

VACANCY

GENERAL SECRETARY FULL TIME

JOB TITLE:

General Secretary of the Free Churches Group [FCG] Company Secretary of the Free Church Federal Council [Incorporated] [FCFC].

LOCATION:

London Office of FCFC/CTE

ACCOUNTABLE TO:

The FCFC Moderator or FCG Convenor acting for the Trustees [the Directors of the Free Church Federal Council Inc., the Trust body charged with caring for the historical assets of the Free Church movement].

RESPONSIBLE FOR:

FC staff members and volunteers

KEY RELATIONSHIPS:

The Moderator and Convener of the Free Churches Group, the General Secretaries and Representatives of the member churches of the Free Churches Group, the General Secretary of Churches Together in England and CTE staff.

BACKGROUND

Since 2001 CTE and FCG have been committed to working in close collaborative partnership, and the intention is that this partnership will continue to be developed for the benefit of all the Churches.

FREE CHURCH IDENTITY

In May 2011 during a 24-hour residential gathering, the members of the FCG met to reconsider the place of the Free Church in the ecumenical scene and, consequently, how the Free Church Federal Council and Free Churches Group should operate to support what emerged as a fresh emphasis on Free Churchmanship.

The essence of the 24 hours together was captured in the form of 'The Cotswold Statement'. Because the role of the FCFC General Secretary is expected to reflect the sentiments of the Statement its contents are included here –

We re-affirm our commitment to the importance of the Free Churches Group within the strategic relationships of Churches Together in England.

We believe that the Free Churches Group should have a clear identity alongside the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches and other streams within CTE.

We need to build on this in order to strengthen Christian unity.

We believe that there is a continuing Free Churches role within society, particularly with regard to chaplaincy and education.

We believe we have a responsibility to encourage our denominations to recognise their Free Church identity and to explore further ways of speaking out together in the public arena, for example through a closer relationship with the Joint Public Issues Team of the Methodist, Baptist and United Reformed Churches.

We believe that the resources of the Free Church Federal Council (Inc.) should be effectively used to strengthen the mission of the Free Churches.

Accordingly, it is hoped that the new General Secretary will play a principal part in developing the confidence of the Free Churches in their own identity as a critical stream within British church life, enabling them to engage in effective mission in and to British Society.

CONTACT & CO-ORDINATION

The General Secretary will have the responsibility for furthering joint working, service and representation by the Free Churches of England and Wales. Whilst respecting the autonomy of the denominations the post-holder shall encourage collaboration on the widest acceptable basis. The person appointed shall seek to foster a spirit of mutual openness and understanding, using his/her best endeavours to influence the members of the FCG to continue their historic witness, as laid out in their Declaratory Statement, to the benefit of both the other churches and the nation.

In seeking to fulfil such a function the General Secretary will act as a personal contact point within CTE for all the Free Churches, servicing the FCG and receiving policy direction from it. The post-holder, therefore, acts as secretary of the Group Meeting and the Board of Directors of the Free Church Federal Council (Inc).

The post-holder is also required to ensure that within the wider counsels of CTE particular functions are fulfilled on behalf of the Free Churches collectively by Free Church [or Free Church-related] staff and by relevant specialist reference committees and should ensure that those committees receive any necessary guidance on Free Church policy issues.

While the role can involve representation of the whole Free Church constituency, many tasks are done principally for the sake of the smaller denominations (that is all except the largest three: Methodist, Baptist Union of Great Britain and United Reformed Church). In general the largest denominations value what the Free Churches Group does on NHS and prison chaplaincy and on education policy while the smaller denominations are particularly interested in issues where government proposes new laws and regulations affecting church life, such as are dealt with by the Churches' Legislation Advisory Service [CLAS] of which the FCFC General Secretary is a member. It is intended that some of the tasks undertaken for the sake of the smaller denominations may also be extended to those small denominations, which are members of Churches Together in England but not of the Free Churches Group.

FREE CHURCH 'ECUMENICAL OFFICER'

The post-holder has the responsibility of engaging all the Free Churches in inter-church collaboration to the greatest extent possible, particularly in the further development of the collaborative partnership with Churches Together in England (CTE), where possible net-working to that end.

The post-holder needs to monitor that relationship and draw representatives of the denominations into shaping its future, while managing the delicate balance between the interests of Free Churches which are members of CTE, those English Free Churches which do not choose to be members of CTE, and the three denominations based in Wales which relate to Cytun. Good personal relations with officers of the ecumenical instruments, secretaries of denominations and officers of the Free Church Council of Wales are essential.

From time to time the post holder may be invited to serve on denominational committees to represent the wider Free Church/ecumenical interest. The present post holder is Secretary to the Protestant Dissenting Ministers and Deputies of the three denominations. This responsibility does not necessarily go with the post, but is to be kept within its purview, though it has to be fulfilled by a member of the URC, Baptist or Congregational denominations.

SUPPORT FOR THE MODERATOR AND REPRESENTATION

The post-holder supports the office of the Free Churches Moderator, providing a point of contact with successive Moderators for official, church and voluntary organisations and, when required, deputising for the Moderator in response to invitations. He/she consults with the Moderator and Convener as well as with the leadership of the Free Church denominations and stands ready to represent Free Church views to a variety of authorities and in response to media enquiries.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

An area of work currently identified as needing extra capacity is that of public affairs/ social responsibility. This would involve liaison with, and the development of a good working relationship with the Joint Public Issues Team, the circulation of government and other documents seeking a response from the churches, being in a position to alert all churches of proposed changes in governance and legislation, especially as they apply to charitable and ecclesiastical bodies, and sustaining the participative processes where a church voice is being sought.

The post-holder will be expected to attend consultations called by Government and to take part when occasion arises in deputations to Government or consultations with civil servants.

As CTE are not mandated to be involved in these activities, the social responsibility role should be extended into a support role for CTE member churches as the NHS & Prison Chaplaincy and Education roles are.

COMPANY SECRETARY OF THE FREE CHURCH FEDERAL COUNCIL [INCORPORATED]

In order to exercise proper stewardship of the Council's resources and to ensure that the Council's mission is effectively funded, the secretary, with the Council's Finance Officer and the Treasurer, is necessarily involved in a certain amount of administration, corresponding with and giving instructions to the Council's legal advisers, property agents, auditors, investment executives etc, corresponding with funding bodies, and preparing the Trustees' Annual Report to submit, with the Accounts to both the Charity Commissioners and Company House

OTHER TASKS

From time to time the Moderator, acting for the trustees, may ask the General Secretary to undertake tasks not covered by the terms outlined above, which are judged to be in the interests of the mission of the Free Churches.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The post is open to ordained ministers and lay people

Essential

Personal Attributes:

- (a) Commitment to the Christian faith and life
- (b) Good standing in one of churches in membership of the Free Churches Group
- (c) Ability to work collaboratively and flexibly
- (d) Self-directing with capacity to prioritise
- (e) Ability to meet deadlines

Education:

- (a) Theological competence

Skills/Aptitudes:

- (a) Written and oral communication
- (b) Analytical skills

Knowledge/ Experience

- (a) Knowledge of Free Churches and empathy with the breadth of views within them.
- (b) Experience at dealing with those in leadership in church and society
- (c) Experience in management of church, charity or voluntary organisation
- (d) Experience in planning meetings and executing their outcomes
- (e) Good IT and Presentational Skills

Circumstances:

- (a) Willingness and ability to travel within England & Wales, with occasional overnight stays

Desirable

Education:

- (a) Evidence of research/ reading in proffered area of interest

Knowledge/Experience:

- (a) Knowledge of ecumenical movement and ecumenical bodies in England & Wales
- (b) Knowledge of Churches other than the Free Churches
- (c) Staff management and supervision

GENERAL CONDITIONS:

Equality of opportunity, and diversity

Equal treatment amongst people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives is one of the central precepts of FCFC. As an employing body it values the richness, which this equal treatment brings to the workplace. Therefore an equal opportunities policy is in place which not only requires the employer to fulfil certain obligations but also places responsibilities on staff. Staff found to be contravening the policy or acting outside its spirit would be subject to disciplinary action, which could lead to dismissal.

FCFC is committed to implement the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act and to improving opportunities for people with disabilities.

Standards of Behaviour and Conduct

Staff are expected to act at all times with due consideration for others and in a manner befitting their position as employees of a body representative of the Churches and as professionals, whatever their job.

Health and Safety Responsibilities

Staff must ensure that they do not endanger themselves or others by any act or omission on their part.

Confidentiality

Staff must not pass on to unauthorised persons, any information obtained in the course of their duties without the permission of their line manager.

Other Information

FCFC operates a no-smoking policy within the workplace.

How to apply

To apply, please write a letter of application which describes how your experience, skills, knowledge, theological understanding and qualities make you suitable for appointment to this post, and send a detailed CV, together with full details of two referees, to Geoff Lomas Convenor Free Churches Group c/o Churches Together in England, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH no later than 31st March 2012. Electronic applications should be sent to geoffjlomas@btinternet.com. Applications received after this date will not be considered.

The list of duties and the 'person specification' for this job describe the sort of skills, experience, knowledge or abilities which we are looking for. We will interview those whose applications best meet these criteria, so it is very important that you should use your application to explain how you can match them.

Please give the names, addresses and telephone numbers of two people who are prepared to give you a reference for this job. If you have previously been employed, your referees should be people who have direct experience of your work through working closely with you for a considerable period, and at least one of them should be your formal line manager in your most recent job. Otherwise they can be people who know you from recent college, or voluntary experience. It is helpful if you can tell us briefly how each referee knows you (e.g. 'line manager', 'work colleague', 'college tutor').

Your referees will be asked to look at the job details and tell us if, in their opinion, you could do the job. We will assume that we can approach them at any stage unless you tell us otherwise when you apply. So, if you wish us to ask for your permission before approaching a particular referee, or to contact them only under certain circumstances (for example if we are calling you for interview, or if we have made you a conditional offer), you must state this explicitly alongside the details of the relevant referee(s).

Your appointment will be subject to (i) the provision of original documentation which indicates your right to work in the UK, (ii) a satisfactory enhanced Criminal Records Bureau certificate and (iii) the completion of an initial probationary period of six months.

Equal opportunities at Free Churches Group

As an Equal Opportunity employer, we positively encourage applications from people of different backgrounds. All our jobs are filled in line with our equal opportunities code of practice, which helps us make sure that men and women, people of different races, and those with disabilities are all treated fairly.

Data protection

All data supplied by applicants will be used only for the purposes of determining their suitability for the post, and will be held in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Screening

Pre-employment screening may be carried out.