call to Honiton. There have been disappointments and frustrations within his time – seeing a need for churches to support and be supported by EFCC. Mike sees EFCC as a broad church.

Also EFCC owe Margaret so much as she has supported Mike, particularly the times when he has been away from home. We give thanks to the Lord for Mike and his role as General Secretary.

Mike responded - confirming his heart for the Pastorate.

### **Greetings from Visitors/ Greetings from EFCC Churches and Associated Organisations**

No visitors.

Greetings and apologies received from individuals and churches within the fellowship. Greetings received from Affinity (Graham Nicholls), The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (Richard Underwood), WECF (Mike Plant), Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, USA (Ron Hamilton), Union of Congregational Churches, Bulgaria (Georgi Zhelev), Fellowship of Congregational Churches, Australia (Kerrian Cartledge).

### **Committee Election Result**

The Chairman informed the meeting of the results of the Committee Election.

Those elected to the Committee were:

Rev. Barnaby Alsop, Bulford Chapel

Rev. Tom Brand, Binfield Heath Congregational Church

Rev. Jackie Brown, The People's Hall Evangelical Church Bridgnorth

Rev. Bill Calder, St John's Congregational Church, Thornton Heath

Rev. Phil Grove, Tillingham Congregational Church

Rev. Mark Ladds, West Cliff Congregational Church Whitby

Rev. Matt Rees, St Briavels Congregational Church

The Chairman welcomed Matt Rees onto the Committee.

The Chairman gave a word of thanks to Darran and the church (particularly the Ladies) for their hospitality.

### **Closing Devotional Address**

Rev. Jackie Brown (Peoples Church, Bridgnorth) gave the closing devotional address from Genesis 1

Please note that full copies of the reports given can be found in the 2016 Annual General Meeting Report Book which was sent to all ministers and churches within the Fellowship.