

Financial Priorities and Representation in #theFIEC: An Inquiry -*Brendon Naicker, Director of IFJR (www.ifjr.org)*

Introduction

The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC), a registered charity with a reported income of £2,177,698 for the financial year ending 31 August 2023, occupies a significant position within the UK's evangelical landscape.¹ Despite its substantial financial capacity, the FIEC's decision to assign Justin Gill as both IT Manager and Intercultural Ministry Advisor raises critical questions about its commitment to diversity, representation, and structural equity.² This dual role suggests a potential misalignment between the organisation's financial resources and its prioritisation of intercultural ministry, a concern that warrants closer scrutiny.

This paper examines whether the FIEC's financial allocation reflects a genuine commitment to encouraging inclusivity or whether its approach inadvertently perpetuates tokenism. By analysing the organisation's leadership structures, financial priorities, and comparative practices within the faith-based sector, this inquiry seeks to highlight areas for improvement and propose actionable recommendations for meaningful reform.

Financial Capacity vs. Leadership Investment

FIEC's Financial Standing

The FIEC operates with considerable financial resources, as evidenced by its latest financial report, which details an income exceeding £2 million.³ These funds are allocated across staffing, administrative functions, and ministry initiatives, reflecting the organisation's capacity to invest in strategic priorities. Given this financial strength, it is reasonable to expect that the FIEC would prioritise the recruitment of experienced professionals for key leadership roles, particularly in areas as critical as intercultural ministry and representation.

The Dual Role of IT Manager and Intercultural Ministry Advisor

The appointment of Justin Gill to simultaneously serve as IT Manager and Intercultural Ministry Advisor is emblematic of a broader issue.⁴ While combining roles may be a pragmatic solution in smaller organisations with limited resources, the FIEC's financial

¹ Charity Commission, "FIEC Financial Report (2023)," UK Register of Charities, accessed February 12, 2025, <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/5083144>.

² FIEC, "Meet Our Team," FIEC Website, accessed February 12, 2025, <https://fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/staff>.

³ Charity Commission, "FIEC Financial Report (2023)."

⁴ FIEC, "Meet Our Team."

standing suggests that such a decision is not driven by necessity but rather by a lack of prioritisation. Intercultural ministry, which requires specialised expertise in theology, sociology, and community engagement, is fundamentally distinct from IT management. The conflation of these roles risks diluting the focus and effectiveness of intercultural initiatives, signalling that such efforts may not be treated as a strategic imperative.

This approach stands in stark contrast to best practices in organisational leadership, where roles requiring distinct skill sets are typically separated to ensure both areas receive the attention and expertise they demand. By merging these responsibilities, the FIEC risks undermining the credibility of its intercultural ministry efforts and perpetuating the perception that diversity and inclusion are secondary concerns.

Concerns About Tokenism and Structural Commitment

Token Representation Without Structural Reform

The FIEC's decision to assign intercultural ministry responsibilities to an individual already tasked with IT management raises concerns about tokenism. *Tokenism, as defined in organisational studies, occurs when marginalised individuals or issues are given symbolic representation without the accompanying authority, resources, or structural support necessary to effect meaningful change.*⁵ In this context, the dual role may serve as a superficial gesture toward inclusivity rather than a genuine commitment to addressing systemic inequities.

A dedicated, full-time Intercultural Ministry Director with relevant expertise and decision-making authority would demonstrate a more robust commitment to diversity. Such a role would enable the FIEC to develop and implement long-term strategies for increasing ethnic representation within its leadership and encouraging cultural engagement across its network. Without this level of investment, the organisation risks reinforcing existing structural inequalities rather than dismantling them.

Comparing Industry Standards

The FIEC's approach to intercultural ministry contrasts sharply with that of other faith-based organisations that prioritise diversity and inclusion. For instance, the Church of England and the Methodist Church have established dedicated teams and full-time roles focused on racial justice and intercultural engagement.⁶ These organisations recognise that meaningful progress requires specialised leadership, strategic oversight, and sustained investment.

By comparison, the FIEC's decision to merge intercultural ministry with IT responsibilities suggests either a lack of understanding of the complexities involved or an unwillingness to allocate the necessary resources. This discrepancy highlights a missed opportunity for the

⁵ Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 23.

⁶ Church of England, "Racial Justice Directorate," Church of England Official Website, accessed February 12, 2025, <https://www.churchofengland.org>.

FIEC to align itself with industry standards and demonstrate leadership in encouraging a more inclusive evangelical community.

Financial Prioritisation and Ethical Accountability

Where is the Money Going?

A review of the FIEC’s financial statements reveals significant expenditures on administrative costs, conferences, and theological training.⁷ While these areas are undoubtedly important, the absence of a dedicated budget for intercultural ministry and representation initiatives is striking. Given the organisation’s substantial income, the lack of investment in this area raises questions about its financial priorities and ethical accountability.

If the FIEC is to uphold its stated commitment to biblical justice and inclusivity, it must ensure that its financial allocations reflect these values. This includes investing in specialised leadership, developing targeted programs to increase ethnic representation, and encouraging a culture of accountability within its structures.

Implications for Institutional Accountability

As an organisation that claims to uphold biblical principles of justice and equity, the FIEC has a moral and theological obligation to ensure that its leadership reflects the diversity of the communities it serves. The New Testament provides clear examples of the early church addressing systemic inequities, such as the appointment of deacons to ensure fair distribution of resources (Acts 6:1-7). Similarly, the epistle of James admonishes believers to avoid partiality and uphold the dignity of all individuals (James 2:1-4).

The FIEC’s current approach to intercultural ministry falls short of these biblical standards. By failing to allocate sufficient resources and authority to this area, the organisation risks perpetuating a culture of exclusion and undermining its own credibility as a champion of justice.

The Need for Real Reform

The FIEC’s decision to combine the roles of IT Manager and Intercultural Ministry Advisor is symptomatic of a broader failure to prioritise diversity and representation. While financial constraints might justify such an approach in smaller organisations, the FIEC’s multi-million-pound income suggests that it has the capacity to fund a full-time, dedicated position in this area.

To demonstrate a genuine commitment to diversity and justice, the FIEC must take the following steps:

⁷ Charity Commission, “FIEC Financial Report (2023).”

- I. ***Hire a Full-Time Intercultural Ministry Director:*** This individual should possess expertise in theology, sociology, or cultural studies and be empowered to develop and implement long-term strategies for increasing ethnic representation and encouraging cultural engagement.
- II. ***Allocate a Specific Budget for Diversity Initiatives:*** Financial resources should be earmarked for programs aimed at addressing systemic inequities, such as leadership training for underrepresented groups and intercultural competency workshops.
- III. ***Implement Transparent Reporting Mechanisms:*** The FIEC should regularly publish data on its efforts to improve ethnic representation within its leadership structures, ensuring accountability and encouraging trust among its members and stakeholders.

Without these steps, the FIEC risks reinforcing a reputation of tokenism rather than genuine reform. The organisation must decide whether it will continue with symbolic gestures or take meaningful action to embody the principles of justice and inclusivity that it professes to uphold.

FELLOWSHIP OF INDEPENDENT EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

		Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total 2023	Unrestricted funds 2022	Restricted funds 2022	Total 2022
	Notes	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income from:							
Donations and legacies	3	989,063	932,468	1,921,531	1,089,424	116,883	1,206,307
Charitable activities	4	234,407	-	234,407	55,827	-	55,827
Investments	5	20,740	105	20,845	2,750	165	2,915
Other income	6	915	-	915	1,654	-	1,654
Total income		1,245,125	932,573	2,177,698	1,149,655	117,048	1,266,703
Expenditure on:							
Charitable activities	7	1,320,079	1,262,596	2,582,675	964,249	366,135	1,330,384
Net expenditure		(74,954)	(330,023)	(404,977)	185,406	(249,087)	(63,681)
Transfers between funds	20	-	-	-	3,484	(3,484)	-
Net movement in funds		(74,954)	(330,023)	(404,977)	188,890	(252,571)	(63,681)
Reconciliation of funds:							
Fund balances at 1 September 2022		1,539,517	1,045,004	2,584,521	1,350,627	1,297,575	2,648,202
Fund balances at 31 August 2023		1,464,563	714,981	2,179,544	1,539,517	1,045,004	2,584,521

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

FELLOWSHIP OF INDEPENDENT EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2023 £	Restricted funds 2023 £	Total 2023 £	Unrestricted funds 2022 £	Restricted funds 2022 £	Total 2022 £
Donations and gifts	937,428	43,631	981,059	1,064,616	116,883	1,181,499
Legacies receivable	33,071	128,709	161,780	24,808	-	24,808
Grants	18,564	760,128	778,692	-	-	-
	<u>989,063</u>	<u>932,468</u>	<u>1,921,531</u>	<u>1,089,424</u>	<u>116,883</u>	<u>1,206,307</u>
Donations and gifts						
Churches	856,058	15,411	871,469	807,842	53,864	861,706
Individuals	52,263	23,444	75,707	171,949	40,325	212,274
Preacher Honoraria	10,323	-	10,323	12,367	-	12,367
Gift Aid	3,930	4,776	8,706	2,949	4,859	7,808
Other	14,854	-	14,854	69,509	17,835	87,344
	<u>937,428</u>	<u>43,631</u>	<u>981,059</u>	<u>1,064,616</u>	<u>116,883</u>	<u>1,181,499</u>

FELLOWSHIP OF INDEPENDENT EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023

7 Expenditure on charitable activities

	Church Training and support information		Outreach	Other evangelical organisation support	Develop-ment	Total
	2023 £	2023 £	2023 £	2023 £	2023 £	2023 £
Direct costs						
Staff costs	457,165	194,811	20,234	25,537	-	697,747
Depreciation and impairment	25,000	-	-	-	-	25,000
Establishment costs	30,498	12,996	1,350	1,703	-	46,547
Staff travel	35,033	14,929	1,551	1,957	-	53,470
Care and recognition of churches	2,404	-	-	-	-	2,404
Preaching and church visits	950	-	-	-	-	950
Leaders Conference	189,408	-	-	-	-	189,408
Theological advice	5,516	-	-	-	-	5,516
Women's ministry	3,451	-	-	-	-	3,451
London team	5,031	-	-	-	-	5,031
Pastors' network	11,177	-	-	-	-	11,177
Together magazine	-	17,574	-	-	-	17,574
Primer	-	1,870	-	-	-	1,870
Media and publicity	-	12,981	-	-	-	12,981
Hub Conference	-	17,579	-	-	-	17,579
Other conferences	-	18,539	-	-	-	18,539
Mission information and support	-	-	696	-	-	696
Representation of other bodies	-	-	-	62	-	62
Support of Affinity	-	-	-	16,938	-	16,938
Development	-	-	-	-	15,513	15,513
Mission projects and teams	-	-	408	-	-	408
Youth and childrens work	1,747	-	-	-	-	1,747
	<u>767,380</u>	<u>291,279</u>	<u>24,239</u>	<u>46,197</u>	<u>15,513</u>	<u>1,144,608</u>
Grant funding of activities (see note 8)	29,250	161,400	1,029,540	-	-	1,220,190
Share of support and governance costs (see note 9)						
Support	131,183	55,137	5,726	7,229	-	199,275
Governance	11,071	5,917	995	619	-	18,602
	<u>938,884</u>	<u>513,733</u>	<u>1,060,500</u>	<u>54,045</u>	<u>15,513</u>	<u>2,582,675</u>
Analysis by fund						
Unrestricted funds	882,841	352,333	29,351	54,045	1,509	1,320,079
Restricted funds	56,043	161,400	1,031,149	-	14,004	1,262,596
	<u>938,884</u>	<u>513,733</u>	<u>1,060,500</u>	<u>54,045</u>	<u>15,513</u>	<u>2,582,675</u>

Bibliography

1. Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.
2. Charity Commission. "FIEC Financial Report (2023)." *UK Register of Charities*. Accessed February 12, 2025. <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/5083144>.
3. Church of England. "Racial Justice Directorate." *Church of England Official Website*. Accessed February 12, 2025. <https://www.churchofengland.org>.
4. FIEC. "Meet Our Team." *FIEC Website*. Accessed February 12, 2025. <https://fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/staff>.