

Church of Scotland, Geneva
Minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting
Sunday 1 June 2025, Auditoire de Calvin

1. Constitution

The meeting was opened in prayer. Present were: Arthur Askew, Sheree Atkinson-Bret, Jane Broere, Han Broere, Michael Bruce, Christine Buhler, Anyangwe Carys, Anyangwe Claimond, Christine Colliar, Freda Craeye, Laurent Djamen, Alison Eriksson, Arthur Griffith, Hazel Griffith, Lily Geissbühler, Carol Holschuh, Vivien Liu, Jane McKenzie, Ewart MacKenzie, Sheila Mesa, Jean Murray, Fiona Parrott, Mary Quément, Páraic Reámonn, Eleanor Strittmatter, Jurg Strittmatter, Chris Sutton, Edith Takem, Peter Tulloch, Rev. Graham Austin (moderator), Cornis van der Lugt, Ellen Walker.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were recorded from Nan Braunschweiger, Antonia Bruce and Makoto Ikeda

3. Minutes of the 2024 Annual Congregational Meeting

The minutes were approved as presented.

4. Announcement of other business

None

5. Finances

The Treasurer gave a brief overview of his report which had been previously circulated.

Budget 2025 and 2026

This is the first time a new budget module has been used for our Church which entails approving a revised budget. The meeting would be asked to approve the revised 2025 and provisional 2026 budgets. The reason for this is that technically, the budget, once approved, constitutes an effective authorization from the Congregation for the use of its resources to carry out its work. Without such an approval, any expenditures raised before the ACM are dependent on a future budget being adopted for them ultimately to be legal. By approving the budget in advance, this risk is removed. It also allows a more meaningful use of the budget by the Congregation as a strategic tool.

2025 will also be very different to what was imagined one year ago since our Minister, the Rev Laurence Twaddle, stood down at end May 2025. Not only will we miss him greatly, a change in Minister also brings with it several managerial challenges and also opportunities. Full-time Ministers are more expensive than locums. This means that the Church can plan for less expenditure in 2025 than was originally envisaged but it also needs to take a firm grasp over its plans for generating income while temporarily lacking the leadership which comes with a Minister.

The Treasurer wished to thank everyone supporting the finance work of the Church. The Finance sub-committee, the ushers for taking the collection, Arthur, Nicola and Han for banking the collection and Andrew McCallum and Robert Walker as independent examiners of the accounts. There are others and he apologised should anyone be forgotten.

Questions raised in respect of the 2026 budget were:

- a) Jane Broere asked if there was a budget line for the Manse refurbishment. The Treasurer confirmed that an amount of CHF8'500 had been allocated. It was agreed that quotes would be obtained before any work was carried out
- b) Arthur Askew asked if additional costs were to be expected with the linkage with Lausanne. Paraic responded that the basis of linkage stipulated that each congregation finances remain strictly separate
- c) Cornis van der Lugt questioned the low employment costs provided for in 2026. The Treasurer replied that the figure represented 6 month pro rata employment costs.

The 2024 accounts were approved as well as the revised 2025 and proposed 2026 budgets.

Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2026 Accounts

Andrew McCallum has kindly volunteered to continue as our independent examiner and this was unanimously agreed by the meeting.

In conclusion the Moderator expressed warm thanks to the Treasurer, on behalf of the congregation, for all his hard work carried out during the past year. Especially as new regulations were put in place given that the International Presbytery now reports as a charity to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

6. Annual Report

Sincere thanks were expressed to Paraic for compiling the report. He responded with thanks that it represents the efforts of all who have submitted articles and shows how much work is being done in the congregation. The Moderator was pleased to see new initiatives, encouraging fellowship.

As agreed at the 2024 ACM, where two articles from the Report would be highlighted, two neighbourhood group convenors spoke of their experiences.

Hazel

I am speaking to you on behalf of the Franco-Suisse North (1) Group. Rebecca, Arthur and I were asked to co-ordinate this group. We have 20+ people.

Geographically, we have church members from Divonne, La Côte, Lausanne . . . even the Valais, Mark! In fact, our group even includes Graeme and Meena in Nepal!

Our first event was in December 2024 and was to a Jazz Club in Nyon. 10 people attended. A second event, an afternoon tea chez les Griffith proved even more successful with 15 people attending.

In summary, feedback has been good and has shown that people have enjoyed time to talk together, and that they appreciate these informal groups.

Sherree

Strengthening Bonds: Our Neighbourhood Group's Journey

In our vibrant church community, we are fortunate to have six wonderful neighbourhood groups that bring congregational members closer together. On behalf of the

Grand Saconnex Group, I am delighted to share that the group gatherings have had a positive impact on all of us.

Our group has met twice so far and it was important to ensure that everyone could participate comfortably. Arrangements for transportation were made so that anyone with mobility issues could attend without worry. Whether it was by coordinating pick-ups, providing information about bus routes, or ensuring that there was adequate parking.

Our latest Afternoon tea gathering was hosted at Arthur Askew's beautiful home in Chambésy. It was a warm (in all senses of the word as June temperatures soared) and enjoyable occasion, bringing together around 12 members (plus a couple of visitors who were most welcome) out of our total group of around 18.

Looking ahead, we are excited about future activities such as group walks, cinema outings, and a communal lunch at a local restaurant. We all agreed that these events not only foster social connections but also create lasting memories and offer us the chance to move beyond simple greetings and connect on a more meaningful level.

We invite everyone in our Congregation to join us and experience the joy of community.

Sherree Atkinson (on behalf of the Grand Saconnex Neighbourhood Group).

The Report was received with thanks by the meeting.

7. Election of members to the Congregational Committee

As of this ACM, one member, elected to serve from the ACM 2022 to ACM 2025 had completed their term of office and was willing to stand for re-election, namely Sherree Atkinson-Bret. She was duly re-elected.

New members were standing from 2023 to 2026, namely Antonia Chapman Nyaho and Mary Quément and from 2025 to 2028, Carol Hohlshuh, Ina Hodge and George Hodge.

The ACM unanimously approved the election of these members to serve a 3-year term of office.

8. What we would be looking for in an Associate Minister

A general discussion was held on the attributes we would hope to see in an Associate Minister. Peter Tulloch stressed that age is not a factor, we have had many an older Minister in the past with an active inquisitive mindset. One point which was stressed was that the person should be prepared to speak French and connect with the local Protestant churches. Páraic added that we have just lost a Minister and as a congregation we need to take time to come to terms with it. During his period as locum, July to September, he planned to meet with neighbourhood groups on this topic.

Arthur Askew stressed the importance of having someone with an international perspective. A narrow view does not go down well in ecumenical Geneva circles. Ellen suggested that the person should be tolerant and inclusive as well as open to new ideas. Christine Colliar stated that it could be different in the future with a Ministry team, requiring a team player.

The Moderator concluded by inviting anyone with had yet to give their input to mail him.

9. Other Business

- a. Arthur Askew requested that someone kindly take over his place on Rassemblement des Eglises et Communautés Chrétiennes de Genève <https://www.recg.ch/>
- b. Jane Broere asked for feedback with the new Zoom setup for Sunday services
- c. Christine Buhler informed the meeting of a new EPG project with Geneva Tourisme and Chiavi della cultura <https://www.chiavicultura.ch/en/about-us> giving access to the Auditoire (and other Geneva churches) by means of registering online and using a code to open the door. The EPG, whilst owners of the Auditoire, have consulted with us from the beginning and are sensitive to our requirements. In parallel there are plans for an Avatar visual aid for the Auditoire. The quote for this is approximately CHF50K and would be financed by the EPG. Christine Buhler is a member of the working group for both projects.
- d. Christine Buhler recently had lunch with M. Stefan Keller, Secretary-General of the EPG. An open discussion was held, and he was sensitive to the topics raised, including the much awaited access for disabled persons. He promised to chase up the EPG architect to organise a meeting with everyone concerned.

10. Closure

The meeting was closed in prayer.