

Inaugural Council of Communities Meeting Leaves Attendees Looking Forward to the Next One

Written by Selina Luis

Overall the feeling at the end of the Council of Communities meeting was a positive one; Pastor Franklin explained that “Often when I come out of a meeting, I find myself feeling angry. This is the first time I haven’t felt that way.” With many others expressing how they felt “hopeful” about the future and were “looking forward” to the follow-up in the next meeting.



Pastors, together with one or more representatives from their local communities attended the Inaugural ‘Council of Communities’ meeting hosted by the West Country in the historical building of Cleeve House. The implementation of which was part of the ‘Restructuring Proposal’ that was agreed upon by an overwhelming majority last August (2015). Rather appropriately the inaugural meeting took place at the start of 2016, from Thursday 28th to Sunday 31st January.



After a wonderful meal prepared by the Kitchen team (consisting of Jose Barata, Naruko O’Connell and Mena Lall) on Thursday evening, the orientation took place with a brief introduction on how the following days would go. Tim Read was then voted in by the council as the Chairperson for the year; he will chair and assist Matthew Huish, UK National Leader, in the planning and running of subsequent meetings.

Sessions were done ‘Parliamentary style’ with participants seated at tables in a shoe-horn layout, and everyone able to see each other clearly. There were 8 sessions spread out over 3 days, with an hour and a half dedicated to each point, to discuss, plan and most importantly create action steps. Ronald German felt the council style was “very positive” and the idea of focussing each session on one topic to be “more fruitful”.





Early morning Hoon Dok Hae took place daily, with opportunities to join different groups and ensured as David Earle expressed there “was a good balance between internal and external” throughout. Most evenings were left free for fellowship between the council members, where everything from deep discussions, scrabble games or impromptu concerts took place. The latter of which caused some confusion for early sleepers, “I thought I was dreaming, I could hear ‘Proud Mary’ being sung but couldn’t understand why Tina Turner’s voice sounded like Bernard Chellew” laughed Mena Lall.



Saturday afternoon attendees visited the quaint town of Bradford-on-Avon where they could explore the local area before being invited to partake in traditional ‘Cream Tea’. After ducking down to enter ‘The Bridge Tea Rooms’ (a place that wouldn’t look amiss in a ‘Tim Burton’ movie), the council members were greeted by waitresses in traditional Victorian dress. Who then served freshly made scones, with Devonshire clotted cream and locally made jams which was washed down with loose-leaf English tea, and made

for a very pleasant afternoon; for some it was even the “highlight” of the meeting.

An evening prayer vigil was held via candlelight and around a bonfire on Saturday, attendees were able to have “deep prayers” and reflect on all they had discussed over the last few days.

As the meeting drew to a close on Sunday, the last session was taken up with voting on the 3 members who would represent the Council of Communities at the National Council. After some spirited discussion the votes were in, with Jeff Bateman, David Earle and Cecilie Fortune gaining the majority.

