

**General Assembly of Unitarian  
& Free Christian Churches**

**Executive Committee**

**Approved Minutes of Meeting**

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

**Essex Hall, London**

**Present** : Joan Cook, Rev David Usher, Alison Thursfield, Rev John Clifford, Robert Ince, Cathie Masztalerz, Rev Andy Pakula, Rev Martin Whitell (Convener)

**In Attendance:** Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute-taker)

**Session 1**

*Saturday Opening Devotions: Martin read from the book "Be the Change" by Stephen Shick about "Balance"*

**1. Apologies**

**2. Appointment of Convenor**

David proposed that Martin be re-appointed as Convenor, this was seconded by Alison. The proposal was carried unanimously.

Andy suggested that the EC should think about ways to alleviate the burden of the job of the Convenor.

**3. Minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

Pg 7 item b) Ministry – it was agreed that this item relating to the Roll(s) would be referred back to the Director of Ministry for clarification.

The Minutes were then agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

**4. Matters arising for noting or to include in Agenda for later Discussion - none**

**5. Reports of Strategy Groups**

**Local Leadership Strategy Group** – noted with the following:

- **Agreed** that the Convenor would extend the thanks of the EC to Dot Hewerdine for her dedication and work during her chairmanship of the LLSG.

- A joint Chair has been proposed for the LLSG; Margaret Robinson and Kate Buchanan – approved subject to the Chief Officer clarifying how communication between the Group, Essex Hall and the EC will take place.
- Peter Davis was ratified by the EC as a member of the LLSG. Action group members and service pool of volunteers noted.
- Joyce Ashworth will no longer co-ordinate CAP.
  
- Chief Officer to liaise with the LLSG with regard to budget information for 2012/2013
- The EC are pleased to note that the LLSG are going to oversee the work of the Worship Panel with regard to the Worship packs and confirmed that production and distribution would be managed by staff as previously if hard copies were produced.

**Ministry Strategy Group** – noted with the following:

- Good work in progress.
- Robert raised a question from the Rev Stephen Lingwood regarding the objective and it was confirmed that “access to ministry” need not necessarily be to “professional” ministry depending upon the wishes of the congregation, and will relay this response.
- EC noted with regret the deletion of the Rev Cal Courtney from the Roll of ministers. The role of the EC regarding the Rolls to be clarified in line with the Guidelines.
- The Chief Officer attended a meeting at UCM with the Rev Linda Phillips and the Rev Stephen Lingwood on the potential financial implications caused by the increase in student fees and the increase in student numbers along with overall college finances.. A letter from UCM is to follow and this will be discussed at the next Ministry Strategy Group meeting to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> June and results of this discussion will be raised at the July EC meeting.
- The Ministry Strategy Group has appointed the Rev Sarah Tinker as Chair of the Interview Panel and the Rev David Shaw will replace the Rev Chris Goacher on the Interview Panel.
- Noted in particular item number 14 – “Suggested contents of training” with proposals to be developed.

**Visibility Strategy Group** – noted with the following:

- The Group has agreed to help Sheffield Fulwood with their recent motion on assisted suicide which was referred back at the 2012 Annual meetings for further consultation. This would assist in the development of a formal process to deal with Social Justice Issues which needed to be developed’ It was agreed that a template be drafted by the Visibility Strategy Group for EC approval with only one or two issues being dealt with at any one time.

- The Visibility Strategy Group had indicated that they would not spend the additional budget allocated to them at the last meeting to work on their bid but would wish to clarify the budget for 2012/13. The Convenor was of the view that funding should be based on the EC's expectations of what the Groups should deliver.

Items would be considered in confidential session (below item 18.)

## 6. EC Communications

The Chief Officer had prepared a paper on openness and communication with Guidance from the Charity Commission, the Quakers, the Unitarian Universalist Association and a proposal from the Rev John Allerton from NELUM.

A lengthy discussion followed on this item with very firm views from members of the EC being put forward. The consensus is that the most important thing that the EC should be communicating to the Movement is vision, hope and plans for the future; not the "nuts and bolts" of the business sections of the meetings.

Andy Pakula proposed a number of actions. EC Key messages to be published in the Inquirer and posted on the GA web site, EC minutes to be posted on the GA web site. Make a priority of subscribing 90% of Unitarians with email addresses to Uni-News. Alternate EC meetings to be open to representatives of the Inquirer and the Unitarian (and other applicants by permission?). Convenor and CO to conduct bi-monthly telephone conferences to which Unitarians can dial in. These would be recorded and made available by re-broadcast. Alternate Strategy group meetings will be open to representatives of the Inquirer and the Unitarian (and other applicants by permission?). Send regular (monthly) pieces designed in content, size, and level of detail for insertion into newsletters. All congregations must provide the contact info of the appropriate individual(s). Communication with ministers by having a designated link.

It was **agreed** that the EC links will work towards capturing email addresses of 90% of the Movement for Uni-news.

It was **agreed** that a monthly Newsletter article containing inspirational material as well as the "nuts & bolts" items of EC meetings" would be provided for use in congregational newsletters. The Chief Officer will deal with the operational issues of the newsletter with a rota being set up of EC members for content. The Convenor to check. (These articles will come with a disclaimer that the content is the opinion purely of the writer and not the opinion of the EC as a body).

It was **agreed** to explore the idea of a bi-monthly telephone conference call to which Unitarians could dial in.

It was **agreed** that the Convenor would communicate with the Ministerial Fellowship with regard to improving engagement with ministers.

The proposal of the Rev John Allerton of a meeting with the Districts was **agreed** with the Chief Officer, Joan and John to work up proposals for the next meeting for a gathering in the Autumn; most likely the afternoon of the 17 November 2012 following an EC meeting.

Discussion took place on the proposal that EC meeting be opened to outside attendees. A vote was then taken on the proposal that the time was not yet right to open EC meetings to members of the general public.

**6 agreed and 2 against**

A vote was then taken that the time is not yet right to open EC meetings to the Inquirer and the Unitarian.

**5 agreed and 3 against**

The Chief Officer stated that if the EC meetings were to be opened to the general public or the denominational press a clear procedure would need to be in place. It was **agreed** that the agenda of the next EC meeting would be planned and managed as if it were an open meeting with confidential items identified. It was to be stressed that this is a continuing process and be subject to review.

**Session 2**

**7. Annual Meeting Report** - noted with the following:

The general feedback has been positive and the overall organisation went well. An online survey was underway. The Annual Meetings Panel for 2013 had held its first meeting. A minister has been identified for the Anniversary service 2013 and proposed keynote speakers.

It was **agreed** that the process of choosing an Anniversary Preacher needs to be addressed and an improved method put in place well before the 2014 meeting

The Convenor was asked to convey the thanks of the EC to Andrew Mason for his diligence toward the meetings despite a family bereavement.

John has **agreed** oversee the disability issues for the 2013 Annual meeting

A letter had been received from the Ministerial Fellowship on the process for motions and it was **agreed** to refer it to the Constitutional Review Group for their attention noting the actions already being taken (above Visibility Strategy Group)

## 8. Financial Reports

- 8.1 Management Accounts – 31 March 2012** - noted. Forecast showing year end deficit of £11,000.
- 8.2 Unitarian Investment Panel – 15 February 2012** - noted  
The Chief Officer will be attending the next Unitarian Investment Panel meeting
- 8.3 Arrangements for Honorary Treasurer – agreed** that Robert would act as Interim Honorary Treasurer whilst a new Honorary Treasurer is sought. The Convenor, Chief Officer & Robert were agreed as signatories for the GA bank accounts with changes to mandates. Robert also agreed to have a look at the role description
- 8.4 Millennium Fund Application - NUF** - **agreed** to award NUF £250 for autocue equipment and software
- 8.5 Nightingale Centre - Charity Commission Scheme**  
The latest proposal from the Charity Commission was **adopted**. Robert reported that the Charity Commission had recommended that a review of the Charity's tax position be undertaken and this would be considered at the next Management Committee meeting.

## Session 3

### 9. 2020 Congregational Development Programme – Update

Andy gave a verbal update and asked that the EC ratify two new members to the 2020 Board:  
Christopher Sande – **agreed**  
Rev Daniel Costley - **agreed**

The main focus at the moment is to get the board together. There is enthusiasm and support within the movement for the programme with some concern about process and buy-in. The Bowland Trust is willing to double up on contributions providing it does not impact on the GA's unrestricted contributions. The Unitarian and the Inquirer have agreed to publish occasional articles and there is a dedicated Facebook page that is attracting a lot of attention. Mid 2013 is the envisioned start of accepting applications from the 2020 Fund

### 10. Becoming a welcoming Congregation

A resource pack was presented developed primarily by Yvonne Aburrow to be placed on GA website. It was **agreed** in principle and the Chief Officer to liaise with Yvonne Aburrow to finalise the text

### 11. Other reports

**GA President** – noted with the following:  
John flagged up that there is a letter with regard to Presidential Expenses; the Chief Officer to speak to the GA President, Elisabeth

Dyson-Jones in this regard.

**Youth Co-ordinator** – noted with the following:

- The Budget will be discussed in September 2012.
- It was **agreed** that promotional work could begin on Youth Sunday to be held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2013
- Work is progressing on the Safeguarding Policy. The differences between the legal position in England and Wales and Scotland was emphasised and needed to be included in policy statements.
- It was **agreed** that records would be kept at Essex Hall with regard to congregations that do not wish to accept the policy despite the encouragement of the General Assembly as ultimately each congregation was accountable for their actions.

**12. Chief Officers Report** - noted with the following:

- The Chief Officer is struggling to get names to approach to stand on the Electoral Panel; Alison put forward a name for him to contact.
- It was **agreed** that Golders Green's records, which the B&FUA could not accept as it was not the Custodian Trustee, would be kept in safekeeping in the vault in Essex Hall.
- The Chief Officer had attended a meeting at the Home Office on Thursday with regard to same sex marriage in a place of worship. This had proved useful in cementing the relationship between Unitarians and the Quakers as Paul Parker from the Quakers was also present. There are some concerns which were voiced by Lynne Featherstone with regard to the high cost of registering religious premises for civil partnerships.
- The Chief Officer received notification of the ICUU European Conference from 31 August – 4 September and **agreed** that leaders within the strategic groups represent the General Assembly. Chief Officer to progress. It was **agreed** to approve the establishment of a "Restricted" Fund for Simple Gifts. It was **agreed** that the Chief Officer would agree with the Bowland Trust the priority list in which the donations would be matched.

## Session 4

**13.A.O.B.** – Risk Register to be on the July EC agenda

**14.Key Messages** – agreed as circulated

**15. Arrangements for Future Meetings:**

July 6<sup>th</sup> 2-6 pm 7.30-9pm

7<sup>th</sup> 9-3 pm

**LKH Manchester**  
**Sept 1<sup>st</sup> 9-5 pm – London**  
**Nov 16<sup>th</sup> 2-6pm – 17<sup>th</sup> 9-5pm – London (subsequently suggested**  
**Manchester to incorporate District meeting (see above))**  
**Jan 4<sup>th</sup> 9 – 5pm 5<sup>th</sup> 9 -12.30pm**

The meeting went into confidential session

Mary-Jean left the meeting at this point. Derek McAuley left for item 16.

#### **16. Staff Salaries**

It was **agreed** to award staff a 1.5% increase in basic salaries in recognition of the changes that were impacting upon their roles.

#### **17. Staffing Position**

The Chief Officer reported on issues relating to staffing and the implementation of the staffing review. The positions of Head of Finance and Administration and IT / Communications Officer had been advertised.

#### **18. Visibility Strategy Group**

A proposal relating to UKunitarianTV was received from the Visibility Strategy group and the background discussed. It was agreed that there was merit in some form of web-based facility and that further discussions needed to be held with the Visibility Strategic Group on its proposal to ensure proper accountability. Any donations received to be held in suspense until this was clarified or if requested returned to the donor.

A proposal had also been made as to the future leadership of the Visibility Strategy Group. It was agreed that this be pursued with the individual with discussion to take place with other members of the group in due course.

#### **19. Non-responsive check out**

*Saturday Closing Devotions: Alison Thursfield*

